SAMSON GELKHVIDZE

DEDICATED TO:

In loving memory of my mother

ETERI ALEXANDROVNA KURDADZE

RETURN

(Storybook)

“STORIES OF YOUTH”

(From the author)

The collection of stories "The Return", like the previously published "Dealers in Pain", is an integral part of one large collection of stories called "Stories of Youth", which were written by the author mainly in 1984-1998 and which were his attempt to delay, at least for one moment, for one moment, like an arrow flying time.

In the stories, an attempt is made to convey to the reader through their characters those moods and feelings that each of us could experience if they had not already experienced the same. After all, each person carries the universe in himself and, at the same time, he himself is the smallest particle of this universe.

And every person sits in every person.

It is known that in order to know humanity, it is enough to know one person, and vice versa, in order to know one person, it is necessary to know humanity.

Often there is a favorite genre - “plotless” stories, or, as I call them, stories of moods, as an attempt to bring the reader to get acquainted with those subtleties and nuances of human feelings and experiences that often border on his deeply intimate, esoteric experiences.

The plots and stories described in the stories, as well as their heroes, often represent a mixture of events and characters that we meet in the real, virtual, a priori, possible, imaginary ... and other worlds.

Some readers consider the stories autobiographical. No, this is an incorrect vision of the attempt and desire to experience all the feelings experienced by the characters as closely and clearly as possible.

But, perhaps, if we talk about the most important purpose and purpose of the author's work, this is the red thread that stretches and permeates everything - this is the attitude of people towards each other and towards God.

“Life without God is hell!”, the author believes, and tries to show in his stories what difficult and far from ordinary situations the heroes get into, who have strayed from the only true path in life - the path leading to God, which runs through the Church.

Throughout our “conscious” life, we, people, walk in painful and exhausting circles, invent a certain world for ourselves, subject ourselves to all sorts of trials and torments, invent a different “new bicycle”, then, as everything

has been invented and said a long time ago. “I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12), says the Lord God.

We, people, often do not follow Him, but follow each other or even follow ourselves, on the lead of our earthly desires, feelings and passions. And, as a rule, as a result, we often go to the wrong place where our soul needs and needs for its salvation and resurrection. And when we find ourselves in a hopeless situation, then we begin to call for help from people who are often unable to help us, and sometimes do not respond to our call at all.

In many of the author's stories, there is, at least for a moment, the ringing of bells, calling, calling heroes to oneself, to the Church, to the only saving ship of the laity, which is able to lead them out of the most difficult, confusing and dangerous situations for life and health.

In our today's complex world, it is not difficult for a person to get lost and lose himself and the good beginning that was originally invested in him by God. And in such cases it is very important to return to oneself, to one's beginning, to one's origins, and this return is possible only with the help of God and the Church.

In conclusion, I note that a more experienced writer, perhaps, would have been better able to say and express what I was trying to convey.

Therefore, I hope for the indulgence of readers, who may have a lot of questions for me, of which the most important seems to be: “Why, then, in this case, I write?” “After all, it is better for a baker to bake bread.” To which I can simply answer: “I write, perhaps not so much because I know how to write, but because it makes me better!”

12. 12. 2003

BEST DIVER

Connecting body

Separates them again

But my life will be bright

As long as love lives.

N.S. Gumilyov

Nugzar slowly walked up the stairs and examined the traces of his childhood on the walls. No, he was not one of those who dirty the walls as a kid. He didn't like it then, but now he looked at things a little differently.

From the friends of his childhood in the city in which they all grew up, almost no one remained. Friends were in good health, but moved to live in other cities.

- Throughout life, a person reaches a certain mark, after which he takes a sharp turn and starts all over again, - with such thoughts, he approached the mailbox with number twenty-six. Deftly he put his fingers in the top slot, took out a poor mail, bent down and peered into the holes at the bottom of the box.

Reluctantly, he pulled out a bunch of keys from his pocket, pulled out two more envelopes from the drawer. I thought: "Isn't it too rich?" and, without reading the addresses of the senders, continued his way upstairs. “What drives these restless, restless people?” - thought on the go.

In the room I threw all the mail on the table and moved to the bathroom - to take a shower.

shower came

I like him.

In a half-open dressing gown, with a large linen towel, disheveled, he appeared before him in a tall mirror.

Having drunk from a glass of yogurt, he brought his face closer to the mirror - his cheeks and nose were covered with wrinkles. For the first time I noticed gray hair on my half-bald head and felt a pang in my heart.

Dejected, he sighed and stepped away from the mirror.

He settled himself comfortably in the rocking chair, began to parse the mail.

- “Dynamo” started to lose already on their field and not so famous teams, - I thought not without sadness, remembering the last time I was at the stadium.

Previously, he usually had a subscription for every season, at home the walls were full of tables fixing the course of the championship. In a word, football lived in it. And is it just football?

Quickly running through the headlines of the newspapers, Nugzar got to the correspondence.

He already forgot when he received so many letters.

I immediately recognized the first letter, it was sent by him to the grandmother of a friend. He himself was surprised that he was more attentive to her than to the most familiar. I could not remember the reasons, I forgot how it started, but I corresponded with her for exactly twelve years, and regularly. And a friend caught a trace.

- Life has swallowed, - suggested Nugzar.

The address on the envelope was crossed out with a cross, and on the back of the envelope was written: "The addressee died last year."

My heart sank a second time, and much stronger.

- Well, now, Nugzar, you lost another friend, - flashed through my head.

Grandmother was already aged, but Nugzar did not separate his friends by age categories.

The second letter was from the Union of Hunters.

- Finally remembered - he thought - casually tearing off the edge of the envelope. It contained a reminder of the payment of membership dues.

- What a disgrace not to pay for four years! - Nugzar was annoyed with himself. - It will be necessary to hand over a gun to Soyuzokhot and generally close the whole shop, - the whims of youth have come to an end.

Nugzar became a hunter because of a puppy that was given to him in the village, a brown Scottish setter named Lady. The dog was his good friend. They had experienced a lot in the short life of the Lady. Nugzar had never seen a smarter and more sensitive dog in his life.

He was offered several times other puppies, but he completely refused. I could not forget the dying look, the look with a plea for help.

- Powerful poison! The fact that she is still alive is due to a partial burp. This is the end, Nugzar, I can’t do anything, she has only half an hour left, - were the words of the veterinarian.

Nugzar looked at the Lady for the last time.

A lump rose in my throat.

A tear rolled down her cheek.

The dog trembled with a chill and occasionally wagged its tail weakly. Nugzar did not take her back, he said goodbye to her alive and did not want to see her again...

Through the open, uncurtained windows, giant poplars swaying in the wind were visible. The rustle of leaves whispered to Nugzar, who came up to the window, about what had and had not happened during his absence.

“I am very tired and unable to do anything,” he silently complained to his friends, looking at their still very tender, green leaves.

He took a deep breath.

- Oh spring, you are charmingly beautiful, your aroma excites the soul, I feel good with you. But soon you will leave me too. Only I alone do not leave anyone, - thought Nugzar, and then a slight fright crept into his soul.

