

«Stuck in haven»

Film script

Author - Sergey Boev
E-mail: sb21@list.ru
Phone: 8-908-786-29-99

1. EXT. SUBURBAN AREA OF A SMALL TOWN - MORNING.

The sun in the slightly clouded sky illuminates private houses, backyards, and waking up from winter trees. The April day promises to be warm. Some lonely gardeners venture into their backyards with gardening tools. Next to some houses, there are no gardens, only small yards with leisure areas. The action takes place in one of these small houses.

2. INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - MORNING.

A heavily drowsy and tousled ROMAN (22 years old) - an ordinary-looking guy with a burn scar on his face - is getting ready for work. He enters the kitchen-living room, where OLEG (23), writing something in a notebook, and the beautiful DASHA (25), preparing breakfast, are present.

OLEG

(Ironically)

What creature crawled out? Didn't sleep well?

ROMAN

Very well. But not enough.

(Looks in the mirror,
adjusts his hair)

Aren't you off today?

OLEG

Day off.

ROMAN

What are you up to?

OLEG

Writing a stand-up.

ROMAN

From a policeman to a comedian? Not bad.

OLEG

Yeah, we're going to Dasha's friends. It'll be like a stand-up party...

ROMAN

And what will you joke about?

OLEG

Coming up with stuff about the service.

ROMAN

For those who don't laugh, there'll be a search tomorrow. We'll find your sense of humor.

OLEG

Not funny.

ROMAN

Well, the topic isn't particularly funny.

OLEG

What else should I talk about? Orphanage?

ROMAN

We had funny moments in the orphanage too...

OLEG

I remember, but I don't want to talk about it. So, it's either about the service or mundane stuff like

(Makes a face)

my girlfriend is such a mess, unbelievably messy.

ROMAN

Can't you come up with something else?

OLEG

I'll think of something during the day.

DASHA

(Placing breakfast plates for Oleg and Roman on the table)

Tell them how your girlfriend cooks for everyone. And how she works like Cinderella in general.

OLEG

Oh, is this an attack?

DASHA
Just kidding, relax. Come up with whatever you want.

OLEG
(Playfully)
Come here, my joker.

Dasha approaches, and Oleg kisses her.

ROMAN
Hey, my kitchen is not meant for this.

OLEG
No worries, Roman, we'll find you a girlfriend too.

Roman silently sighs, shifts his attention to the food on the plate, and starts eating. Dasha moves away from Oleg, takes care of tasks in the kitchen. Oleg tries to write something but crosses it out a second later. He thinks.

DASHA
Don't stress about it. Just say:
"Guys, no jokes, I'm a cop."

OLEG
I'll say: "Yeah, guys, the cop has a bad sense of humor. I'll hand the floor to my girlfriend; she'll make you laugh like crazy..."

Dasha, jokingly, shows Oleg the middle finger.

OLEG
(With feigned seriousness)
Arrest will be tough, with the use of force. And possibly, special means.

After breakfast, Roman stands up from the table, doesn't wash the plate, and doesn't even put it in the sink.

ROMAN

Alright, leaving you two, won't be a witness.

OLEG

Good luck. Extinguish at least 10 fires out there.

ROMAN

(Unhappy)

Yeah, and you arrest a hundred criminals tomorrow.

OLEG

(Jokingly)

Oh, I'm just kidding. Have a peaceful day.

ROMAN

(Ironically)

Poor listeners of your stand-up.

Roman leaves. Dasha's playful mood turns irritated.

DASHA

Oleg, I understand everything, but this is just rudeness. I'm cooking, keeping things in order... Can't he at least wash the plate?

Dasha takes Roman's dirty plate, carries it to the sink, and washes it.

OLEG

(Sadly)

Sweetheart, we almost live in his house for free; we have to do something for him. Let's not argue again... Let's take it as it is.

DASHA

(Unhappily washing dishes)

In the orphanage, did he also spit on others' efforts?

OLEG

I don't think so. Well, don't be upset, please. You know, Roman is a

good guy. Maybe find him a girlfriend instead.

DASHA

(Smiling sarcastically)
And here do everything for him...

3. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Firefighters' leisure time. Roman plays table tennis and excels at it.

ROMAN

(Defeating another opponent, confidently)
Next!

VICTOR (30)

Yeah, you beat everyone.

ROMAN

Everyone?
(Excitedly)
Yahoo!

Colleagues jokingly mimic fanfare, congratulate Roman, someone gives him a potted plant as a bouquet.

ARTEM (25)

(Taking a photo of Roman with his phone)
Hooray to the champion! Roman, say hi to your mom.

A smile fades from Roman's face, he nods into the camera, waves warmly.

VASILY (35)

And now the champion leaves.

ROMAN

For a well-deserved rest?

VASILY

(Jokingly)
For a well-deserved... I'd tell you... Let others play.

Roman, satisfied with himself, leaves.

NIKOLAI

(To Artem)

What are you talking about, saying
hi to his mom?

ARTEM

What's wrong?

NIKOLAI

He doesn't have a mom, an orphan,
from the orphanage.

ARTEM

Oh no... I didn't know. I don't
know anything about him except that
he loves tennis.

NIKOLAI

That's it, all alone.

ARTEM

Why is that?

VASILY

I heard his parents died in an
accident when he was four.

ARTEM

Poor guy.

4. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

A fire alarm sounds, firefighters rush to the exit.

ROMAN

(To someone hesitating)

Faster. Faster, people are dying!

5. EXT. STREET NEAR A LARGE WAREHOUSE - DAY.

A fire truck arrives, firefighters quickly jump out, unravel
hoses. Roman, the most motivated, acts very fast, climbs to the
second floor of the burning building, kicks the door open.

VASILY

Roman, don't go alone, wait!

Roman doesn't listen, enters the burning room.

VASILY

(To the other
firefighters)
Faster!

6. EXT. STREET NEAR A LARGE WAREHOUSE - EVENING.

Firefighters finish extinguishing the last smoldering embers. The building looks seriously charred but not destroyed. Dirty and tired, firefighters walk towards the truck with a sense of fulfilled duty.

ARTEM
(To Vasily)
Well, Roman is a beast, for sure,
focused.

VASILY
(Quietly)
Such ones, unfortunately, burn out.
(Pause)
Or burn, God forbid.

7. INT. FIRE CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY.

The Chief - IVAN SERGEEVICH (45) and Roman are alone in the office. Ivan Sergeevich maintains a friendly demeanor towards Roman, while Roman remains focused, maintaining a sense of subordination.

IVAN SERGEEVICH
The financial bonus is just a small
part of how grateful everyone is to
you.

ROMAN
Thank you, Ivan Sergeevich. It's
not about gratitude for me... I
just want to help. Plus, I have my
own scores to settle with fires,
well, you know...

IVAN SERGEEVICH
(Nodding approvingly)
Everyone should work like you.
Rescued so many people. By the way,
I was thinking, why don't you meet
with the kids, tell them about your
profession.

ROMAN
(Surprised)

With kids?

IVAN SERGEEVICH

Yes, there are events in schools.
Career guidance for graduates. I
was thinking of sending you.

ROMAN

(Thoughtful)

No, Ivan Sergeevich, it won't work.
I love kids, but I can't handle
high schoolers, I'm afraid. And my
appearance...

(Roman gestures towards
his scar)

IVAN SERGEEVICH

But you didn't get that on duty.

ROMAN

Still, a disfigured firefighter,
what kind of promotion is that?

Ivan Sergeevich sighs sadly but doesn't argue.

8. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Firefighters are taking a break, some playing cards, others
drinking tea, watching videos on their phones.

NIKOLAI

What was it, Roman? Why were you
called?

ROMAN

Just career guidance at schools.
Ivan Sergeich wanted to make some
anti-profession publicity -
showcase me.

Roman grimaces bitterly; colleagues look at him sympathetically.

ARTEM

Come on, Roman, it's not that
bad...

VASILY

(Changing the subject,
cheerfully)

What will you spend the bonus on?

ROMAN
(Shrugging)
I'll go on a round-the-world trip
with my wife.

Roman smiles, and his colleagues respond with laughter to his joke.

9. INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING.

A festive dinner. Oleg twirls a wine bottle in his hands, reading the label. Also in the room are his fiancée Dasha and Roman.

OLEG
(Reading the information
on the label)
Expensive?

ROMAN
Well, relatively.

OLEG
(Sarcastically)
Thanks for the detailed answer.

ROMAN
How else should I answer? If I
drink it myself, it's expensive; if
I treat dear people, then - no.

OLEG
Truly dear ones appreciate you even
without treats.

ROMAN
Speaking of which, if someone isn't
happy with me wearing worn-out
socks, I won't go to them with new
ones on my feet.

OLEG
Exactly.
(Raises his glass)
Come on, Roman.

DASHA
(To Roman)
For your bonus.

OLEG
(Sarcastically)
Ha, for the bonus.
(To Roman)
For your excellent service, for
saving people.

