

*Mikhail Volokhov*

# KILIMANJARO ON YOUR LIPS

*A dramatic comedy*

## CHARACTERS:

**Dasha** – an actress

**Mitya** – a businessman, former theatre director

**Lyalya** – a charming young girl

**Kilya** – a charming student

*Moscow, the present.*

*The action takes place in Dasha's apartment.*

**Mitya.** Ah, Paris! Ah, Nice, the Pyrenees, the Alps, Strasbourg and Bourget! And the châteaux! Arcachon, the Atlantic, the tallest sand dunes in Europe – the northern Nice. A month flew by in no time. Next year I'll spend my holidays in France, for the whole summer.

**Dasha.** And what about me?

**Mitya.** We'll take you along. I invited you this year, too. It was you that refused.

**Dasha.** You didn't go alone.

**Mitya.** She's a lovely girl. Too lovely, even. But she had nothing against our crazy love in a threesome.

**Dasha.** Since you made money you've become very simple-minded.

**Mitya.** No problem. I love you. Breathe some French oxygen. (*Gives her a perfume bottle.*)

**Dasha.** Chanel No. 5? You can get that here nowadays.

**Mitya.** But this came from Paris. Have I walked in on a tragedy? God Almighty. Such good vibes all around, Dashenka. Not life but a carousel, my sweetie.

**Dasha.** I'm a sweetie, but not yours.

**Mitya.** So who's your new man?

**Dasha.** Jesus Christ with no money.

**Mitya.** A big, pure, uncorrupt love?

**Dasha.** Without your beloved money.

**Mitya.** Nonsense. You get my beloved money too.

**Dasha.** You give it to me. So thanks. Actors are underpaid in the theatre nowadays.

**Mitya.** That's why I quit the theatre, for fuck's sake! Sorry. Now I work hard and get

money for it. I'm working like mad, but at least get something in return. Sweetheart, I need some relaxation – it'll kill me otherwise. You're still working in the theatre. For you it's like a religion, a sacred part of your destiny. For me too. But you have to eat something, you want more when so many are getting crazy bonuses, from Mercs to luxury pads in the countryside. I'm glad I can help you with money, so you don't quit your devoted service in the Temple of Theatre. I'm grateful that you take the money from me.

**Dasha.** Why so gloomy and mercantile, sir. Quickly, strip me to the waist. And the bits above my waist. And below. Slide boldly along my black silk stockings. With your hands, your lips, use your tongue, use your... You're boring me. All this sliding and merging, this slag slime, the oohs and ahs of heavenly happiness. By morning I just want to slit your throat.

**Mitya.** We'll burn up together for a long, long time.

**Dasha.** But two days later the whole thing repeats itself. You call me and say you love me. So many lies just to squeeze our bodies together in carnivorous ecstasy. Does it come naturally? Oh, please, sir, caress me there with your tongue. I have such an erogenous concentration of love right there. More!!! More!!! I can see a garden of flowers in paradise, through closed eyes. I confess my love for you, sex without love!!! More!!! More!!! More!!! (*Cries.*) Oh, you're just tired. Now you can only do a blowjob. Although you wanted the craziest love. Me too. But we're people with well aligned, well constructed serpentine convolutions. Oh yes. Our crazy love won't be repeated... I did my own abortion...

**Mitya.** Well, it was a very dreary autumn. Endless rain! You lose the will to live.

**Dasha.** And after the abortion I can no longer have children.

**Mitya.** Forgive me. It was such a long time ago.

**Dasha.** Back then you had no money to feed another two mouths. And I was weak, a poetic fool by nature. What are we doing in this world? We live and dream. Human existence is only the shades of other people, their machines and crutches, the graves of horses, dogs, latrines, wagtails... And after death, underground, you inhale your own stale, poisonous, sepulchral fumes for eternity.

**Mitya.** You're in a cheery mood, my darling Cinderella. Theatre's a special thing... I betrayed it. That's life. But I always carry the cherry stone, our talisman.

**Dasha.** It's unbearable how you live in the past, Mitya. You can't seem to understand that not a single cherry stone remains from that cherry orchard.