He returned to the room at the ringing of the phone. He heard the familiar and pleasant voice of a friend.

- Hello, old man, how are you?

- Thank you, Temo, little by little.

- I felt like you were coming today, how did you do it?

- Yes, he escaped, missed his wife and son.

- Such, brother, is family life - it shakes you, regardless of time or kilometers.

- I remember, like I did not complain to you about her.

- What are you, I'm just joking, myself - like a top ... Are you for a long time?

I'm flying back tomorrow morning.

- Yes, not enough, but this time is enough for me.

- What's happened?

“Your help is desperately needed,” Temo changed his tone. - Understand, I'm very embarrassed in front of you, but without you, things are rubbish ...

- Explain plainly what happened to you.

- Well, OK! Could you come to our base?

- Right now?

- Yes, I’ll explain everything there, now there’s no time!

- But, - Nugzar hesitated, thinking for a few seconds. - Well, well, - he agreed, knowing that Temo would not bother a person without extremes.

He once again walked around all the rooms in the house. A certain feeling from any meeting with them did not leave him in childhood and became more and more aggravated with age.

- Thank God, at least there is someone to clean the house, - he thought, and a warm wave swept through his heart.

What to do with a tile that has flown off almost everywhere? The kitchen, my God, what it looks like! Wallpaper, yellowed and half-torn in places, hung from the walls.

- When and to whom to repair all this ?!

- Oh, parents! We, children, cannot even imagine what kind of burden you carry on you all your life.

In the bedroom, his wife and son looked at him from a photograph. He himself took them off last summer at sea, when they came to visit him, to find out how he works and lives without them.

Although Nugzar considered himself a strong man, he was familiar with feelings that were not easy to resist, and some of sometimes they even managed to draw more than one pair of tears from the depths of his stern eyes.

Standing in front of the closet with the doors open, he thought for a moment, looking over his clothes.

There was a loud, impatient bell in the hallway.

"I'm coming, I'm coming," a woman's voice answered.

“Here, take it, please,” the woman who came in asked, releasing part of the nets with food from her hands.

- Fu-u, - she drawled, - I thought they would fall off.

- Hello, granny, - the little one, about five or six years old, happily greeted her, the grandson, naturally, who considered himself already big.

- And my mother bought me a machine gun, tr-tr-tr, - he crackled with a toy weapon.

- Wow, you, what a fine fellow, come to me, grandmother will kiss you.

The grandson did not disdain the caress of his grandmother and always responded to her with joy.

- Where have you been for so long, Rusudan, I have already begun to worry.

- It's a day off, mom, the market is so full of people that you can't get through, Kahi almost lost on the way.

- Why so strain when you can ask your father and he will give you a lift in a car.

- Oh, you know him, - he always has no time!

He won't refuse you this. Well, okay, now quickly wash your hands and eat.

- What's your wanderer, didn't come and didn't call? - Mother asked Rusudan at the table.

- I don't know, mom, I don't know anything.

- What do you know? When it was still not too late, I warned you about everything.

- My Nugzar - he is so sensitive, attentive ...

- Now what? Whom she began to resemble, she lost weight all over.

- Mom, I'll go to the yard, can I? - asked Kahi.

Rusudan smiled back at him:

- Yes, but only for a short time!

“As long as he listens,” she thought.

- Do you even love him, Rusudan, now?

- I do not know. Though yes, probably.

- And he you?

- He says yes.

- This is not love, on the road.

- We will never lose each other's love, - Rusudan smiled.

- He will not have time to settle in with Kakha, as he is again on a business trip. Sometimes it seems to me that it is better this way, a person always strives for what he does not have. And he doesn't have us. God, what nonsense I'm talking!

- And what does this job give him ?!

- Everyone except us. Although, maybe, us too... Scuba diving and the sea are his selfless love since childhood, and he never parted with his beloved for a long time.

- It seems to me that he taught you to his absences too?

- What are you, mom, you can’t accustom yourself to this. I get very tired from work, but I often remember him. When I get tired, a new business appears from this. This is how Kahi and I live in anticipation of him.

- Previously, I remember, he traveled very rarely, but now he frequented.

- There is a great demand for good specialists everywhere. Now he is collecting materials for environmentalists. Underwater life is interesting, of course. You know, one day he took me with him.

- What are you saying?! This was not enough for him to drown you there!

- Hmm, - laughed Rusudan. - Move there and live, at least for a while, as an amphibious man. It would be great!

- It's time for a thirty-year-old woman to say goodbye to her sentimentality. Live where your mother gave birth to you.

- Mom, don't remind me of my age, please.

- Does not matter! It can't go on like this anymore.

- What do you suggest?

- Get divorced. What is he like to you. I lost all my youth for him. A young wife needs a husband, let him decide what is more important to him. It can't be like that! The last time he showed up for a few hours, only upset us and went back. Wow numbers?! In the end, he can find some work for himself here. How many fans did you have

one is better than the other. And what did you find in it? He's so many years older than you!

Rusudan listened in silence and remembered her husband's eyes when he proposed to her. She then felt herself standing over a certain abyss. I caught such a prayer in them ...

“If I hadn’t married him, he would definitely have died,” she said in a low voice.

- Wow, I would have died, - muttered my mother sarcastically. - This is the crown number of men, I already know them.

Previously, Rusudan would have thrown a tantrum after such words, but now she just smiled.

- What are you, mom! Okay, let's leave this conversation, please...

- You know better, but keep in mind that we live in this world once. Both I and your father don't want to see you unhappy.

- I know!

Rusudan was silent for a minute. Mom continued to finish her dessert, an apple, while sighing as if someone was forcibly stuffing her with it.

- I'll go and look at Kahi! - Rusudan went through the room to the loggia.

In the room, she locked herself with a key and gave vent to her feelings. Hardly restrained tears gushed forth.

“Lord, why am I in such pain, because I love him, I love him,” she pleaded, falling face down on the bed. She buried her face in the pillow and sobbed for a long time until she completely burst into tears.

From the parking lot next to the cafe, there was a view of the sea surface. There were more cars than usual.

Going down the paved road to the rescue station where Temo worked, Nugzar glanced at the shed nearby, it was crowded under it.

Nugzar paused. I noticed a car on a ferry, not far from the coast, and people scurrying around near it. My heart skipped a beat for the third time that day. You have to be a novice at sea not to guess what's going on. He was incomprehensible only to his own important role in this matter. He suddenly became agitated and quickly walked towards the station.

He noticed Temo, who had already come out to meet him.

They greeted the hand.

- Who? - Nugzar asked, barely catching his breath.

- Guy, twenty-four years.

Like a stone fell on the heart of Nugzar.

He took a deep breath and wiped the cold sweat off his forehead.

- Well, you arranged the number for me, my friend!

Forgive me, I couldn't help it. Look, these are the relatives and friends of the deceased.

They walked slowly towards the station.

Temo was still apologizing to his friend.

Passing by the audience, Nugzar heard behind him:

- This is the best diver, Nugzar Chedia, I recognized him!