They clink glasses and drink. Dasha takes a small sip, while Roman and Oleg finish their drinks.

DASHA
Damn, you won't even taste it.

ROMAN
(Shrugging)
Habit.

OLEG
I caught myself thinking that I'm not familiar with good alcohol at all. When it was interesting, there was no money, and now the priorities are different. I don't see the point in splurging on expensive alcohol.

ROMAN
Don't worry, when you become a cool investigator, you'll drink the expensive stuff. You won't even have to buy it.

Oleg and Dasha laugh.

ROMAN
And where's ours... Darn, forgot.

Roman gets up, leaves the room. Dasha stops smiling, turns to Oleg.

DASHA
You didn't tell him?

OLEG
No, it's his celebration today; I didn't want to.

Roman returns with snacks.

OLEG
(Making a casual
appearance again)
Well, how about another one?

ROMAN
Let's go.

10. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Firefighters are taking a break; some are engrossed in their phones, while others play table tennis. Roman is once again winning against everyone.

ROMAN
(Scoring the winning
point)
Next!

ARTEM
Roman, do you find this interesting
at all?

ROMAN
Yeah, it's okay.

VASILY
(To Roman)
Satisfied with the level of
competition?

ROMAN
(With a smile)
I'm satisfied that you extinguish
fires better than you play.

The sound of an alarm siren interrupts their leisure.

11. INT. BURNING RESIDENTIAL HOUSE - DAY.

Firefighters bravely battle the flames. Roman hears a child crying and follows the sound. At some point, the fire and smoke become overwhelming. Artem taps Roman on the shoulder, trying to lead him away from the dangerous area.

ROMAN
(Shrugging off his hand)
There's a child in there!

Artem hesitates, clearly afraid, and stays in place. Roman moves towards the thick smoke.

12. EXT. STREET NEAR THE BURNING RESIDENTIAL HOUSE - DAY.

Exhausted firefighters exit the house.

OLD FIREFIGHTER (50)

It's about to collapse. Everyone's out?

VASILY

No sign of Roman Belsky.

Firefighters use foam to extinguish the building, which begins to crumble.

VASILY

(Anxiously shouting)

Roman!

Firefighters watch the building in alarm. Finally, Roman emerges carrying a small BOY (5) in his arms. The child wears a gas mask, and Roman, covered in soot, coughs heavily. He removes the gas mask from the child.

BOY

(Crying, pointing at the house)

My mom is in there.

Sadness appears on the faces of the firefighters, but they refrain from entering the building. Roman, still coughing, looks at the crying child, turns towards the burning building, and tries to go back in. His colleagues attempt to stop him; someone grabs his arm, but Roman breaks free, puts on the gas mask, and enters the building. Smoke immediately obscures Roman as he steps inside. After a moment, Vasily follows Roman, but his colleagues restrain him.

OLD FIREFIGHTER

(Strictly)

You want to die too?

ARTEM

Leave it, Vasily. It's his choice.
You have a family...

Vasily is torn with anguish, but he reluctantly agrees. Firefighters continue to extinguish the building with foam.

Those not engaged in firefighting nervously watch the gradually collapsing structure. Vasily is the most agitated, literally unable to find his place.

VASILY
(Quietly)
I must...

OLD FIREFIGHTER
No!

VASILY
(Quietly)
Come on, Roman, come out.

A large part of the building collapses.

ARTEM
Rest in peace, Roman.

Roman exits the building without the gas mask, dragging something behind him. Firefighters joyfully greet him.

SENIOR FIREFIGHTER
(Strictly)
Where's your gas mask?

ROMAN
To hear better, took it off.

SENIOR FIREFIGHTER
You could've inhaled smoke.

ROMAN
I could. But at least...

Roman glances around and doesn't finish the sentence, realizing he brought out not a person but some sort of sack. He looks frightened, slowly turns to the child, tragically looks at him. The boy cries loudly. Roman takes a gas mask from one of his colleagues, wanting to go back inside, but at that moment, the house completely collapses.

13. INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Roman sits at a set table, but he appears completely despondent. Also present are Oleg and Dasha, both looking somber. Dasha washes dishes and cleans the stove. Oleg sits at the table next to Roman.

OLEG

You've already done more than you could, don't blame yourself.

ROMAN

(Staring into space)

I could have saved her. I heard her. I deliberately took off the gas mask to follow her voice. But I grabbed this damn sack.

(After a pause)

Does the boy have anyone left?

OLEG

(After a pause, sadly)

No one.

Dasha interrupts her task, turns to Oleg and Roman, silently sharing their sadness.

ROMAN

(Sadly)

Another orphan.

OLEG

Good people also grow up in orphanages.

(Pats Roman on the shoulder)

Roman continues to stare into space. Dasha looks at Oleg seriously, he shakes his head in disagreement. Roman doesn't see this silent exchange between friends; he continues to sit with an absent look.

14. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Firefighters take a break. Roman plays table tennis, but this time poorly, frequently hitting the net. The firehouse is unusually quiet, allowing every ping and pong to be distinctly heard. Roman makes another unsuccessful hit.

ARTEM

(Surprised)

11:2, game over.

Roman seems oblivious, picks up the ball, and prepares to serve again. None of his colleagues intervene. The opponent easily deflects the ball, but Roman hits the net again. He then serves the ball out. Firefighters watch silently, exchanging

sympathetic glances. Fire Chief Ivan Sergeyevich enters, glances at Vasily with a questioning look. Vasily sadly purses his lips and shakes his head.

IVAN SERGEYEVICH
Roman, could you pause for a moment?

Perplexed, Roman turns to the chief.

IVAN SERGEYEVICH
Roman, I wanted to thank you for your heroic actions during the fire and saving the child's life. You're a great guy, Roman, an exemplary firefighter. It's been decided to award you a bonus and grant you an unscheduled leave. Rest is essential for everyone, especially for heroes. Thank you for your commendable service.

All firefighters applaud Roman. However, he doesn't look triumphant; he stands with a lost expression. Ivan Sergeyevich, glancing at Roman, exits.

NIKOLAI
(After an awkward pause)
Roman, what will you spend the bonus on?

ROMAN
I wanted to help that boy, but he doesn't understand the value of money. And with no family left, he'll end up in an orphanage.

ARTEM
(Concurring)
Yes, the state will take care of it.

ROMAN
(Sadly joking)
Guess I'll have to go on a round-the-world trip with my wife.

Colleagues share a bitter smile.

15. INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - DAY.

Roman plays table tennis on his laptop. Oleg and Dasha busy themselves, adding finishing touches to the house.

OLEG

(Approaching Roman)

Roman. Hey, Roman!

Roman doesn't react until Oleg taps his shoulder. Only then does Roman tear his attention away from the game.

OLEG

Listen, I invited a lot of people today, including Dasha's friends. I hope you won't get stuck in the game tonight?

ROMAN

I can't get that kid out of my head. Trying to distract myself somehow.

OLEG

I get it. But you can't help him anymore. You need to think about yourself too.

Roman sighs heavily.

OLEG

Listen, Dasha showed me her friends, amazing girls. If I were in your shoes, I wouldn't waste time...

(After a pause)

Damn, I'd hit it off with each of them.

ROMAN

Planning to be a ladies' man until old age?

OLEG

No, I'm already moored.

(Cheerfully)

Sometimes I envy you...

ROMAN

What's there to envy...

(After a pause)

I couldn't care less about these parties, hookups, girls. All I need is one good woman.

(Dreamily)

Kind, calm, caring. Someone for a lifetime.

Oleg, contemplating, nods approvingly.

OLEG

We missed out on a lot in life. I, for instance, still don't know about some family matters. Well, when the time comes, we'll figure it out.

ROMAN

I hope so.

16. INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Party in full swing. The house is filled with lively young people. Roman sits at a table with drinks and light snacks. Also seated at the table are three guys and two girls, drinking and chatting.

FIRST GUEST (30)

And then I just wait for the right moment and sell.

The story garners general approval.

FIRST GUEST

So, what do you do?

SECOND GUEST (27)

I'm trying to make movies.

FIRST GUEST

Are you a director?

SECOND GUEST'S GIRLFRIEND (25)

(Laughing)

Yes! According to his contacts.

SECOND GUEST

(Smiling)

Don't start...

SECOND GUEST'S GIRLFRIEND

Come on, tell us!

SECOND GUEST

Well, I'm studying to be a director, trying to write scripts, shoot. I don't have any films yet. We were leisurely checking through an app how people have me saved in their phones. Five different people have me listed as Denis Director.

Guests laugh.

SECOND GUEST

So, I'm already a director without even making a single movie.

Roman shows little interest in this conversation; all his attention is on a beautiful, cute girl standing a bit away, chatting with Dasha. Oleg, already slightly tipsy, approaches the table and places a music speaker playing tunes.

OLEG

(Approaching Roman,
cheerfully)

Well, how's our hero doing?

ROMAN

Just chilling, nothing special.

OLEG

Come on, I'll introduce you to someone...

Roman stands up, and Oleg leads him towards Dasha and the attractive girl that caught Roman's eye...

17. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - EVENING.

The same house where Roman lived before, now cozier and tidier, with a clear feminine touch. Roman walks around the room, looking a bit more mature. The scar on Roman's face is less noticeable, clearly treated with something. In Roman's hands is a box from a delivery service.

ROMAN

Sweetheart, we've got a delivery.
Did you order something?

Roman places the box on the table. The WIFE (25) - the beautiful girl from the party, approaches and kisses him.

WIFE

Yes.

ROMAN

And what's in there?

WIFE

Where?

ROMAN

Well, in the box they delivered.

WIFE

(Playfully)

Open it and see.

ROMAN

A surprise, hmm... I love surprises.

WIFE

Do you love surprises?

ROMAN

I love surprises and you.

The wife hands the box to Roman. He begins to unwrap it but stops.

ROMAN

Wait, should we call Maxim? He might find it interesting too.

MAXIM (4) rushes into the room - a little boy somewhat resembling the child Roman saved from the fire.

ROMAN

(To Maxim)

Mom made me a gift. Let's look at it together.

Roman unwraps the package, glancing at his wife, who smiles mischievously.

ROMAN

I hope it's not an 18+ gift? Max
won't have to explain things ahead
of time?

The wife rolls her eyes and smiles mysteriously. Roman opens the
box and pulls out table tennis paddles.

ROMAN
Paddles, brand new, wow! And
something else...

Roman retrieves a piece of paper from the bottom of the box.

ROMAN
(Reading)
A Ping pong table. That's amazing!

WIFE
You love ping pong so much, but
there's no table at home. Now you
can polish your skills at home. And
teach us in the process.

ROMAN
I'll definitely teach you! (Looking
at his son) We'll raise a champion!
(To his son)
Want to play ping-pong?

MAXIM
Yes!

Roman lifts his son and twirls him around. The happy wife
laughs.

18. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - MORNING.

Roman is having breakfast with rice and sausages. His wife and
son are also present, creating a family idyll. Roman shares
funny stories, and his wife listens with a smile.

ROMAN
Our guys really wanted a gaming
console, but they didn't buy it for
us in the orphanage. So, the boys
figured out that there's a cool
console in a bar, left there
overnight. And they came up with
this plan: at night, they climbed
out of the window, got some tool

somewhere, wrapped their faces in scarves, and went to rob that bar. They cut off the lock, and suddenly, a dog approaches them. Not just any dog but a familiar one from around the orphanage; we used to feed her with bones. Anyway, the dog recognizes our guys, wags her tail, and stands on her hind legs, distracting them. They hesitated to kick the dog, and she started playing around and barking. Other dogs gathered hearing the barking... Long story short, the guys got scared and ran back to the orphanage, didn't steal the console. So, our dog, Sharik, prevented a robbery. And the guys are normal now, by the way, with families, working, none of them turned into a criminal.

WIFE

(Laughing)

Thanks to Sharik.

ROMAN

It seems so. Do you have any stories like that?

WIFE

No.

ROMAN

(Satisfied)

You're such a good girl.

WIFE

(Playfully)

Yes, I am.

ROMAN

Listen, I'm so happy, finally. I envy myself. I have everything I dreamed of, especially you and Max.

WIFE

Nice to hear.

ROMAN

I'm not joking. Happiness is in little things.

(Enthusiastically)

Breakfast with loved ones, tasty rice, sunshine through the window, a passerby in a funny hat, a job I love...

(Looks at the clock)

Oh, my beloved job, and I'm running late.

Roman goes to his wife and son. He leans down to his son, kisses him on the forehead, and the little one hugs his father.

ROMAN

Oh, how can I leave you guys...

19. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Roman is playing table tennis with colleagues. Once again, he displays skill and finesse in handling the ball and paddle, easily defeating his friends-opponents. His friends don't take offense; they acknowledge Roman's mastery with smiles, gracefully accepting their defeats. The chief of the fire brigade watches Roman's game, giving him a thumbs up. Roman remains humble, graciously accepting the compliments from his colleagues.

20. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - DAY.

The family celebrates Maxim's fourth birthday. Roman, his wife, and Maxim wear festive party hats, and there's no one else in the house. They bring Maxim to a cake with a number 4 candle. Maxim blows out the candle, and his wife captures the moment on her phone. Everyone rejoices.

ROMAN

(To Maxim)

You're such a big boy now. I wonder if you'll remember this day.

(To his wife)

Do you remember your fourth birthday?

WIFE

(Rolling her eyes, trying to recall)

Hmm, not really.

ROMAN

So you don't remember either. I do remember my fifth birthday, though. It was the first one in the orphanage. But at four, it must have still been with my parents. I can't recall if we celebrated or not. Just that it was warm, peaceful, everyone loved each other.

WIFE

Which parent are you most like?

ROMAN

(Reflectively)

I can't remember my parents' faces. All the photos were destroyed in that fire at the orphanage. My grandmother, she couldn't take care of me after my parents passed away. So, off to the orphanage I went. At least I inherited something from her.

Getting emotional, Roman turns away from his wife and child, trying not to cry in front of them. However, he notices something outside the window, and his mood shifts. He becomes focused.

ROMAN

(To his wife)

Come over, take a look.

WIFE

(Approaching the window)

What's there?

ROMAN

That guy in the cap, I've seen him around here before.

WIFE

And?

ROMAN

Why does he keep hanging around here?

WIFE

Maybe he lives nearby if he's often here.

ROMAN

(Thoughtful)

Maybe.

A STRANGER (30), the man in the cap, glances unexpectedly toward Roman and his wife. Roman startles. The stranger smiles, flashes a victory sign with two fingers. Roman looks puzzled, and his wife doesn't respond to the man's greeting. Both step away from the window.

ROMAN

Do you know him?

WIFE

No, first time seeing him.

ROMAN

Why is he waving at you?

WIFE

At me?

ROMAN

Well, not me. I don't know him.

WIFE

Maybe he just greets everyone.

ROMAN

A neighbor with a touch of madness,
that's what we needed...

The wife shrugs.

21. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

The firefighters are taking a break. Roman is once again skillfully playing table tennis, but there is no smile on his face, only a look of complete concentration. The other firefighters behave calmly, refraining from engaging Roman in conversation. They simply exchange places at the table after each defeat, maintaining a quiet atmosphere.

22. INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Roman is having rice with sausages. Seated at the table, he is half-turned towards the window. His wife approaches.

ROMAN

Did you put him to bed?

WIFE

Yes. Sleeping like an angel.

ROMAN

Yeah, Max is great, no trouble at all.

WIFE

How's work?

ROMAN

All calm, thank God.

Suddenly, Roman becomes alert, seeing something through the window.

ROMAN

(Gesturing for his wife to come closer)

Quick, look here. It's him again.

WIFE

Who?

ROMAN

That psycho.

WIFE

What psycho?

ROMAN

The one I've been noticing here for the past few days. Look. No hat today, but it's him. I recognize him.

The stranger waves at Roman and his wife with a welcoming smile.

ROMAN

(Pensively)

And he recognizes us too.

WIFE

Who is this?

ROMAN

The one who wore the brown cap or hat.

(Getting worked up)
Have you forgotten?

WIFE

Don't get upset, darling. Just eat your dinner.

ROMAN

Wait, don't avoid the conversation. We've been seeing the same guy for a few days now, the one who just waved at us. How can you not recognize him?

WIFE

I won't talk to you if you're going to be so angry.

ROMAN

Of course, I'm angry because I feel like something weird is going on!

WIFE

Let's talk when you calm down.

The wife leaves the room. Roman watches her go, then turns back to the window. There's a look of contemplation and unease on his face.

23. EXT. STREET - EVENING.

Roman and Vasily, tired after work, walk along the street.

ROMAN

How do you understand if your wife loves you?

VASILY

Understanding if your wife loves you can be tricky. Feelings are not always explicit and measurable. Perhaps pay attention to some signs. If your wife shows interest in your life, asks questions, listens attentively, it could be a sign of her love. Also, support, displays of care and attention. If

she tries to make you happy, pamper you, all of that can be considered signs of love. Everyone expresses their feelings differently.

(Pause)

But the best way to find out if your wife loves you is to openly and sincerely discuss these questions with her.

ROMAN

That's right, of course. But what if it's me who's lacking somewhere...

(After a pause)

How do you know if you're a good husband, if you provide enough for your wife's happiness?

VASILY

Evaluating yourself as a husband can be challenging. All people and relationships are individual...

Roman rolls his eyes, tired of the cliché responses from his companion.

24. EXT. BACKYARD AT ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Roman adjusts the net on the table tennis set up in the yard. His wife and son Maxim are right there, enjoying the warm sunny day as a family.

ROMAN

Well, beloved team, shall we give it a try?

His wife takes the racket with a smile. Roman, seemingly relenting, lightly serves the ball. Unexpectedly, his wife hits the ball back with strength and precision.

ROMAN

(Struggling to return the ball, surprised)
Wow, you've got skills!