**Mitya.** I want you, my little cherry.

**Dasha.** Whatever the director requests, the actress obeys. The director is the power. The power is the director.

**Mitya.** Sounds sexy. Say it again.

**Dasha.** I repeat. Directors, with very rare and surprising exceptions, are like perineum-decubitus, parasites feeding on other people's texts and acting genius. This is such an eternally wilting, snotty, maniacal, worthless prick, but by some incomprehensible pistol action it's still right there, scalding hot, leaping and fucking in bestial ecstasy all living things in the theatre and life.

**Mitya.** Well, you've made progress. That was brilliant.

**Dasha.** And you're doing the right thing, too.

**Mitya.** What d'you mean?

**Dasha.** You live like all men, as a treacherous director.

**Mitya.** And you live like all women, as a warm-hearted, suffering actress.

**Dasha.** An actress on sexy errands. Proud, poor, brilliant, biblical Russian art. Eternal glory to you. God save you and have mercy.

**Mitya.** Dasha, you have to live calmly and positively, that's all, it's elementary. Venture into the forest, gather strawberries! Mushrooms! Blueberries! Directing your own, one, true, natural happiness. My God. How easy everything is when you take the right point of view. How important it is to listen to a sincere, kind, beloved woman, and to hear what she says. And we rape these kind, sincere women, we corrupt them and turn them into unbearable, mechanical whores. We like it that way. Then we reproach them for it, sentence them to death. And we like that even more. My God, the things that happen in this world, messieurs!

**Dasha.** Hooligan. And it wasn't an act.

**Mitya.** She loved that hooligan. With good reason.

**Dasha.** She loved a murderer.

**Mitya.** You bet. Why not?

**Dasha.** The coolest thing right now is to become a murderer, a killer. What a beautiful buzzword. People pay for alienation.

**Mitya.** Sure thing.

**Dasha.** That's what you're doing?

**Mitya.** Naturally.

**Dasha.** You're a killer?

**Mitya.** If it turns you on.

**Dasha.** Although you never stopped to think, a killer can be the victim of another killer, if he kills too much and knows too much.

**Mitya.** Never thought about it.

**Dasha.** So how many have you killed?

**Mitya.** What?

**Dasha.** You never told me how many you murdered, killer.

**Mitya.** Are you rehearsing a play with me? I never killed anyone. I don't understand you. You're a funny girl. I never got the text of this drama, Dashenka.

**Dasha.** You're trying to wriggle out of it?! Why are you lying, you stinking worm?!

**Mitya.** Wha-at?!

**Dasha.** Keep calm and own up, how many have you murdered, killer?

**Mitya.** Slow down.

**Dasha.** I'm slowing down. We've stalled.

**Mitya.** You need to see a psychiatrist?

**Dasha.** I already saw a psychiatrist.

**Mitya.** And what did this mystical doctor tell you?

**Dasha.** This mystical doctor said there's nothing wrong with me.

**Mitya.** Honest Dr Chekhov.

**Dasha.** So I want you to tell me, honest Chekhov doctor, frankly, sincerely, how many people you murdered with your silenced pistol.

**Mitya.** I don't understand.

**Dasha.** You don't understand?

**Mitya.** I don't understand. But I'm a sane person and ready to understand your female fantasy!

**Dasha.** You want me to repeat my simple question to the penniless millionaire

pretending he's an idiot?

**Mitya.** I'm getting tired of you. What question?

**Dasha.** I repeat. I want you, a healthy male person, to honestly tell me how many other healthy, not dead, of course, despicable people of different sexes he, that is, you, dispatched with this silenced gun.

**Mitya.** Dash, I don't even have a gun, especially a silenced gun. I'm a millionaire, a modest one, but in dollars, and imagine, I don't carry a gun and have no bodyguards. Bodyguards only draw attention. Are you crazy?

**Dasha.** Having your own gun can be useful.

**Mitya.** If they want to kill me they'll kill me with gun in hand, just the same. Shall I give a few examples?

**Dasha.** No examples needed. What's this? (*Takes a gun with a silencer from a desk drawer.*)

**Mitya.** A gun. With a silencer.

**Dasha.** Recognise it?

**Mitya.** It's not mine.

**Dasha.** Then whose is it?

**Mitya.** How do I know? Where d'you find it?

**Dasha.** In the bedside table.

**Mitya.** What bedside table?

**Dasha.** Your bedside table. Where you keep your socks and underpants. I found this toy in there.

**Mitya.** You need to be careful with this toy.

**Dasha.** Of course. I'm not crazy.

**Mitya.** Where did you find it?

**Dasha.** Once again I explain to a healthy male person: I found this gun with the silencer in your bedside table with the socks and underpants.