- Brought, finally!

What have you been waiting for so far?

Nugzar already knew what Temo had to ask him.

- How did it happen? asked Nugzar.

- Looks like a heart. We don't know yet! He was with a girl, he probably wanted to show himself. She claims that he could swim. They were going to play a wedding the other day, - Temo added.

Nugzar asked the following questions already from the observation post.

- How many days already?

"Three," Temo replied, hesitating.

- What did they do?

- All that was in my power: divers, cords, now here he is, - Temo pointed towards the sea.

"Why the hell don't your people keep an eye on the boats before the tragedy happens!?"

- You can't keep track of everything and everyone, you know, - Temo drooped.

The living are always sinful and guilty before the dead.

Nugzar noticed in the corner of the room a sign brought from the beach with the inscription “No sacrifice to the sea”. Temo noticed his friend's gaze. He became even more embarrassed. Both were silent.

- The place that the girl pointed to, we surrounded with buoys. They combed the whole area, even more, as if through the ground, - Temo continued to explain. - Parents cry, do not let up, at least they want to get a corpse, some strange ones. They promise to stand up for nothing.

- A person is more loved and respected when he dies. But don't die for this, damn it! However, they do not interest me, I am interested in you.

- We need to finish this business! - There was not a blood in Temo's face.

- Do you know the weather report of that day?

- Yes.

- What are you thinking of doing?

- I no longer hope for these, I want to try it myself. Nugzar, you know me well, I'm not a coward, but now the conversation is not about me. No one here knows these places better than you - help me out!

Nugzar sighed heavily.

- I'll take you past the funnels, but where the undercurrent is, - Temo thought, peering at his comrade.

Nugzar remembered his childhood, when he and Temo were diving in simple masks with a snorkel and fins, armed first with spear guns, and later with underwater cameras.

But since then, much has changed both in their lives and in the life of the sea. The sea became different, and Nugzar knew about it. He also knew that the new sea of Temo was more familiar than he was, but he could not refuse a friend.

- Well, you got into history, buddy! - muttered Nugzar, not interrupting his thoughts about the matter.

Soon the boat, loaded with the necessary supplies for the work, set sail from the shore ...

There was a particularly sharp phone call. The woman's heart seemed to fall from a height.

"He's the one," she thought in her head. She jumped out of her chair in front of the switched on TV and rushed to the bell. On the way, she slipped on the carefully varnished floor and fell face-first onto her knees.

Luckily, I managed to put my hands up.

- Mom, phone, long-distance! - I managed to say.

The mother picked up the phone, heard a male voice and immediately saw her daughter rising from the floor.

She wanted to put down the phone and rush to help, but her daughter shook her head to the side, as a sign of refusing help. A few seconds later, she picked up the phone.

The conversation didn't last long. Rusudan answered only occasionally, dryly, in separate words: okay, I understand...

A pretty young telephone operator smiled sweetly at the customers as she sent them to their respective booths.

- What's wrong with you, Nino? the woman asked her employee.

- No, nothing, - the young telephone operator answered with amazement, - it's just that the man who has just left behaved very strangely. I called the city on long-distance, and then left the cab and stared at me like a ram at a new gate.

- Ha-ha, - the employee laughed, - it is clear that he really liked you.

- No, I think there was a more serious matter here.

Nugzar almost did not feel the pitching, only a heavy head and a dull hum of engines chained him to the chair.

- And what? What happened? he asked puzzled.

- You are already better, - was heard in response, while he could hardly distinguish the silhouette of a stewardess, - here, drink this, - a hand with a cup stretched out to him.

- What is it?

- Mineral.

- Thank you, - thanked Nugzar.

The stewardess put her hand to Nugzar's forehead and, smiling, retired deep into the cabin.

- What did she need? - Nugzar asked a neighbor.

- You were delirious, in my opinion, young man, and demanded to stop the flight. What was left for me to do, - the old woman sitting next to him justified herself indignantly and excitedly.

- Ah, - said Nugzar, apparently starting to come to his senses. - Well, of course, of course, you did the right thing, thank you!

The old woman is nearby, not hiding obvious indignation deniya, still shaking her head and staring at the porthole. Nugzar drank from a cup of mineral water and sank into thought.

The flight of the air liner was coming to an end.

- Should I even come this time? thought Nugzar. - For what purpose did you come and why am I going back? Hmm, how does this folk proverb say: a fool went to the city, what did he carry there, and what - back?

He had several hours to see his family, but he did not use them. He flattered himself with hope: he would finish the remaining couple of months, and then he would quit his “long-distance” work and return home forever. I couldn't imagine my life without her though. Or family, or favorite work - today life offered him such a choice. But today he could not give up either one or the other.

He tried to delay the solution of the issue in time, hoping that problems that a person cannot solve can sometimes be solved by time.

- And poor Temo did not help anything. And why am I so unlucky! - Nugzar was annoyed. - All your life you are spinning, spinning, but you really don’t have time to do anything.

Where Nugzar was heading now, good news awaited him. For painstaking work and interesting finds, he was presented with an award. But will he now be pleased with what he used to live and what once pleased him? He felt his sadness and his joy grow old with him. But to start life anew, at the age of forty, it also did not seem possible and prudent to him.

“Hmm,” he thought, “how does that proverb say: you chase two hares, you don’t catch ... either one or both?” What the hell, I forgot again!

The liner hovered freely over the luxurious motley glades. On one of them, Nugzar noticed horses running in different directions, which, apparently, were running away from the roar of aircraft engines overtaking them.

Blood flowed from the bruised knee of a young girl, a tear rolled from the eye of one of the passengers, and dewdrops streamed down the window of the plane. The girl's parents were indignant, the pilots operating the liner were worried about the flight, the air liner carried passengers with their problems and sins.

Which one was the hardest now?

The liner unexpectedly dived sharply down, so much so that the passengers took their breath away, and immediately corrected the roll of the flight.

- Who is the best diver! - decided one of the passengers, who was already thinking about taking this maneuver into service at his work, which began already from the very early morning.

In general, Nugzar considered the best divers to be the dives that they, together with Temo, hunted on boats in their youth. For all the time of the hunt, they did not manage to shoot a single one. Hunting rifles did not reach them, and diving did not let them within range of a shot.

Convinced of the futility of their undertaking, they decided to learn from them the highest degree of professionalism - diving.

When the dives disappeared under water, one of them remained on the boat, and the other dived after them in a mask with a snorkel and fins, and there, under water, watched their swimming.

Having dived, the birds descended like a stone vertically deep down, then slightly surfaced and, straightening the list of swimming with the help of their beak, freely soared in the water space, conquering kilometers of the underwater kingdom for a long period of time.

Then they surfaced for a short time on the surface of the water far, far from the place where they dived, and again repeated everything several times a day.

Nugzar now had to do the same. He dived into his work and only occasionally surfaced to see his family and then dived again.

The best divers are the best because they can stay underwater for a long time, which gives them enough food, joys and pleasure in life.