WIFE

(Laughing)
I can be surprising.

His wife consistently and powerfully returns the balls. Roman puts in a considerable effort, trying to defend against his wife's attacks, looking bewildered.

25. EXT. BACKYARD AT ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Roman sits on a bench, gazing at the sunset. His wife approaches.

WIFE

Our little one is sleeping like an angel.

She sits next to him, embracing Roman. Roman happily reciprocates, holding her close.

ROMAN

I missed you!

WIFE

We spent the whole day together.

ROMAN

I managed to miss you while you were putting Maxim to bed.

His wife laughs, kisses Roman on the lips. Roman responds to her kiss. When their lips part, Roman looks into his wife's eyes and kisses her again.

ROMAN

I feel so good with you.

WIFE

And I with you.

ROMAN

Really?

WIFE

Of course.

ROMAN

Am I a good husband?

WIFE

Yes, you are a wonderful husband and father. Do you doubt that?

ROMAN

I guess I worry unnecessarily; I don't have much experience in relationships. I wasn't truly happy before. So, I'm always waiting for something to go wrong.

WIFE

It's okay, my dear. Enjoy the pleasant moments.

ROMAN

(Tenderly looking at his wife)

I'm learning to be happy with you.

WIFE

You make me happy too.

Roman kisses his wife, then, pulling away, looks at the beautiful sunset.

ROMAN

Today's sunset is especially beautiful. Do you know what it depends on?

WIFE

Sunbeams pass through the atmosphere, collide with water particles, dust, scatter, and create various shades. Unusual-shaped clouds make each sunset unique.

ROMAN

You're my smart one.

(Pause, looking at the sunset again)

Clouds are a kind of obstacles, but they add beauty. I wish it could be both cloudless and beautiful.

WIFE

(Playfully)

Are you in a poetic mood today?

ROMAN

Maybe. I never wrote poems. How about you?

WIFE

Almost all girls try to write poems.

ROMAN

Let me hear.

WIFE

(Reciting poetry)

My eyes, like bright stars at night,
They will always light your way,
And full of love, my heart beats,
Hold me tighter, never go away.

ROMAN

Wow!

(Hugging his wife)

I'll hold you tight, never go away,
and never give you to anyone else.

His wife leans her head against Roman's chest.

ROMAN

(Ironically)

You probably wrote something similar to some other guy a long time ago.

WIFE

(Tenderly)

No. Only to you, my love.

Roman holds his wife even tighter, kisses her on the lips. A scene of family bliss against the backdrop of a beautiful sunset.

26. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - MORNING.

Fresh and satisfied after a shower, Roman exits the bathroom when suddenly he hears the sound of the front door slamming shut.

ROMAN

(Anxiously)

Honey, is that you?

WIFE

(Approaching him)

What's wrong, dear?

ROMAN

Did you hear anything? It sounded like the door slammed.

Without waiting for an answer, Roman decisively heads towards the front door, but there's no one in the hallway. Roman looks out the window and sees a man in a brown cap walking away from their house, turning the corner and disappearing from view. Concerned, Roman approaches his wife, who is playing with their child.

ROMAN

(Thoughtfully)

It's that guy again.

WIFE

Which guy?

ROMAN

The same one, don't play dumb!

WIFE

Don't raise your voice at me.

ROMAN

Do you hear what I'm saying? Someone just left our house! Damn, I should've caught up with him. Check if anything's missing, quick!

WIFE

Nothing's missing.

ROMAN

(Roughly)

I said check, don't rush to answer.

WIFE

Yell at someone else, not at me.

The wife moves the child from her lap to a chair, approaches the side table, and checks a hiding spot.

WIFE

Money's still here.

ROMAN

(Thoughtfully)
I remember locking the front door.
(Glancing at his wife)
How did he get in?

Ignoring Roman's questions, his wife continues playing with their son. Frustrated, Roman approaches her.

ROMAN
He somehow opened the door. You didn't lose your keys, did you?

WIFE
(Calmly)
No.

ROMAN
What a mess.
(Looking at the clock)
And it's time for work. Honey, double-check, make sure everything is in place, lock the door, and if you see anything suspicious, call the police immediately and then call me. I'll try to figure out what happened.

27. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Roman plays table tennis, winning against his colleagues, but there's no joy on his face. Concentration and heavy contemplation occupy his thoughts.

28. EXT. STREET NEAR THE FIRE STATION - EVENING.

Firefighters exit the building, bidding farewell until tomorrow. Roman and Vasily walk together in one direction.

ROMAN
Vasily, how do you know if your wife is deceiving you?

VASILY
Detecting deception can be difficult; each case is unique and involves various factors.

Roman sighs heavily.

VASILY
(Continues)

If your wife suddenly changes her behavior, becomes more closed off, irritable...

The men continue walking side by side, but Roman seems distracted, only half-listening to Vasily's words.

29. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Roman is having rice with sausages for dinner, and his wife sits beside him.

ROMAN

So, there was absolutely nothing suspicious?

WIFE

No.

ROMAN

And nothing is missing?

WIFE

Nothing.

ROMAN

Did you check thoroughly?

WIFE

Yes.

ROMAN

Good.

WIFE

Is something bothering you?

ROMAN

No, just puzzled by this situation. Someone enters another person's house. And the fact that nothing is missing makes it even stranger. Why would he come in the early morning? Or even came in at night and left in the morning...

Wife remains silent, shrugging her shoulders.

ROMAN

Did you hear anything suspicious at night?

WIFE

No, nothing.

ROMAN

It's all very strange.

WIFE

We have a wonderful family, no reason to worry.

Roman eats, and his wife silently watches him.

ROMAN

What did you do during the day?

WIFE

Just played with the little one and took care of household chores.

ROMAN

You know, what I still don't understand. You say you love me, but for some reason, you don't try to pamper me with something delicious, for example. I eat the same thing every day - rice with sausages, sometimes an omelet or dumplings. You spend whole days at home, why can't you cook something decent? What are you busy with all the time?

WIFE

Are you going to scold me?

ROMAN

No, I genuinely don't understand. You express your love for me in words, so why not confirm it with actions?

WIFE

I take care of the child and do household chores.

(Almost in tears)

I don't deserve your reproaches.

Wife leaves the room.

ROMAN

(Watching her leave)

I'm sorry.

30. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Roman is not playing table tennis; he sits contemplatively in a corner. Vasily watches him attentively.

31. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Roman sits in front of the laptop, reading a fairy tale to his son Maxim, who sits quietly and attentively, listening.

ROMAN

The little girl struck a new match against the wall; a bright light illuminated the space, and before the child stood her grandmother, surrounded by radiance—so bright, shining, and at the same time, gentle and affectionate. "Grandma!" the little girl exclaimed. "Take me with you! I know you'll leave as soon as the match goes out, leave like a warm stove, a wonderful roasted goose, and a big, glorious Christmas tree! And she quickly struck the rest of the matches she had in her hands—she so wanted to keep her grandma. And the matches flared up with such a bright flame that it became brighter than daylight. Grandma had never looked so beautiful, so majestic before! She took the little girl in her arms, and they flew together in the glow and brilliance, high up, where there was neither cold, nor hunger, nor fear...

The doorbell rings, Roman interrupts his reading, and a look of excitement appears on his face. Maxim rushes out of the room. Roman slowly walks toward the front door, grabs the handle, and pauses for a moment, as if anticipating who he will see behind the door. Opening it, he finds his chief standing on the doorstep.

ROMAN
Ivan Sergeyevich?

IVAN SERGEYEVICH
Hey, Roman, hope I'm not
interrupting?

ROMAN
(Confused)
No, no, not at all. Please, come
in.

The chief enters the house, glancing around.

IVAN SERGEYEVICH
Just thought I'd check in on you.
How are you doing?

ROMAN
(Uncertain)
Good, thank you. It's just
unexpected; you've never visited
before.

IVAN SERGEYEVICH
I'm not bothering you, am I?

ROMAN
No, not at all. I'll tell my wife
to make us some coffee.
(Calls)
Honey!
(Without a response, to
the chief)
You can't get her when you need
her. Probably busy with the child.

Roman enters the room where his wife is.

ROMAN
My joy, we have a guest - my boss
is here.

WIFE
(Enthusiastically)
How wonderful!

ROMAN

Let's go, I'll introduce you, and think of something to treat him with.

Maxim runs up to Roman.

MAXIM

Dad, how did the fairy tale end?

ROMAN

(Lovingly)

I don't know, Maxie, I'm curious too. We have guests now, but when they leave, I'll finish the story for you. Do you want me to introduce you to the fire chief?

MAXIM

Yes!

ROMAN

Let's all go and meet him.

Roman, his wife, and son enter the room where the chief was sitting, but it's now empty. Roman freezes for a moment, then looks around.

ROMAN

Ivan Sergeyevich?

(Quietly, puzzled)

Where is he?

Roman approaches the toilet.

ROMAN

Ivan Sergeyevich?