**Mitya.** I love you, I keep almost all my clothes here with you, not at her place. Things are still the same between you and me. I don't go shopping with her, either. That would be a betrayal to you. Because I see you in the shop instead of her. It just drives me mad. It's a little quirk I have, but it's genuine. Because I love you madly. Then of course, I don't have time to go shopping. And she has a lot of free time – she's young and healthy. I give her money, after all. I'm not exploiting her. I fuck her, but for love – I'm not a sadist. She loves me too, this girl. But I love you no less. If not more. Naturally, more. So I keep my socks and underpants with you, I repeat. God dammit. In the bedside table.

**Dasha.** So I repeat, where did the silenced gun you left in the bedside table come from?

**Mitya.** Are you kidding?

**Dasha.** Do I often make jokes about serious matters?

**Mitya.** No matter, I love you for your gentle humour.

**Dasha.** But these serious jokes of yours about guns in the bedside table aren't jokes at all, in my opinion.

**Mitya.** It's not mine, Dashechka.

**Dasha.** Nobody visits me here except you, Mitenka. This pistol was in your bedside table with the socks.

**Mitya.** In my bedside table with the socks...

**Dasha.** And underpants.

**Mitya.** And underpants... MY pistol was never in there.

**Dasha.** With a silencer.

**Mitya.** With a silencer.

**Dasha.** Because this pistol of yours, Mitenka, was in another place before, that's all.

**Mitya.** No-o, Dashenka.

**Dasha.** Ye-es, Mitenka.

**Mitya.** In what other place was this so-called pistol of mine, Dashenka?

**Dasha.** You know better than me, killer-boy Mitenka.

**Mitya.** Who told you it was my gun? And where did you get it?

**Dasha.** I found it in your bedside table with the socks and underpants. And you yourself just confirmed that it's your gun and silencer, Mitenka! That's not funny, after all.

**Mitya.** I said that tongue-in-cheek!!! Did you fall from the moon – are you stupid, or don't you understand when I'm just being ironical? I thought you were a professional actress. Who are you? You're not an actress anymore? Who are you, girl? Are you off your rocker? Or else I'm off my rocker after the trip to France. Where are we?

**Dasha.** In Russia.

**Mitya.** And who are you?

**Dasha.** I'm Dasha, a killer's doxy.

**Mitya.** You're Dasha, a killer's doxy? That's an interesting statement. Then who am I?

**Dasha.** You, Mitya, are a killer, a sadist. And I'm your freaky doxy Dasha. It was like that in the past, anyway.

**Mitya.** What? What the devil?

**Dasha.** The devil on both our houses, sadist.

**Mitya.** But wait, a killer can't be a sadist. He just kills and that's it, kaput, the person doesn't suffer any more.

**Dasha.** But you see, I'm suffering for some reason. Suffering a lot, killer, dammit.

**Mitya.** Who's the killer, dammit?!!!

**Dasha.** You are.

**Mitya.** What?!!! (*Slaps her face.*) Please forgive me, Dasha.

**Dasha.** The gallant killer-healer isn't a sadist. A quasi-French gentleman from Khamovniki!

**Mitya.** That's me all right.

**Dasha.** A Khamovniki-Frenchman from Bordeaux. Remembers to bring a whip when he visits his woman.

**Mitya.** Friedrich Nietzsche was absolutely right.

**Dasha.** Only Comrade Mauser was absolutely right. With a silencer. To make it quiet – intimate – when dispatching some guy to Hades with a blast of lead, kaput. (*Kisses the gun.*)

**Mitya.** Tell me the truth, where did you find it? No hocus-pocus?

**Dasha.** Picked it up off the street.

**Mitya.** Which street?

**Dasha.** Near Izmailovsky Park. A week ago. I went for a walk. It was evening. Some dude was walking in front of me. Then I heard a pop and he keeled over. On the asphalt. There was another man walking twenty metres behind us... no, more like

thirty metres. There was an electricity pole there too, several. Do electricity poles have to be a set distance apart?