People often dive into life, like diving into water, remaining for a long time under its deep layers and at the same time rarely emerge to see the Sun - the Source of Light and Heat - and take a breath of life-giving fresh air.

And to emerge to the surface, although not for long, it is salutary necessary for both of them, because they are alive not only by food alone.

9.09.1984

RETURN

What we have lost
what a harmful oversight we commit, so
that Christian power is moving away from us,
all living creatures leave us, and we, as
coffins painted like an empty shell,
worm-eaten from the inside?

/Archimandrite Lazarus (Abashidze)/

Hoping to quell his spiritual crisis, Otar decided to visit a former classmate. Much to my surprise, I found him at home.

- This can happen only once a year! - he frankly remarked, in response to which it was heard:

- When you come in once a year, of course, yes, Otar!

- Don't tell me! You completely forgot my address!

Although it was very pleasant for Otaru to talk with a friend, to turn over the pages of the past that had connected them so closely, four hours of conversation still did not bring him the desired relief.

He had not experienced such a state for a long time. I could not but notice with alarm that over time it loses its taste for the surroundings, that all colors mix into one, unloved color, which seemed to have froze for a long time, hiding and looking at the surroundings in anticipation of something unusual, as if anticipating that life is preparing some - some changes.

“When you lose one, you find another,” he thought with the hope to which he now owed his life.

- But Adam did not feel completely satisfied even when he was full, and then he met Eve, because of whom he subsequently lost paradise - thoughts relentlessly climbed and caused irritation.

After what he had suffered from his "beauty", he was wary of women. He considered them as abysses that should be bypassed in order to reach some mysterious and still unknown to him lofty goal.

- A meeting that does not fully satisfy the thirst for spiritual communication does not justify itself. It even prevents people similar in character from maintaining contacts, Otar believed, summing up the conversation with a friend.

Even on the escalator running down, Otar noticed an elderly man, about seventy years old, who later asked to show him the way to the desired station. The old man remained Otar's companion for only two stations.

Otar did not remember how he talked to him, but he remembered his words.

- I went to the doctor, they pumped out three liters of fluid, but they still insist on an operation.

- Since they insist, maybe - it is necessary? - Otar asked with pity.

- What is there, they did it to two of our yard, and not one of them could stand it.

- What if it gets worse?

- How much worse! The wife also warned, said, do not agree. And now she's dead.

- Well, do you even have children? - asked Otar.

- There are children, God bless them. Only they are not up to us - there is no time, because they have their own families, their own worries. I don't really tell them anything.

The old man was talking to Otar reluctantly. It was immediately obvious that he was ill. I trembled slightly.

- Can I take you out?

- Don't, son, I'm on my own!

Otar had seen the sick before, but the old man puzzled him.

Where and how is he now?

His eyes - large and tormented - were remembered and haunted.

It was time to return home, in the morning a new working day was waiting for him, but he was in no hurry. I knew that habitual insomnia and a bunch of medicines for it awaited at home.

- Better to admire the moon - he thought, walking along the main avenue. But the moon was not visible that evening.

He phlegmatically walked past posters, shop windows, occasionally peered into brightly blinking colored advertising inscriptions from fluorescent lamps. I dreamed that the day would never end. But traffic along the avenue subsided.

Passing by telephone booths, Otar could not resist. He found coins, dialed a familiar number.

The first coin went to the machine for free, and the second connected it with a rough male voice.

- Who do you want?

- I'll give Irina, if possible, - Otar hesitated.

- And who asks her?

- And who are you, in fact, forgive? - Otar added after a pause.

“Listen, no gentleman would dare call a lady at this hour.

- Give the phone, - Irina's cheerful voice was heard in the receiver.

Hello, who is asking?

Otar stepped back a little, hearing a familiar voice.

Hello, Ira...

- Hello! - not long in coming surprised female voice.

- How are you doing?

- Good. And who asks? - still surprised asked Ira.

- You will not know?

- Sergey - no. Nico, hello! Where are you from?

- No, it's not Niko, I'm Shaliko, - Otar answered with annoyance.

- Shaliko? - Ira was amazed. - I don't know this.

Ira hung up. Otar did the same, but a little later, while smiling ironically.

He was not offended, although he was annoyed that the conversation did not work out.

- When you do not appear on the stage for a long time, they begin to forget you, - thought Otar.

All life you need to play something and something. Otherwise, you are nobody. For others, of course. So the actors lose their roles.

Even old friends forget you.

I wonder who this man was? Has she got married? If yes, then today I probably made her porridge.

To marry or get married is to get lost, then why is divorce not to appear? It seems that here is an irreversible process. If A is equal to B, then this does not mean that B will always be equal to A. Maybe everything also depends on C?

As a child, Otar was most afraid of the dark, but now he realized that in There are worse things in life. He murmured to himself a somehow folded quatrain:

Don't live without hope

And don't lie to yourself

Loneliness is ours

Worse than death and darkness.

And he immediately consoled himself with the words of Omar Khayyam.

- Hmm ... better alone than with just anyone. It’s not like you sometimes look at a person, it seems that outwardly it leaves a normal impression, but you open your mouth, even if you run for three to nine lands. No, perhaps Omar Khayyam is right about this.

- Yes, breaking away from people, it's not so easy to get used to them again ... It's hard both with them and without them.

“The golden mean,” an inner voice answered him.

“I know,” he agreed, and immediately added another quatrain:

Golden mean,

Who can tell where she is

If here this very second,

And in another - somewhere there.

- But if people, even the closest and dearest, sooner or later leave each other, then a person cannot remain completely alone, without some kind of higher supervision?

Thinking as he walked, he silently continued on his way.

- In such a big city and - no one! Was it harder for Robinson? One thing is clear - it's not easier, - concluded Otar with a smile.

Who starts early, ends early, and there's nothing to be done about it. It seemed to him now that he was living as if he had never lived before.

Where did all the old go, all the past, where?

Before time, nothing can resist - not even time itself, especially neither strength nor love. Perhaps this is the cause of all misfortunes and hardships? The point is that this concept helps people to live, and not vice versa, as is often the case. I would put them before the abyss, with the condition of obligatory advancement, even when the wings of a person turn out to be clipped long ago.

In this case, any other road but forward is doom.

As in that fairy tale: you go to the left - you will pierce your heart through, to the right - you will lay down your head, straight ahead - there is no road at all, behind - death flies like an arrow, and heaven does not allow you to fall through the earth.

Stand and wait? Funny: why? Or maybe just evaporate? But how?!

Okay, just in case, let's say goodbye to someone and something, so that the fruits of ignobleness do not hang over us later in a heavy cloud.

Thoughts prevented Otar from noticing the young couple walking towards them.

- Hello, Otar! Thank God, at least we met on the street.

- Tengiz? Otar was surprised.

- Well, of course! Where did you disappear to? How did you fall through the ground? You don’t visit anyone, as if no one works except you.

- What about yourself? thought Otar, but said nothing.

- Meet my wife. Were with her in the theater.

- Vika, - the companion nodded her head.