There's no answer. Roman clicks the light switch twice and then cautiously opens the toilet door - no one is there. He returns to his wife, who is already sitting on the couch playing with their son.

ROMAN

Can't understand anything. He came to check on me, entered, and left immediately.

WIFE

(Calmly and even
cheerfully)
Checked and left.

ROMAN
But it's strange...

WIFE
Apparently, he values his time a
lot.

ROMAN
(Worried)
Come on, this is nonsense... I said
I'd call you in a moment,
(Pause)
And he left...

WIFE
(Calmly)
Well, he left. You promised Maxim a
story.

Roman stands still, lost in thought, discreetly glancing at his
wife.

32. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Roman and Maxim are drawing together.

ROMAN
Maxim, have you noticed anything
unusual lately?

MAXIM
No.

ROMAN
And how's our mom behaving? Is she
acting the same as always?

MAXIM
Yes.

ROMAN
Hmm... Has anyone, any strangers,
come into our house when I'm not
around?

MAXIM

No.

ROMAN

Okay... Has Mom said anything strange or different?

MAXIM

No.

ROMAN

(Thoughtfully)

That's good.

MAXIM

We have a great family, no need to worry.

Hearing these exact words, Roman looks at his son with a sense of concern.

33. INT. FIRE STATION - DAY.

Firefighters are casually engaged in various activities - playing tennis, using gadgets, or chatting. Roman approaches the tennis table, taking a racket from the defeated player.

VASILY

Roman, what will you spend the bonus on?

ROMAN

(Quietly, calmly, without humor)

I'll go on a round-the-world trip with my wife.

Vasily and other colleagues laugh.

ROMAN

(Flaring with anger)

Why are you laughing? Did I say something funny? Can't I go on a trip with my wife?

Firefighters laugh, not realizing the seriousness of Roman's words.

ROMAN

(Growing angry)

Why the hell are you laughing all
the time?

In frustration, Roman hits the table with the
racket, breaking it into pieces. He throws the
remaining fragment across the table to his
opponent, who barely dodges it. Vasily approaches
Roman.

VASILY

(In a soothing tone)

Roman, people sometimes laugh just
like that.

ROMAN

(Raising his voice)

Why the hell are you laughing all
the time?

In anger, Roman hits the table with the racket, breaking it into
pieces. He throws the remaining fragment across the table to his
opponent, who barely dodges it. Vasily approaches Roman.

VASILY

(In a soothing tone)

Roman, people sometimes laugh just
like that.

ROMAN

(Glaring at Vasily)

And you often go to Ivan Sergeyich,
and today he came to visit him.
What secret discussions are you
having with him?

VASILY

(Pushing Roman away)

Calm down! We discuss work matters
with him.

ROMAN

(Shouting)

He was at my place yesterday. Are
you discussing my family with him?

VASILY

This is nonsense.

ROMAN

(Continuing to shout)
Do you know something about my
wife?

Vasily shoves Roman away.

VASILY
Get your hands off me! I don't care
about her.

Roman hits Vasily in the face, and he falls. Other
firefighters rush to Vasily.

ROMAN
(Shouting hysterically)
Who else wants to say something
about my family?

Colleagues remain silent. Roman turns away from them and towards
the tennis table, overturning it in one swift motion. The
firefighters flinch at the loud crash but are hesitant to
intervene. Roman, sobbing, screams out his frustration.

ROMAN
(Crying out)
Shameful scum!

34. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Wife is playing with their child, while Roman sits
in an armchair lost in thought.

WIFE
(Speaking to Roman)
Sweetie, are you tired from work?

ROMAN
(Secretly hiding his
swollen fist from the
punch)
Yeah, a bit tired.

WIFE
How about watching a movie to
relax? We haven't done that in a
while.

Wife approaches Roman, embracing him gently. Signs of relief
appear on Roman's face. He kisses his wife's hands and holds her
close. Suddenly, a loud noise comes from behind the door. Roman

is startled, pulling away from his wife. Three drunken men burst into the room, and one of them is the STRANGER Roman has seen near their house before. Roman is shocked, momentarily in a stupor.

GUY 1

Hey, buddy, just hanging out.

STRANGER

(Recording the situation
on his phone)

Roman, let's go for a drink, it's
my birthday!

ROMAN

(Recovering, shouting)

Have you lost your minds?! Did
anyone invite you here?

STRANGER

Come on, don't get worked up. We
just dropped by to get along with
you.

In a fit of rage, Roman finds something heavy in the room, turns to the uninvited guests, but notices they are quickly leaving. Roman doesn't pursue them, stops, and turns back to his wife and son.

ROMAN

Are you okay?

WIFE

(Calmly)

Yes, are you?

ROMAN

(Anxiously)

No, I'm not! Some guys barged into
our house, saying they're at home.
What do they want from me?

Roman looks out the window, seeing the men swiftly leaving the house.

ROMAN

(Yells)

I'll beat them next time!

WIFE

Why are you shouting like that?

Roman paces around the room. His wife and son sit there, not too bothered.

ROMAN

We probably should call the police. They broke into our house, even if nothing was stolen. Right? And install a camera, I have one somewhere.

Roman rummages through the room, searching for the webcam.

WIFE

Dear, don't worry so much. Just sit down.

ROMAN

(Nervously)

Listen, your calmness surprises me! Does this happen often here? Am I missing something?

WIFE

(Angrily)

I don't need your insinuations. And don't yell at me!

ROMAN

No, I will yell! Because I don't understand a damn thing happening here! Some people break in, and my wife calmly accepts it. It's very strange to me, don't you think?! And this guy with the phone, didn't you recognize him? We saw him before, he's the same guy in the cap.

WIFE

(Calmly)

Which one?

ROMAN

(Enraged)

Are you mocking me or what?!

WIFE

Don't get angry. We have a wonderful...

ROMAN

(Interrupting, mocking his wife)

A wonderful family, no reasons to worry. And our little angel is sleeping like an angel.

(Yells again)

Stop repeating this bullshit!

WIFE

(Angry)

Don't talk to me like that.

ROMAN

(Kicking a chair, where his wife is sitting)

Shut up!

WIFE

If you keep behaving like this, I'll call 911.

ROMAN

(Surprised and scornful)

Where are you going to call?

Watched too many series, stupid?

Wife, in tears, leaves the room. Maxim is also crying. Seeing his son, Roman pulls himself together, calms down. He gently places his son on his lap, kissing him many times.

ROMAN

Everything is okay, Max, it's all over. Forgive me. Forgive daddy. Everything is fine.

The child stops crying, and Roman takes a tissue from the table to wipe away Maxim's tears.

ROMAN

We'll wipe away the tears and won't get upset anymore.

Roman picks Maxim up and spins him around. The child enjoys it, laughing. After a while, Roman stops and looks at them both in the mirror, holding Maxim at the same height as his face.

ROMAN

(Thoughtfully)

Actually, you don't really look
like me...

Roman holds his son for a long time, scrutinizing their faces in the mirror.

ROMAN

(Slowly)

To be more precise, you don't look
like me at all...

(After a pause,
thoughtfully)

Although, seemingly, we have a
wonderful family, and there's no
reason to worry...

35. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Roman sets up a webcam at the entrance of the house, positioning it to capture those approaching. At some point, he pauses, contemplating briefly. He unscrews the camera from outside and places it inside, now focusing on the corridor.

36. EXT. STREET NEAR ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Waving to his webcam, Roman steps out onto the street. The bright sunlight blinds him, prompting him to shield his eyes with his hand. Slightly dazzled by the sun, Roman descends the steps of his home unsteadily, strolling along the street, admiring the beautiful blooming trees.

37. EXT. CEMETERY - DAY.

Roman walks sorrowfully through the cemetery, approaching the graves of a man and a woman with the same date of death. The modest memorials of his parents lack photographs.

ROMAN

(Sadly)

Mom, Dad, hi.

Roman stands in deep contemplation for a long while.

ROMAN

It's not good without you.
(Pause)

It's always been tough, but now it's especially hard. Something strange is happening, and there's no one to ask for advice. I've probably been disgracing you lately. Yelling at my wife. And at work... I'm sorry. I hope, later, when we meet, you'll forgive me for my foolishness. For all the mistakes.

(Through tears)

Will I recognize you, you think?

Crying, Roman leans over the grave, embracing it with his hands and placing his head on it.

ROMAN

(Sobbing)

Mom. I don't remember your face, but I remember your warmth.

(A bit calmer)

It felt so good. I remember lying curled up like this on your laps.

(Lies down next to the grave)

You used to stroke my hair, and I would fall asleep.

Having stopped crying, Roman continues to lie next to the grave in the same position.

38. EXT. STREET NEAR ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Roman, disheveled and slightly dirty, staggers towards his home.

39. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Roman wanders through the house. His wife comes towards him, calm and friendly, as if nothing happened.

WIFE

How are you, dear?

ROMAN

(A bit embarrassed)

Fine.

WIFE

Tired from work?

ROMAN

A bit. How about you? Everything calm here?

WIFE

Yes.