**Mitya.** Of course.

**Dasha.** Okay. So the man walking behind us fired from a distance of thirty metres. And he started running after this scarcely audible pop-shot – the gun had a silencer. So when the man started running something metallic – that much was obvious from the sound – fell on the asphalt, from his pocket or somewhere else. But he didn't try to pick it up, he ran off as fast as he could. Then jumped into a Mercedes like yours, and that was it.

**Mitya.** You're serious?

**Dasha.** Couldn't be more serious. I approached the man lying on the ground and saw his eye had been torn away, with shreds of flesh: blood and brains, the whole thing. It was horrible! At the back of his neck the bullet had left a small hole. I understood straightaway, the man who ran off was the killer and he dropped the gun so he carried no material evidence. I went and picked up the metal object that had fired with a metallic clatter, and there it was, this pistol with a silencer. I ran to a payphone nearby and called the police and ambulance. And of course I vamoosed from the scene of this bloody showdown. But I took the silenced pistol dropped on the asphalt. Using a cellophane bag, naturally, not my bare hands. I put the pistol in my bag.

**Mitya.** O-la-la! What a nightmare! You walk on this earth naïve and happy, then... You're not having me on – you're serious?

**Dasha.** I was almost... out of my mind!!! But you are lying... You rode your horse to a standstill way back. All this week I've been afraid to walk along the street. This poor guy got killed, but it seems one hundred percent they were aiming at me with this superman fatal Colt of yours, although they missed. Or was it a mistake? Maybe you can tell me. I can't tell. I don't have any unpaid debts, but everyone knows that you keep me.

**Mitya.** That's horrific, sounds like a clash between two gangs. Well, if you like I'll get you a license to carry arms. Teach you to shoot. Hit your target. But it won't help if anything else happens.

**Dasha.** And what will help if something else happens, Mr Hit-Your-Target?

**Mitya.** Cut it out. You need to move, change jobs, so nobody can find you on your old patch.

**Dasha.** That's not easy.

**Mitya.** When did it happen?

**Dasha.** A week ago, I told you. When you and your Lyalya were together on the banks of the Loire.

**Mitya.** We should have gone taken you along. Fucking hell. Who decided you're useful, or rather, not useful?

**Dasha.** I've been trying to work it out all week. It gives me a headache.

**Mitya.** Have you worked it out?

**Dasha.** I worked it out.

**Mitya.** So what did you work out?

**Dasha.** I worked out that I'm no use to you. Easy as 1, 2, 3.

**Mitya.** Logical.

**Dasha.** Logical, one hundred percent.

**Mitya.** How d'you mean – logical, one hundred percent? What are you trying to say?

**Dasha.** You yourself just – everything's logical and on-target!

**Mitya.** Wha-at?!

**Dasha.** They tried to shoot me! That's not logical! (*Whimpers.*)

**Mitya.** Oh, leave it out. Sorry. Okay, I apologise. So this was serious shooting?

**Dasha.** When people shoot at you, that's already serious, for God's sake!

**Mitya.** Okay, listen, go to Corsica for a month. I'll buy you a package tour. You can take a holiday from all this. Go swimming, sunbathe. Eh?

**Dasha.** And afterwards?

**Mitya.** Afterwards you can move to another apartment, change your job. We'll think of something. Fucking hell. So there really are lowlife bastards who'd dare to kill a girl like you.

**Dasha.** There really are. But I can't change my job in the theatre, Mitya. I'm an actress. People know my name, it's your surname too.

**Mitya.** Okay, I'll find this guy who wants to kill you, I'll do something very, very bad to him and leave him for dead.

**Dasha.** You're a knight in shining armour, a real Hamlet.

**Mitya.** I'm not Hamlet, but I love you like a true knight.

**Dasha.** As he'd love Ophelia?

**Mitya.** As he'd love his beautiful Ophelia.

**Dasha.** You want me to go crazy and drown?

**Mitya.** I want to save you from our earthly abominations. You're my special girl.

**Dasha.** Then why d'you keep this nymphet between us, she's a headache, most of all for me.

**Mitya.** She doesn't come between us, she has her place. A long way behind yours. We agreed.

**Dasha.** A place where I don't exist at all.

**Mitya.** Everyone has their place, Dashenka. It's not easy for me. Work sets you free.

**Dasha.** The words above the gate at Auschwitz. Work sets you free. Is this a replay? Or will everything stay the same?