- Very nice! Otar! - He delicately responded and inquired:

- What theater did you go to?

- In "Contemporary".

- Where is it?

- And here, not far, below the main square, remember, the church was there. They repaired it, arranged an excellent hall, in general, it turned out great!

- And he didn't come to my wedding! - Tengiz suddenly changed the topic of conversation. - True, it was not, as such, but the guys still came. Otar, what's wrong with you?

- Oh, nothing special.

- Listen, brother, live simpler, here's my advice to you. Take an example from others. Learn to live, because once it falls to us, in the end. Everyone works, as they say, they don’t get killed for their salary, they drink, go for walks, have fun with their girlfriends, with friends. Well, what are you, "unfortunate"? Did something go wrong?

- No, nothing, - Otar changed his tone, - just a temporary eclipse. I am looking for a way out of life's problems and answers to them.

- So, it means that you solve the next questions posed by life? Tengiz smiled.

- May be.

- Well, okay, God is with you! Resolve quickly and come back to us. We miss you very much. Promise?

- Will try.

- Well, happy to you, sorry, we are in a hurry. Yes, do you remember Andrei Ebralidze?

- Of course, - remembering, answered Otar with fear.

- The boyfriend is gone, - Tengiz added sadly.

- Why? ^ - Otar asked almost indifferently.

- Peritonitis. Well, okay, everything!

- Total ... - muttered Otar, seeing off the departing couple with a look.

- Andrey, Andrey, forgive the friend who left you!

Otar muttered these words almost without pain, almost indifferently, and from the realization of this he became even more gloomy.

Truly: all the blessings of this world are only the consolation of mortals.

- There was a time, we were friends, - Otar recalled. But then the paths diverged, as often happens in life. Nothing can be done, each person has his own way in life.

Among his negative qualities, Otar attributed, along with others, the fact that he never returned to where he was happy. Sometimes he was afraid of himself - when earthly happiness seemed not enough ...

Those were already meaningless for him spiritual boundaries, which he was most afraid of, even though from the point of view of life strategy they seemed very convenient. For this he often scolded himself, but he could not help himself.

He could not, without any regret, not notice in himself the fact that lately he had lost interest in anything. So many things around, but still - emptiness.

The oppressive emptiness ruthlessly drove him to clarify himself, to determine his place in life. And frightened him, and filled with hope. Like the wind, it blew in his back, as if about into the sails and whispered: go, go ahead, boldly, until you find your way! Of course, I had to do something, but there was neither enthusiasm nor interest in what was being done. Rather, the feeling of dissatisfaction intensified, and he reproached himself for trying to violate his old principle: "Do not look for a way out of a hopeless situation."

Only now did he remember the once-familiar feeling that he experienced as a teenager, when his parents left him alone - in a rest home, outside the city, in a pioneer camp. It was fun and good there, but the enigmatic, mysterious sadness, the name of which he had searched in vain all his life, still cruelly oppressed him. He could not stand such a “severe” test, and begged his relatives to take him back.

And now all the people around him are like people, and among them he is like a white crow. It seems like it's not of this world. The search for secrets that had not yet been revealed to him, which were to be comprehended, tormented and tormented him. He felt like he was about to be reborn.

- The fruits of a bad upbringing?! If there is one, then only the fault of the educator himself. The child must learn to think for himself, he himself must distinguish the bad from the good, he thought, recalling the past.

Why is there so much melancholy in a person? It accumulates in him a destructive bile, without which he cannot live and which at the same time oppresses him so unceremoniously and ruthlessly.

How many secrets hide in themselves the depths of the human personality, not visible from the outside!

It turns out that in order to destroy a person, it is not at all necessary to cut off his wings, cut off his limbs, tongue, plug his ears, mouth, gouge out his eyes ... It is enough to tear him away from his roots, sources.

“If we are aliens from heaven, then perhaps separation from our true homeland is the reason for our worries,” he suddenly thought.

Simple as that!

But what if the reason for all this is time?! It is ruthless to all life on earth. Recently, it seems to him that the speed of its flow has almost doubled in him.

“Twice, if not more,” repeated Otar.

It was like sunset during sunrise.

Otar looked at the cloudy night sky:

- So, you gave me life on loan, took pity on me, as once on Lilian Remarque? Well, I'll just say thank you out of tact. You endowed me with reason, not only so that I could think, but also, probably, so that my thoughts would lead me to the discovery of something most important and important in my life?

You don't have to answer, any answer of yours will not alleviate my fate.

Life, shortened by half ... Is it doubly beautiful? Would life on earth, shortened by half, three times, make people nobler and more beautiful? Or would it ruin them doubly, triply? Would this make a person think faster, move

faster and reach his goal earlier? What is the point in the consciousness and in the mental gift of a person, if they do not lead him to the goal - to the truth. The truth... I feel it, but I don't see it.

I'm only twenty-six. God, how do people live to seventy, eighty, and still manage not to go crazy? Although they partially succeed.

He no longer wanted to think, but thoughts stubbornly overcame him. I did not want to look, but stubborn eyes saw almost everything around and remembered. He did not want to go home, but something pushed him forward. Finally, resisting himself, he tried to brush it off, but his hands would not obey him... In the early morning, with the first chirping of birds and the rattle of trams leaving the park, Otar was returning home.

A sprinkler and a garbage truck drove past him.

The long-forgotten breath of fresh dew from the lawns and the first rays of the coming morning instilled in him cheerfulness and a tiny hope for the day ahead. Even the sun managed, overcoming the thickness of thick heavy clouds, to look out of prison for a few minutes in order to warm the awakened faith of a person.

All in time, but where is it?

“Maybe, to rely on time and attribute all the troubles to it is as reckless and absurd as to completely forget about it?” Otar flashed. - So, the whole point is in a person and in how he relates to everything that happens?

So there is hope, at least some, for the future, even though it is invisible and hidden?

He passed by the bathhouse, the doors of which welcomed and escorted visitors. Flocks of pigeons crowded on its roof, flocking for long respite between long-distance flights.

- Hmm, they say that there used to be a beautiful church here, and now - on you ...

Two fishermen overtook and easily overtook Otar, talking impatiently and cheerfully about something among themselves.

Otar has never seen happier faces.

“Naive,” he thought, “crazy, in this weather, but happy,” he added with good envy.

Now he really wanted to sleep.

As he approached his house, he noticed a light in his window.

- What is it, left it on or do I have guests?

Inserting the key into the keyhole, before opening the door, he thought for a minute:

- I already ran away from self-deception once, and I will never return to it.

14.09. 1988

SPA CASES

People are like rivers...

Everything in the human soul

It flows, everything changes.

old wisdom

The big hand of the clock jumped past twelve.

- It's time, - was heard in the hall.

The double doors swung open, and people, almost in an organized manner, headed into the hall. They passed through the rows of tables, like mushrooms, scattered across the "clearing" with a roof held up by massive columns, like centuries-old oak trunks.

Everyone went to their table.

Young girls-waitresses had been scurrying about in the kitchen for a long time, laying dishes and decorating, like a Christmas tree with toys, their two-story mobile carriages.