ROMAN

And no one bothered you?

WIFE

No, everything's good, just another beautiful day.

ROMAN

(Unsure)

I feel really guilty towards you, spoke rudely, yelled. Please forgive me.

WIFE

It's okay, dear. And you forgive me.

ROMAN

(Surprised and suspicious)

For what?

WIFE

(With a smile)

For making you yell.

Roman stands in confusion for a couple of seconds, looking at his wife suspiciously, then laughs. His wife joins in, and they embrace. He presses his head against her shoulder. Happiness and relief reflect on Roman's face.

ROMAN

How's Max doing?

WIFE

Sleeping like an angel.

Roman continues to hug his wife, but tension returns to his face.

ROMAN

(Breaking the embrace)

You lie down too. I'll have dinner
and sit here for a while.

40. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - NIGHT.

Roman plays a video recorded by the webcam in their home. Roman nods approvingly, seeing the good video quality, then fast-forwards the footage. For a long time, nothing interesting, or anything at all, happens on the screen. Neither his wife nor his son appear in the corridor. Not finding anything interesting, Roman relaxes and casually watches the laptop screen. At some point, he tenses, noticing a shadow passing by the corridor window - someone is approaching the house. Roman rewinds the video, slows it down, observes the emerging shadow with concern, and then sees the stranger entering the house again, wearing the same brown cap.

ROMAN
(Pensively)
So you have a key...

The stranger on the video moves out of the camera's view, and Roman watches for another half-minute, but nothing noteworthy happens. He accelerates the video again. Time quickly passes on the screen, but nothing happens; the corridor remains empty. Finally, the same person reappears in the same attire, but without the headwear. He calmly walks through the house, talking on his mobile phone. Roman immediately slows down the video. Spotting the camera, the stranger pauses for a second, looks at it, then winks into the frame and casually continues down the corridor. Roman sits in shock, stunned by what he just witnessed. The stranger is out of frame again; Roman speeds up the video. Seeing a shadow in the corridor, Roman slows down the playback once more. Crossing the corridor, the same stranger again appears in the hallway, calmly opening the door and letting someone in. Another man enters, and Roman tries to get a good look at him, but the man doesn't turn towards the camera. The men at the door talk about something, but the camera doesn't transmit sound. The second stranger turns around, and Roman jerks at the monitor, recognizing Oleg - his childhood friend from the orphanage, with whom he used to live here.

ROMAN
(Surprised)
Oleg? Are you with him?

The men talk about something, Oleg points a finger towards Roman and his wife's bedroom. The stranger shakes his head negatively, then points at the webcam. Oleg looks up, gazes at the camera for a few seconds. Roman, frozen, stares at his childhood

friend. Then the men exit the frame and leave the house. Roman, excited, watches the video, but it only shows an empty corridor. He then accelerates the playback, but the scene remains unchanged until his return home. In complete bewilderment after long contemplation, Roman turns off the video.

41. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Roman and his wife sit at the dining table, with the laptop showing paused video displaying the faces of yesterday's guests - Oleg and the stranger in the cap.

ROMAN

So, you don't know them, didn't see, or hear anything yesterday?

WIFE

(Guiltily)

No.

ROMAN

(Slowly)

My love, I'm trying my best not to get nervous, but the situation is extremely strange. Some guy comes in, opens the door with his key, stays in the house for hours, and you hear nothing?

WIFE

We were playing with Max, and I didn't hear anything.

ROMAN

And when the second one came, this one, Oleg,

(Points with his finger)

they were talking in the hallway. Maybe he even knocked or rang the doorbell. And you absolutely, completely didn't notice anything?

WIFE

(Guiltily)

No.

ROMAN

(With a heavy sigh)

My dear, my beloved, I really want to believe you, but it's just not believable.

WIFE

Sweetheart, I don't want you to be upset. Let's figure out this problem and forget about it as soon as possible.

ROMAN

Alright, check again if anything is missing, and I'll report to the police. I'll also change the locks.

WIFE

Okay, my love, don't worry. We'll overcome everything together. I love you very much.

Roman nods in agreement, then looks thoughtfully into his plate, which contains once again rice. His wife gets up from the table, Roman stirs the same rice in his plate and eyes his wife suspiciously.

42. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Roman contemplatively looks at his mobile phone. The phone screen displays the contact list, with Oleg's contact selected. Roman hesitates, ponders, but eventually presses the call button. Long rings, but there's no answer. Still lost in thought, Roman places the phone in front of him, finishes the last spoonful of rice, and puts the plate in the sink. The sound of an incoming message is heard. Roman immediately returns to the phone, sees a message from Oleg: "Bro, a bit busy. Later." Roman smiles slightly after reading the text, then sighs deeply and immerses himself in memories.

43. FLASHBACK.

INT. ORPHANAGE - NIGHT.

A fire breaks out in the orphanage. There's chaos with flames and smoke everywhere. Children scream and run down the corridor, driven by the approaching tongues of fire. At the end of the corridor is a smoky unknown. Some children decide to run through the smoke, others hesitate. LITTLE OLEG (12) tries to see someone in the smoke.

LITTLE OLEG

(Yells)

Roman! Where's Roman? Did he run
out?

There is no clear answer. Children scream and try to escape the room, some boldly, some timidly, moving through the smoke toward the exit. Oleg turns around and moves in the opposite direction, peering into a smoke-filled room.

LITTLE OLEG
Roman! Belsky! Are you here?

Coughing is heard from the corner of the room. Little Oleg moves toward the sound and finds his friend lying on the floor. LITTLE ROMAN (11) barely conscious lies between the wall and a burning bed but, with his last strength, reaches not towards the exit but towards a nightstand in the corner.

LITTLE OLEG
(Joyfully)
Roman, you're alive! Let's run!

Little Roman continues to reach for the nightstand.

LITTLE OLEG
Can you get up?

Little Roman doesn't respond, stretching for the nightstand handle. At that moment, Little Oleg grabs his friend by the shirt and pulls him towards the window. Little Roman manages to open the nightstand, but he doesn't have time to grab anything from it. Family photographs spill out of the nightstand, showing a beautiful woman with a newborn baby and a man whose face is already indistinguishable by the fire. Coughing from the smoke, the children reach the window. The sound of breaking glass is heard.

LITTLE OLEG
Roman, we need to jump.
(Helping Little Roman
climb onto the
windowsill)
It's high, but we won't die, don't
be afraid.

44. INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY.

A children's burn unit in the hospital. A child lies on the bed with bandages on their face, and Little Oleg sits beside them.

LITTLE OLEG

The firefighters came, but it seemed like they ran out of water or something.

LITTLE ROMAN

Did our things all burn? I had photographs...

LITTLE OLEG

(Sadly)

They burned. Veronika and Yegor Ivanovich also... died. Yegor Ivanovich went in to find Veronika and got suffocated.

LITTLE ROMAN

Like a hero.

LITTLE OLEG

Pasha, Denis, and Vlad are in critical condition...

Little Roman lies silently, motionless, then sobs, obviously crying beneath the bandages.

LITTLE ROMAN

How can firefighters run out of water?

Little Oleg sadly shrugs his shoulders.

LITTLE ROMAN

And you saved me.

LITTLE OLEG

Of course. You're almost like a brother to me.

With these words, Little Oleg places his hand on top of his friend's hand. Little Roman turns his hand to touch palms. The bravely strong handshake of the kids becomes a kind of pledge of loyalty to each other.

End of flashback.

45. INT. ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Roman sits at the table, gazes at his phone display, and with a sigh, puts the mobile into his pocket.

46.EXT. STREET NEAR ROMAN AND WIFE'S HOUSE - DAY.

Roman steps out onto the street, squinting against the bright sunlight. He looks around, doesn't spot anyone, and proceeds forward...

47. INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY.

Roman sits at the table. Across from him is a PSYCHOLOGIST (40), who attentively listens to Roman with a focused expression.

ROMAN

And she seems to say all the right things, at least what I want to hear, that she loves me, that everything will be fine, that we're a wonderful family, and there's nothing to worry about. But it all feels like a facade. I sense she's not telling me something. But this situation, someone entering our home and being there for hours, and she heard nothing... That's pure fantasy. Our house isn't that big to miss the front door sound. And sometimes I feel like my wife has some mental issues. She forgets what we recently talked about, even things that matter to me. Forgets everything. I can't figure out if it's a sign of a mental disorder or if she's playing mind games with me. How can I find out?

PSYCHOLOGIST

Perhaps it would be helpful for both of you to come in together.

ROMAN

I've considered that, but going together would be admitting that we have significant issues. Can we handle this more subtly? Could you come over as an old acquaintance of mine? We could all have dinner together, talk about something casual, and you could observe my wife's behavior. If there's a severe diagnosis, a professional like you would notice, right?

The psychologist is not thrilled with the idea, her facial expression changes, she remains silent.

ROMAN

(Hastily)

Please don't refuse. I understand it's an unusual request, but I won't forget this favor. Understand, my wife and son are everything I have in life. I don't need anything else besides them. If we can solve this problem, I'll be the happiest person. I'm really begging you!