**Mitya.** Only time will tell. You have to stay optimistic. Let death choke on the dead.

**Dasha.** That means one living person killing another living person. In Corsica they're better shots than in Moscow. They won't miss me there. I won't suffer so much.

**Mitya.** They shoot much worse there. We showed that to Napoleon, in demotic terms.

**Dasha.** And I'm telling you in demotic terms. I carefully retrieved the silenced gun from the asphalt with a piece of cellophane and put it in my bag. You know Svetochka, my friend the actress, her boyfriend's a criminologist, specializes in fingerprints. It's such a lucrative profession these days. Well anyway. He found your prints on the handle of this silenced gun, Mitenka. How d'you like that?

**Mitya.** I don't like it at all. Where did you get such a ridiculous idea?

**Dasha.** It's called a dactyloscope.

**Mitya.** But I was in France, dactyloscoping.

**Dasha.** I can't believe it, either. A French riddle.

**Mitya.** And where's the Russian trump card?

**Dasha.** The devil knows.

**Mitya.** Have you finished assing around?

**Dasha.** This black humour has more black treachery than humour.

**Mitya.** I was in Paris for a whole month with Lyalya!

**Dasha.** To start with you claimed to be touring France.

**Mitya.** So, that's what we did.

**Dasha.** Then how was it you spent a whole month in Paris with Lyalya?

**Mitya.** Figuratively speaking, you little actress, no need to dactyloscope my every word.

**Dasha.** And what about the fingerprints on this pistol and silencer, on your bedside table with the underpants and socks? (*Shows him two photos.*) Look, two photos: material evidence, the prints on the bedside table and on your pistol and silencer are YOURS without a doubt.

**Mitya.** Looks like serious photography. (*Examines photos.*) Who set this up? And why?

**Dasha.** If it wasn't you, it must've been Lyalya.

**Mitya.** She's fifteen.

**Dasha.** Nowadays fifteen-year-old girls are very cunning little beasts.

**Mitya.** Okay, okay! But wait, she loves you.

**Dasha.** Who loves me?

**Mitya.** My Lyalya loves you.

**Dasha.** So Lyalya's a lesbian as well?

**Mitya.** She loves you because I love you.

**Dasha.** You believe what a woman says?

**Mitya.** You're a woman too.

**Dasha.** You've known me for a long time, darling. Have I ever lied to you? Cheated on you?

**Mitya.** I don't know.

**Dasha.** You don't know?

**Mitya.** You love me, I can feel it. And I believe you and love you. You look like a saint when you're asleep. I can always picture you asleep and it gives me strength.

**Dasha.** And your Lyalya, how does she look when she's asleep?

**Mitya.** I don't know. Haven't seen it yet. With her I fall into a dead sleep after... You get my drift. Anka has machine-gun passions for Petka and Chapaev.

**Dasha.** Yes, if a woman sleeps like a shot bitch, then she's a bitch. And the womanizers of bitches love to the point of incineration, so they can do a little shooting afterwards. Well, bitch! How did your fingers get on the pistol and silencer, Dmitry Petrovich Chapaev?

**Mitya.** On the silencer too?

**Dasha.** On the silencer, on the handle, and on the trigger – everywhere. Everything was ecstatically fingered.

**Mitya.** It was evil spirits. Maybe it's evil spirits? There's all kinds of poltergeists around these days. You know that?

**Dasha.** A poltergeist burns fingerprints.

**Mitya.** You could have made a decent living with Mueller in the Gestapo, Dashenka.

**Dasha.** Can you just answer me, Stirlitz director Mitenka – how is it that this entire pistol and silencer was covered in your fingerprints, if it wasn't you who missed me that night?

**Mitya.** I wouldn't have missed. I'm a very good shot and I wouldn't miss you.



**Dasha.** You wouldn't miss me?

**Mitya.** Why would I shoot you?

**Dasha.** You're asking Desdemona?

**Mitya.** Her Othello was jealous.

**Dasha.** The whole thing was vile – a setup by Iago... Everything is as before, everything turns in a circle and everything will be as it will be.