This is how they started every day. Their everyday enthusiasm could only be envied, and, perhaps, the only reward for them was a “thank you” from the table. But sometimes it happened in a different way: the duty officer had to sort out the statements of the vacationers. These girls in white aprons also came across comments.

They handled the kitchen utensils like jugglers in a circus, going from “please serve this” on one table to “please bring it to me” on the other.

But, alas, no one saw or noticed this on this ordinary working day as clearly as Maria Mikhailovna, the attendant in the hall. And who cares before that, everyone had their own plans for the day and their worries.

- Well done, my girls! - Maria Mikhailovna thought with joy, looking at how they managed.

Some leave, they are replaced by others, and so every day, and the work of the girls is more fun.

Whatever you say, the accordion still inspires. We work in anticipation of the end of the shift, when the harmonist and singing teacher arrive, and then we pour out our souls, - Maria Mikhailovna looked through the visitor's log.

- Table six - two, seven - three... eleven - four. Many have left, but others will soon arrive. Nothing can be done, everyone celebrates the New Year according to their abilities, and not everyone is equally happy about its approach.

Before New Year's Eve, the tables really thinned out, but this made it no less work.

Everyone was seated and settled down. Maria Mikhailovna walked around the vacationers, asked about their health, about how they live with them.

- How are my girls? - smiling, she asked, pausing briefly near the sixth table. - How do you relax? Any comments about the menu?

“Everything is wonderful with you, Maria Mikhailovna, thank you very much for your attention,” Nadezhda Nikolaevna and Klavdia Petrovna answered with courtesy in return.

Well, besides the exchange of pleasantries, they had something to share with each other. And advice, and practical suggestions, and even secrets. Women, even strangers, always find something to talk about, and sometimes they do it with such zeal that it is difficult to determine the statute of limitations for their acquaintance.

Beauty and a craving for communication, even if it is banal, is something that the whole history of human existence on earth could not take away from them.

- Klava, who are these delicate people? - Nadezhda turned to her friend sitting next to her, pointing to her neighbors at table seven.

- Husband and wife, - answered Claudia, - the husband is an artist, and she, it seems, works in the press.

- Do you know them?

- In principle, no, so, I heard about them in the lobby.

- Hmm, about whom they just don't talk about. Probably about you and me, Klava?

- Maybe. Oh, yes, let them chat, whatever, I'm neither cold nor hot from this.

Nadezhda reached for a bottle of sunflower oil.

- Sunflower is the best choleretic agent, Klava. Do you know this?

Claudia was silent. Biting off pieces of bread, she looked around the hall.

- Do you really think to meet him here? - inquired Nadezhda, pouring oil into a salad of beets, carrots and cabbage with potatoes.

- Not excluded.

- In my opinion, he should still be in the hall nearby.

"Maybe," Claudia sighed.

- Eat, Klava, eat, why do you eat only bread? Your figure is not bad, but so much bread ...

- I don’t want something porridge, I’ll wait for the second one. In vain we ate too much fat yesterday, Nadezhda.

- Nothing, at the dance with him you will settle everything.

- No, the liver is whining.

- Well, drink while at least warm tea. Maybe bring a rosehip?

`- No, don't, it will pass!

A rhythmic and quiet noise could be heard in the hall: the tapping of chairs on the floor, the sounds of falling knives and forks, and some incomprehensible words from neighboring tables.

- Actually, they look like very intelligent and interesting people ...

"Who are you talking about?" Claudia asked.

“About the neighbors,” Nadezhda once again pointed to table number seven.

"Ah," Claudia drawled.

- How old will they be, I wonder?

- They are probably ten years older than us, it is possible that they are a little more - that way, over sixty ...

- You know, they always come very early and solve more and more crossword puzzles almost every time. Moreover, it is clear that the husband does this reluctantly, and the wife continually pesters him with her questions, to which she does not always receive satisfactory answers. On his face there is always an amazing calmness and mysterious phlegmatism.

- He lives only thanks to her. It is evident that he has already given up on his life for a long time. People said that she snatched him from the clutches of death. Here and now she persuaded him to come to Minvody. This is love, right, Hope?

“Love is devoted, which is adjacent to beautiful and businesslike love,” Nadezhda sighed.

- And what kind of love did you have, Claudia?

- Oh, yes, what kind of love is there when a husband gets drunk and swings his fists. No wonder I divorced him. Better a terrible end than horror without end.

- Well, at least she was at the beginning?

- It was, since we have Alena. Poor thing, and she and her husband were not lucky, - added Claudia after a short pause.

- Do not be upset, Klava, men are all the same, except perhaps some ... But can you understand right away ?.

- And how did your life turn out in this regard?

Claudia managed to notice how a tear from her friend's cheek landed right into a glass of tea.

She put her hand on Hope's sleeve.

- Hope, what are you? I'm sorry if I offended you, I didn't mean to.

“Nothing,” Nadezhda said in a barely audible voice, looking for a handkerchief in her purse.

People came out of the dining room through a narrow door in a long stream, dispersed in different directions.

Two men in blue tracksuits, with opaque cellophane bags in their hands, stood to the side of the exit, looking at the exiting crowd with curiosity.

- Good morning, Klava, - a tall, thin man in a tracksuit called.

- Oh, Gena, hello! - Claudia happily responded, quickly approaching those waiting.

- This is my friend, Slava, meet me!

- Very nice, - Claudia greeted the stranger by the hand.

“Me too,” Vyacheslav replied with a restrained smile.

- Hope will not come to us? - asked Gennady.

- How, - called Claudia to her friend.

- Well, everything is fine, now we are all familiar, - Gena remarked not without joy.

“Where did you disappear to yesterday?” Klava asked importunately.

- Klavochka, please don't judge me, PE. Tell me what are you doing today?

- What, again something sensible? - asked Klava.

- Yeah, cultural and entertainment program. Today at seven in the House of Culture dancing. We would be very happy to see you there.

Claudia looked at her friend. Hope shook her head slightly.

- Yes, nothing will work out today, unfortunately, - Claudia explained.

- Well, why, Klavochka?

- PE.

- And tomorrow? - Gena asked after the departing interlocutors.

"We'll wait and see," Klava promised.

- Well, wait, let's talk a little.

- Once, we are late for the procedures.

- These are wonderful, they will not forgive a single mistake, they will certainly answer the same, - Gena was upset.

- All right, Slava, let's go.

- Wow, cavaliers, - Claudia complained to Nadezhda, - they would be glad to see. Why can't they invite a couple of rubles as a human being?

Nadezhda was silent all the way until they parted, only listening to her friend's stories about her new acquaintances.

In the evening, the foyer of the health resort was relatively quiet, but crowded.

Some watched TV, others played dominoes, chess, and some rested at home, although there were very few of the latter.

Nadezhda Nikolaevna was sitting on her made bed and, under the light of the table-topper, from time to time leafed through the pages of a tattered book wrapped in newspaper.