The psychologist looks at Roman sympathetically, then nods in agreement.

48.INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - DAY.

Entering his home, Roman is bewildered, not recognizing it. The cozy atmosphere his wife created is gone. Roman's room looks like when he lived with Oleg - untidy, lacking the beautiful figurines and lamps he saw this morning. All of Wife and Maxim's belongings are gone. In confusion, Roman scans the room and suddenly startles, hearing a male voice.

STRANGER (OFF SCREEN)

Had a good stroll?

Roman turns and sees the man from the video footage, the one he's seen multiple times before. The man is seated in Roman's chair, exuding absolute calmness, leg crossed over the other, boldly staring at Roman.

ROMAN

(Slowly, agitated)

M-My family... Where are they?

STRANGER

(Calmly)

They're no longer here.

ROMAN

(Frightened, slow)

Did you... kill them?

STRANGER

(Thoughtfully)

Yes.

Roman shudders at hearing this. Voices echo in his head - his wife's, Maxim's, his boss's, the laughter of colleagues at the phrase "I'll go on a round-the-world trip with my wife," and the stranger's voice saying, "Roman, join us for a drink." Wife's voice again: "We have a wonderful family, nothing to worry about," against his son's laughter. Overwhelmed, Roman covers his ears, stumbling, trying not to fall, squints his eyes. After 2 seconds of darkness, Roman sees himself violently attacking the stranger with a meat mallet. The stranger's head is bloodied, he lies on the floor futilely shielding himself from the blows. Roman, in desperate despair, continues the assault. The stranger, with his last strength, gets up and runs toward the exit. Roman chases him. Before reaching the door, the stranger falls. Roman catches up and delivers more blows to his head. The stranger ceases to resist. Roman throws the mallet aside and collapses next to the bloody body, sobbing.

ROMAN

(Crying)

Why? For what?

For some time, Roman lies on the floor, sobbing. The doorbell rings. Surprise, confusion, hope on Roman's face. Slowly getting up, he takes a step toward the entrance. But then the sound of a ringtone comes from the pocket of the dead man. Hastily, Roman searches the pocket, finding the stranger's phone with an incoming call from Oleg and the caption "Oleg's Home." Roman pushes the phone aside, cautiously peers out the window, sees Oleg at the front door with a phone to his ear. After some hesitation, Roman picks up the meat mallet from the floor and opens the door.

OLEG

(Surprised)

You?

ROMAN

Surprised? It's supposedly my house.

OLEG

Yeah, I just didn't expect...

Roman stands in a way that hides the lifeless body and the mallet.

ROMAN

Why did you come?

OLEG

To check on you.

ROMAN

Then why are you surprised I opened
the door?

Oleg tries to peer into the house, but Roman blocks his view.
Oleg takes a step back.

ROMAN

What do you want to see in there?

Oleg doesn't answer, but clenches something in his coat pocket.
The dead man's phone on the floor starts ringing. Roman,
momentarily distracted, turns toward it. Oleg takes advantage of
this pause and glances into the hallway, seeing the lifeless
body.

OLEG

(In desperation)

What have you done?

Roman drags him inside, closes the door, presses Oleg against
the wall, holding the mallet.

ROMAN

Are you in this together with him?

OLEG

I don't want harm to come to you,
Roman. I never wanted that.

ROMAN

(Shouting)

Answer me! Are you in this
together?!

OLEG

Brother, listen...

ROMAN

(Angry, trembling voice)

Damn it! How could you?

Roman raises the mallet to strike Oleg but stops at the last
moment. Oleg covers his head with his hands, sliding down the

wall. Roman raises the mallet again but halts with a grimace of suffering.

ROMAN

(In despair, almost
crying)

Damn it! Why? How could you?

Sobbing, Roman bangs the mallet against the door twice and rushes outside.

49. EXT. CITY STREET - DAY.

Roman runs away from home with a bloodied hammer in hand. Oleg chases him from quite a distance. Passersby fearfully recoil or run away from the person with the bloodied hammer. Roman, in despair, cries but continues to run. Oleg doesn't stop either, relentlessly pursuing Roman. The chase continues through busy urban streets, with pedestrians continuing to shy away from the dangerous runner with a hammer. In the distance, the sounds of a police siren can be heard. Roman glances back, seeing the pursuit, and keeps running. He runs along the pedestrian part of the bridge over the river. Oleg continues the chase, and ahead, on the other part of the bridge, armed individuals in uniform and a police car with flashing lights are already waiting for Roman. Realizing he's trapped, Roman stops, breathing heavily, seeing police officers and Oleg approaching from both sides. Gathering his last strength, Roman clenches his fist and climbs onto the railing of the bridge.

OLEG

(Screaming)

Noooo!

Roman jumps from the bridge into the water. In Roman's eyes, there are splashes, immersion into the water, and then darkness.

50. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY.

Roman regains consciousness. He looks just like at the beginning of the story, with the same hairstyle and a noticeable scar from a burn.

NURSE (35)

(Seeing that Roman has
awakened)

Feeling better? Can you hear me?

ROMAN

(Weakly)

Yeah.

The nurse leaves the room, calling someone. A POLICE OFFICER (45) enters with papers in hand, nods friendly to Roman, checks for a reaction, and sits on a chair next to Roman's bed.

POLICE OFFICER
(Showing identification
to Roman)
Captain Goncharov Boris
Sergeyevich, homicide investigator.

ROMAN
(Ironically)
Almost said it's a pleasure.

POLICE OFFICER
Roman Alexandrovich, I understand
you're not feeling well after being
in the water for a long time, but I
need to ask you a few questions.

Roman nods obediently.

POLICE OFFICER
Did you kill Sasha Panov?
Presumably with a kitchen hammer.

ROMAN
He's dead after all?
(After a pause,
vehemently)
Good riddance, he killed my family!

POLICE OFFICER
Who?

ROMAN
(Aggressively)
My wife and four-year-old son! If
you had arrested him in time, they
would be alive now.

POLICE OFFICER
(After a pause)
Did you witness the murder, or why
are you so sure?

ROMAN
He confessed to it himself!

POLICE OFFICER

Did you see the bodies of the victims?

ROMAN

No. He hid them somewhere.

The police officer pauses again, looking intently at Roman.

ROMAN

Don't you believe me?

The police officer looks away from Roman, stands up, walks slowly around the room, stops, looking out the window.

POLICE OFFICER

Have you contacted the relatives of the murdered wife?

ROMAN

No, didn't have time, everything happened too quickly.

POLICE OFFICER

(Seriously)

You need to calm down. My task is to ask you questions. Let's continue. Do you remember the day of your wedding well?

Roman slightly rolls his eyes, trying to remember. Obviously, unable to recall, he grimaces.

ROMAN

I need more rest. Then I'll remember everything.

POLICE OFFICER

I sometimes forget the date of my wedding, but to forget the event itself...

Oleg enters the room, greets Boris Sergeyevich, and approaches Roman's bed, looking at him sadly.

OLEG

What have you done, buddy...

POLICE OFFICER
(Sarcastically to Roman)
Was your buddy at your wedding?

Roman looks at Boris Sergeyevich with hatred. Oleg, understanding Roman's mood, quickly tries to calm him - putting a finger to his lips, signaling to be silent.

OLEG
Boris Sergeyevich, may I?

The police officer mumbles something indistinct, goes to the far part of the room, and looks out the window.

OLEG
Roman, Roman, maybe it's my fault too that I didn't stop that. Who could have thought...

ROMAN
And you were in cahoots with him.
Killed my family together?

OLEG
(Pleadingly)
Oh God, Roman, what family? Your parents died almost 20 years ago...

ROMAN
(Irritated)
And wife and son?

OLEG
You never had a wife or a son.

Roman looks surprised, even slightly smiles in amazement. The police officer shifts his attention from the window to the guys.

OLEG
(Continues)
You invented a family for yourself.

Roman listens attentively in silence.

OLEG
You always liked that game - a simulator of family life. After that fire, when you saved the boy and didn't save his mother, you

fell into depression. Just lay there and stared into space. And I was glad when you snapped out of it and started playing games on your laptop - table tennis and this one about family.

Roman remains silent, showing distrust on his face.

OLEG

Then it turned out that you got so carried away with the game and delved into your fantasies so much that you even started questioning the artificial intelligence: How to understand if you're a good husband, how to find out if your wife is cheating... Then you even made it compose love poems. Rom, I saw that dialogue with the neural network on your laptop.

ROMAN

(Sarcastically)

And the neural network fed me too?

OLEG

The neighbor fed you, Sasha. You killed him. He even said that you were so undemanding and engrossed in the game that there was no need to bother with complicated dishes. He took care of all the household chores.

(After a pause,
sympathetically)

And you thought it was your wife doing everything?

Roman squints and shakes his head, wanting to get rid of this information or wake up from a terrible dream. Oleg takes out a mobile phone, opens some video, and hands the gadget to Roman.