Suddenly she heard a familiar voice, then laughter. The laughter went on for a long time, several minutes with short breaks.

- Hmm, wow sick, - Nadezhda continued to read the book.

There was a knock, then the creak of the door opening, and the same familiar cheerful voice.

“Come in, guys, let’s sit for a while,” Claudia invited the guests.

Nadezhda managed to put down her book and get up from the bed.

- Good evening, Nadezhda Nikolaevna, we were bored without you, - said Gena.

- What are you talking about? Sorry, but I could not foresee this, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna sneered.

There was a pause for a moment.

- Yes! - Gena said. - Well, okay, we'll go, Klavushka, we're really at the wrong time, goodbye.

- Goodbye, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna was not stingy to answer.

Klavdia Petrovna gazed at the slamming door for a long time.

- Sorry, Klava, if I ruined your evening.

Klavdia Petrovna put the small cups back into the cupboard.

- The guys wanted to drink a bottle of champagne with us ... just simply And you drove them away.

Hope silently sighed, burying herself in the book.

- Nadia, what does it look like, tell me, please. How are you behaving? Surely I have not read all my life that every evening you do not part with this damned book for a minute. Stand up and see how you've driven yourself.

Nadezhda tore her head from the book and looked at Claudia.

- What do you care about me? I live as I want, and it is not for you to teach me how to live.

- Ah! .. - Klava drawled. - I didn’t like it. How much longer do you think you will live? Or do you hope with your sores to reach a ripe old age?

The argument gradually turned into shouting.

- Klava, stop it now.

- No, since I started, I'll finish it. Do you want to know what they say about you?

- It doesn't interest me at all.

- You still listen. They say about you that you are no longer a woman, that men, therefore, do not interest you at all.

- Shut up, bitch! cried Nadezhda and gave her friend a slap in the face.

- You're a jerk! Klava slapped her friend on the head with a pillow so that she flew almost to the opposite wall.

Nadezhda Nikolaevna turned away and began to cry. For a while there was silence.

- Oh, Nadya, - Claudia relaxed, - forgive me, please, forgive me.

Klavdia Petrovna ran up to her friend, sank to the floor, and helped her up.

Sitting on the bed, they looked into each other's tear-stained eyes, and then, embracing, sobbed together.

After weeping, they continued to sob and apologize to each other, wiping their reddened eyes.

“Where did you go alone today, fool?” Claudia finally asked.

- I called home, I talked with my son, - Nadezhda, still not calmed down, answered.

“Nadya, what do you have there, confess,” Klava advised.

There is no point in being silent now. Last year, for the umpteenth time in recent years, I put my husband in the hospital. Asthma tormented the poor fellow, and it was evident that he gradually began to fail. You know, it was not his strength that was running out, but the desire to help himself let down.

On the day I saw him for the last time in the ward, he was so cheerful, he looked relatively fresh, he was joking.

The doctors wanted to arrange a pension for him, but he refused, saying that they would not have time. He turned out to be right. On that day, it turns out, I saw him for the last time, - Nadezhda sighed, - who could have known! He escaped from the hospital and disappeared.

It's been over a year since we can't find him.

Wherever they searched, what they did not undertake, all to no avail. So much money, nerves and time squandered.

He determined his fate, but at least he thought of me and my son, - Nadezhda began to cry again. - Who am I now, a widow, not a widow? To live, not to live, and how?!

For a long time, almost all night, the friends spent together in tears and lengthy conversations. In the morning, their strength began to dry up, they were inclined to sleep.

- Enough, Nadezhda, to torment yourself and torment yourself. You loved him and did everything you could. Well, what will you change with tears? - Nothing! Live a little for yourself. He won't be alone, don't worry. Secondly, you look, and someday it will appear.

- You think?

- Of course, anything is possible!

- No, - Nadezhda shook her head, - so much time has passed!

“Life itself will tell you what to do next,” Klava reassured her.

Days passed, and the friends gradually got used to life in the sanatorium. Although the frost in the mornings did not please, the warmth of the people warmed the souls.

- Good morning, my dears, - greeted Maria Mikhailovna, - how are you resting? So, today one of our ovens has gone bad, and we are changing the menu for you. Here you are, - she held out a double printed sheet.

“Is this the menu for the whole day?” Claudia asked.

- No, I think the masters will fix the stove by noon.

- Well, what will you order, Klava?

- What did you choose?

- Pancakes with curd.

- Then I, too, pancakes with cottage cheese.

- That's good, the order has been accepted, - Maria Mikhailovna moved away from their table. Yes, girls, I've got two more hooked on you here - a son and a mother, I think, get along.

Hope nodded her head.

- Klava, do you like pancakes with cottage cheese?

- So-so, - answered Klava.

- I'm not particularly.

- Hmm, why did you order?

- My husband loved them. I remember even at the wedding stuffed me with them. It was kind of weird at the time. He was sure that what he liked, his young wife should have liked. Although during our life together, he still managed to persuade me to pancakes. And my Vovka does not eat them.

- What is it like for you, Vovochka?

- Big already, married, but also with oddities. For some reason, he does not like everything that I buy for him. Have I become so old-fashioned, Klava?

Claudia smiled back.

- He asks: Mommy, do you like it? If I answer yes, he offers me to wear it myself.

Hope shook her head slightly, smiling.

“Looks like our new table-mates are coming,” Claudia remarked.

Hope instantly turned her gaze to them.

A young man of about thirty, of medium height, with straight hair and an elongated face, in denim trousers and a jacket, accompanied an elderly mother of about sixty.

“And he’s not at all bad-looking,” Claudia burst out in an undertone.

- Hello, - the first lady greeted, coming up to the table and pushing back her chair, - allow me?

“Hello,” the son said dryly.

The first day of dating was gloomy. Each pair was limited to talking among themselves.

But little by little, Alexei, as the young man introduced himself, and his mother, Pelageya Andreevna, found a common language with their new acquaintances, and at the table a mutually interesting and cheerful conversation sometimes began.

Pelagia set the tone, turning over the cheerful pages of her past. The admiration of the listeners was not always held equally firmly.

- Well, you give, Pelageya Andreevna? - Nadezhda rolled every now and then.

“Do you remember, Klava, we were worried, we thought it was bad luck,” Nadezhda turned to her friend.

Perhaps, of all four, Alexei experienced the greatest inconvenience, whose understanding was inaccessible to many details in the conversation of women. In addition, he had heard the stories of his mother more than once. But he could not fail to notice that in the new arrangement their originality doubled. Perhaps she overdid something.

Grateful listeners did not remain gu. Officially declaring Alexei their man, they shared with Pelageya the secrets of life at the resort. They learned from Pelageya to regulate their failures and ups in the emerging resort, as they called, novels.

There were many more meetings and interesting conversations for women up to the minutes of parting with each other, which, of course, did not go without kisses.

Klavdia Petrovna kissed Alyosha good-naturedly and friendly, like a son.

- Farewell, Alyosha, happy to you! Listen to your mother, you have a nice one. In short, all the best, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna lavished wishes, - well, I don’t kiss men at all, don’t be offended.