OLEG

Sasha sent me this video.

Roman watches the video on the phone.

51. INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING.

A party celebrating Sasha's (Stranger's) Birthday. Several guys, already a bit drunk, gather together, posing for a photo. Sasha (Stranger) is taking pictures.

SASHA (STRANGER)

(Drunk voice)

Ah, it's a video, guys. Even better.

Friends laugh, wave greetings at the camera.

1ST GUY (25)

Is your neighbor not joining us?

SASHA (STRANGER)

Doubt it.

Sasha (Stranger) lowered the phone but didn't turn off the recording. The image is tilted, but all voices are clearly audible.

2ND GUY (25)

He hasn't come out once all evening. A Buddhist monk, perhaps?

Guys laugh.

SASHA (STRANGER)

No, he's depressed, so I don't bother him.

1ST GUY

Do you even talk to him?

SASHA (STRANGER)

No.

1ST GUY

So maybe his depression has already passed. Let's check on our friend.

2ND GUY

Let's go, of course, what are you waiting for...

The three guys, including Sasha (Stranger), get up from their seats and walk towards Roman. Sasha raises his phone to record everything.

SASHA (STRANGER)
(Drunk voice)
Oh, it's already on.

1ST GUY
What's his name, it is Roman?

The tipsy group barges into Roman's room. In his neglected bachelor pad, Roman sits at the table in front of the laptop. On the laptop screen, a life simulation game is running - a family life simulator. In a beautiful room similar to the one Roman saw in his "family life," a woman and a little child comfortably sit next to a man controlled by Roman. Hearing the noise, Roman turns to the guests, confusion evident on his face.

1ST GUY
Buddy, just chilling?

SASHA (STRANGER)
Roman, let's go have a drink, it's my birthday!

ROMAN
(After regaining a bit of composure, shouts)
Are you out of your mind?! Who invited you in here?

SASHA (STRANGER)
Come on, don't get upset, We just dropped by to get along with you.

Roman, visibly angered, jumps up from his chair, grabbing something.

1ST GUY
Let's get out of here!

The guys quickly turn around and rush out of the room.

2ND GUY
He's sick, your neighbor.

SASHA (STRANGER)
Let's go finish our drinks outside.

The video ends.

52. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY.

Roman, with an expression of despair, holds Oleg's phone in his hands.

OLEG

(Sympathetically)

Convinced?

(Takes back the phone)

ROMAN

Where did it come from? You lived with me.

OLEG

Well, we...

(Surprised)

You really don't remember anything?

53. FLASHBACK.

INT. ROMAN'S HOUSE - EVENING.

A lively party is in full swing. The house is filled with cheerful young people. Roman sits in an armchair, not participating in the guests' conversation, but watching a beautiful girl (his fictional wife) talking to Dasha at the other end of the room.

VOICE OF SOMEONE FROM THE GUESTS

...I'm listed as Denis the Director in the phone contacts of my friends.

(Guests laugh)

So now I'm a director without even shooting a single film.

Cheerful, slightly tipsy Oleg approaches the table, placing a playing music speaker on it.

OLEG

(Approaching Roman, cheerfully)

Well, how's our hero doing?

ROMAN

Nothing much, just relaxing.

OLEG

Come on, I'll introduce you to someone.

Roman gets up, and Oleg leads him towards Dasha and the beautiful girl who caught Roman's eye... But before reaching the girls, Oleg stops near some man.

OLEG
Meet Roman, this is Sasha, also a cool guy.

Roman gives a brief glance to Sasha (the Stranger), shakes his hand.

SASHA (THE STRANGER)
(Politely)
Nice to meet you.

ROMAN
(Automatic)
Uh-huh.

OLEG
Roman, Dasha and I decided to live separately, moving out. Sasha can live with you instead of us, on the same terms, if you don't mind.

Sasha glances at the girl he likes, almost not listening.

OLEG
Is that okay?

ROMAN
Yes.

OLEG
(Relieved)
Great.
(Enthusiastically)
You both are good guys. I'm sure you'll get along. Be friends...

After nodding and muttering something approving, Roman looks back at the beautiful girl. Seeing Dasha moving away from her, he decides to act. As Dasha passes by Roman, she winks playfully. Roman approaches the Girl (his potential wife).

ROMAN
(Gently, a bit uncertain)
Good evening. We, it seems, haven't met. I'm Roman, live here.

GIRL

(Friendly, with a smile)
Nice to meet you. I'm Maria.

ROMAN

(Cheerfully, politely)
You're probably Dasha's friend? Or
who are you here with?

GIRL

Yes, we're colleagues with her. I
rarely attend parties, but Dasha
dragged me here.

ROMAN

And very wrongly, that you rarely
attend. In this house, you can come
every day.

GIRL

Not every day for sure; my husband
wouldn't like that.

ROMAN

(Suddenly looking sad)
You're married... And for how long?

GIRL

Not for long yet, but I hope for a
lifetime.

ROMAN

(After a pause)
I wish you happiness.
(Playfully)
But if something goes wrong, and
someone suddenly turns out to be a
jerk and an unfaithful husband, you
know where you can come...

GIRL

(Laughing)
Alright, I'll keep that in mind.
You're funny.

ROMAN

Of course, keep it in mind. I will
always help you if any.

GIRL

Thank you. We have a wonderful family, no reason to worry...

End of the flashback.

54. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY.

Oleg gently shakes Roman, who was deeply immersed in memories.

OLEG

Roman. Roman, are you here?

ROMAN

(Returning to reality)

I remembered... Seems like I inhaled a lot of smoke back then; my head is working strangely.

OLEG

(Sadly)

If only you had remembered earlier...

ROMAN

And what happened next?

OLEG

Sasha hid the laptop so you couldn't play and returned to normal life.

ROMAN

Why?

OLEG

(Embarrassed)

Well, why... To live. Truly.

ROMAN

And who said I needed that?

OLEG

Did you want to spend the rest of your life there? In the game?

ROMAN

(Phlegmatic)

Why not? I would have been happy there if people hadn't interfered.

OLEG

Roman, that's not real. It's a delusion. Happiness needs to be built in real life.

ROMAN

Really?

OLEG

Of course.

ROMAN

Have you built much happiness here? Do you often see genuinely happy people? It seems to me everyone around is just getting angry and lying. And I deceived myself, and no one is offended.

OLEG

There are not many happy people, Rom. But we need to fight. You could have been helpful to others. Your vacation was over, but you didn't go back to work. You're a good firefighter; you could have saved people instead of living in some virtual happiness.

ROMAN

(Sadly, thoughtfully)

Why do you all care about my happiness? I didn't bother anyone. Maybe I don't want to fight, maybe I don't know how!

(Pause)

They say happiness is in a person's head. Find your own happiness, whatever it may be, and live in it. Then you won't have to bother anyone.

Oleg sadly and helplessly shrugs; he has nothing more to say. Roman lies there, looking somewhere into the distance. Just like back in the hospital many years ago, Oleg tries to place his hand over

Roman's, but this time, Roman withdraws his hand at the last moment. Oleg sighs in disappointment. The police officer is present but not paying attention to the guys, lost in heavy thoughts.

OLEG

They will charge you with murder, Roman. But maybe they'll declare you insane.

POLICE OFFICER

Not certain. Declaring a young firefighter on duty as insane... I don't know.

OLEG

(Looking at the clock)

It's time for me to go.

(Turning to Roman)

Roman, buddy, sorry for everything.

(Voice trembling)

No one thought that...

Oleg falls silent and turns away to hide his tears, quickly leaving the room. Roman lies silently, staring at the ceiling, the sad police officer standing aside, swallowing a lump in his throat.

ROMAN

Captain. Are you here?

POLICE OFFICER

I'm here, Roman.

ROMAN

Can you help me get up?

55. EXT. NEAR THE HOSPITAL - DAY.

Oleg approaches Dasha, who is waiting at the entrance. With her is a child, the boy whom Roman saved in that unfortunate fire. Oleg and Dasha take the little one by the hands, and young family leaves the hospital. Suddenly, Oleg stops, as if feeling someone's gaze. He looks around and gazes up at Roman's window.

56. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY.

Roman watches Oleg's family. He raises his hand in a welcoming gesture but, overwhelmed by emotions, he can't hold back tears.

57. EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL - DAY.

The child, along with his new parents, also looks up towards Roman's window.

58. INT. PRISON CELL - EVENING.

Three inmates sit down at a table, pushing aside their metal cups and taking out playing cards.

1ST INMATE (30)

How about a game of two-on-two?

(Calls out)

Hey, Roman!

2ND INMATE (45)

(Strictly)

No! Leave the sleepwalker alone, or he'll start cutting his veins again. Let him rest.

1ST INMATE (30)

Alright, let him rest.

Roman lies on his bunk, curled up in a fetal position, staring into space. His face reflects absolute tranquility and bliss; he is once again in the world of dreams.

The End.

Author - Sergey Boev

E-mail: sb21@list.ru

Phone: 8-908-786-29-99