It so happened that Pelageya Andreevna and Alexei left earlier, although they arrived later than Nadezhda Nikolaevna and Klavdia Petrovna.

In life, the laws of information stacks often operate, when the last one to leave is the first to leave. Well, if it happens only in good aspects.

Now Klavdia Petrovna had to cut short her vacation and return home earlier than Nadezhda Nikolaevna, despite the fact that she arrived later. This decision forced her to accept a recent telephone conversation with her daughter, and she was convinced that her mother's heart would not make a mistake.

“You need to look after Alenka,” Klavdia Petrovna explained, “there is one guy driving up to her, but I don’t like him so much.

“The young people will sort it out themselves, Klava, don’t interfere,” Nadezhda Nikolaevna tried to restrain her.

- Yes, how! We all think in our youth that we are well versed in all life issues and do not need help, even parental help, at least advice, however ...

"Yes," Nadezhda Nikolaevna confirmed, "if youth only knew, if old age could..."

“All the peasants are bastards, they must be crushed like bedbugs,” Klavdia Petrovna cried out with tears coming to her eyes, twisted her thumb and ran her fingernail along the table as if she had already had a chance to fulfill the promise.

- Klava, what are you? - Nadezhda Nikolaevna, stunned, barely articulated.

- They have only one thing on their minds! - Claudia Petrovna burst into tears to her friend “in a shirt”.

- Well, well, well, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna patted her comfortingly on the shoulder. - Don't worry, Alena will be fine!

"I'm not talking about that now," muttered Klavdia Petrovna.

Nadezhda Nikolaevna hesitated, looked inquiringly at her friend.

- I'm sorry, Nadia, you were right, but I'm a fool for not listening to you.

Nadezhda Nikolaevna's surprise grew with every word her friend said.

- It's just that the whole life has passed without great love. And she wants it so much! It is so painful and scary that you will die and not have time to experience it, at least for a short time, at least a little. You dangle tirelessly through life, you dangle, and all you think about is to meet her, even if you burn in her. And for this, Lord, forgive me, it is not a pity to give up anything - neither honor, nor well-being, nor even life.

Claudia Petrovna burst into tears already to the fullest.

Nadezhda Nikolaevna could hardly restrain her impulse. She felt the force of her heart beating, and she was afraid that it was about to jump out of her chest.

- To hell with honor, life, health and everything in the world, - Klavdia Petrovna sobbed, - love, real great love, where are you, where, respond! Lord, help me find her and don't kill her before that.

- All right, Klava, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna consoled her, - you are looking for something that does not exist in the world.

Klavdia Petrovna was suddenly silent.

“Are you serious?” she asked through her tears.

Nadezhda Nikolaevna nodded her head in the affirmative.

- Yes, but how can you live without it, Nadyusha?

- How we live, - explained Nadezhda Nikolaevna.

Passions slowly subsided.

- Well, okay, what else happened to you there? - asked Nadezhda Nikolaevna.

Klavdia Petrovna drooped silently.

- It's your handsome offended you?

There was a slight nod of approval.

- Don't tell me! .. Did you have something? - Nadezhda Nikolaevna threw up her hands.

The movement of the head was repeated after a pause.

- What? - Nadezhda Nikolaevna was indignant. - Are you crazy? When? We were together most of the time, weren't we?

How much time does it take...

- Wait for it! I'll arrange for him, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna threw in anger, trying to fly to the offender.

“Wait, Nadia, it’s not about him,” now I had to calm her down.

- That is, how is it?

- I myself, the first ... and do not regret it. Even now.

"Then what the hell...

- That is, it was not drawn to him, but to that love, which, it seemed, I finally met.

- Where is he now, I wonder?

- Gone!

- So how did you leave?

- That's it, took it and left! Unexpectedly, secretly, without saying goodbye.

- Yes, but he arrived much later than us. Like so?

Klavdia Petrovna bowed her head in agreement.

“Meanwhile, he promised that he would spend it, that we would exchange addresses, that we would correspond, that he would invite me to his place and that he was even thinking about how to connect his life with me. He also pretended to be divorced.

“Bastard!” concluded Nadezhda Nikolaevna.

Friends for a long time discussed the tricks of a familiar handsome man.

A few days later, Klavdia Petrovna was given a luxurious farewell. Only they did not come from the one from whom she dreamed. A farewell feast was arranged by Nadezhda Nikolaevna and Maria Mikhailovna with her maiden retinue.

- All the same

I managed to snatch from life moments of happiness that may not be repeated, - Claudia Petrovna consoled herself in her soul, and an hour later she was waving goodbye to her friends from behind the large window of a departing comfortable bus.

And a few days later, Maria Mikhailovna promised to arrange the same for Nadezhda Nikolaevna, but she completely refused immodest wires, confining herself to warm words of gratitude to the hostess of the dining room.

- Hello, Vovochka, how are you, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna asked loudly on the phone.

The conversation was arranged by custom communication from the administrator's office.

- Nothing, ma, how are you?

- All right, I'm leaving in a few hours, I'll be there by noon. Do you hear?

- I hear, mom, I hear, we will meet you.

At the airport, check-in took place for the flight on the announced flight.

- Citizen, are you Nadezhda Nikolaevna? - a young man in the form of an airport employee scattered.

“Yes, yes,” Nadezhda Nikolaevna drawled in surprise.

- Please come with us for inspection.

Two employees escorted her to a separate room. They seated me in a comfortable chair, in front of a wide table with a polished surface, left me alone, asking me to wait a minute.

“Hello, Nadezhda Nikolaevna,” she suddenly heard a familiar voice from behind her.

“Hello,” she replied, got up and turned around. “Vyacheslav?” she dropped in surprise. - What are you doing here?

- The same as you.

- What does all of this mean?

- Nothing, please, sit down and listen to me.

- No, listen to me! Either you let me out of here at once, or I'll call the police.

“You don’t have to call her, because I am the police,” Vyacheslav laughed and presented his certificate.

- Well, okay, what do you want?

- Nadezhda Nikolaevna, can I see you? It will be easier!

“The power is in your hands,” the woman humbly looked down.

- Nadia, believe me, I did not think to detain you. It's just that I work here, I happened to see you and...

Vyacheslav hesitated.

- Well, bolder, bolder, why are you embarrassed? Don't forget where you work!

- Okay, I'll be direct and frank.

- Excuse me.

I'm so embarrassed to talk about this, but...

- Come on, otherwise my plane will fly away.

- He won't fly away without you, I took care of that.

- What? This is getting interesting. Lord, what an adventure this is.

- All right, so be it. I think you know about the affair of your friend Claudia Petrovna and...

- Your Genka, - Nadezhda Nikolaevna did not let him finish.

- Gennady Alekseevich, - Vyacheslav specified.

- Well...

- You know, at first everything turned out so great for them! I even envied them in a good way.

- What are you talking about? - Nadezhda Nikolaevna threw ironically.

- Yes, imagine!

- Well, what happened next? - Nadezhda Nikolaevna took on the role of interrogator.