**Mitya.** But you haven't cheated on me, not once. Not before, not even now. You're a saint, I repeat, girlie. I love you for that. I don't know, of course, why you love me.

**Dasha.** Nobody ever knows why they love someone. It's a psychiatric disease like schizophrenia.

**Mitya.** I'm grateful to you for this schizophrenia...

**Dasha.** That's why you cheated on me with this bare-assed nymphet.

**Mitya.** All you divine girls have heavenly naked butts.

**Dasha.** Not all divine girls wear shorts ten times smaller than their naked, fleshy, pillowy butts.

**Mitya.** Pillowy butts!!!... I can tell you, that is said even at the level of Dali, with great cultural taste, of a woman worthy of the highest praise. Well, she's still young, just a baby. Have pity, **Dasha.** She'll grow up and get smarter.

**Dasha.** When she grows up you'll find yourself another nymphet with a naked, brazen, pillowy ass. You have money. Hungry nymphets stand in queues and stick out their breasts.

**Mitya.** She's expecting a baby, we're both very happy.

*Pause.*

**Dasha.** Congratulations.

**Mitya.** Thanks.

**Dasha.** She's expecting your baby?

**Mitya.** You hate her – I can understand that.

**Dasha.** I love her. I just don't love you being with her. But I love and understand her as a woman.

**Mitya.** Well said. She's a fine, good-looking girl. Just like you. But she was born a few years later than you and met me when I was getting old too... But you have the most positive biofield in the whole wide world. When I take your hands I'm happy and calm – I don't need anyone else in the whole world. May I? (*Tries to take her hands.*)

**Dasha.** Let's discuss this without fingerprints. (*Takes her hands away.*)

**Mitya.** Well, they cut the life of our generation in two with an axe. Like puppies thrown in the water – off you swim, they say. Well, I can swim away, by myself. The theatre is the sacred past – it's you. Business is the future – that's sacred, too – it's her. But you also mean no less to all of us in this ongoing sacred life of ours. She's expecting a baby. With me! And with you, too. We're all together in this... We already said... You love her yourself and understand her as a woman. What's the problem? You deliberately make up stories about killers, pistols, et cetera!

**Dasha.** I'm not making anything up! It's all true! The naked truth! Like a stark naked ass!!! I was shot at!!! Your prints were found on the gun. You should be grateful I didn't go to the police, but I'm conducting an investigation myself, for the first time in my life. And imagine that on the evening when I was shot, someone called me on

the phone and told me to compare your prints on the nightstand where you keep socks and underpants with the fingerprints on the silenced pistol. That's an important and undeniable detail.

**Mitya.** You're lying.

**Dasha.** If I'm lying, then this pistol is a lie.

**Mitya.** Listen, only a person who's visited this house could have called you. Someone who knows about the bedside table with the underpants and socks.

**Dasha.** He scared me so much, I almost died of fright.

**Mitya.** Fascism. You just need to understand who needs all this. I don't need it.

**Dasha.** I certainly don't need it – I nearly got shot.

**Mitya.** They were shooting at someone else.

**Dasha.** You wanted them to kill me?

**Mitya.** Of course not. I feel sorry for the murdered man, too. Very sorry. We're all members of the human race. I love all the people on this earth. I still do, oddly enough.

**Dasha.** And most of all me, who gave you, a Christian, the scarlet flower of her youth.

**Mitya.** Women have such a happy, divine destiny – they give the flower of youth. I also gave you my youth and I continue to give you love. And respect. You're making problems out of nothing again.

**Dasha.** Your underage floozy set it all up. Specifically, she doesn't want to share your material greenbacks with me. Because she's giving you her youth. My youth is pensioned off now. And if she's got a young killer lover, she could just ask him, in a Christian way, to get rid of me, no need to hire anyone.

**Mitya.** She doesn't have a young killer lover!!!

**Dasha.** Well, maybe her young lover isn't a killer yet. But tomorrow she'll ask him and he'll become a killer, for the love of her fragrant, naked young ass.

**Mitya.** She doesn't have a lover!!! A young lover or any other kind!!!

**Dasha.** She's such a sultry, splintery icicle. You bought her, took possession. Do you think it's hard for her to find someone younger who'll pay more for gourmet blowjobs?

**Mitya.** She doesn't have a lover!!!

**Dasha.** Why shout like that when you can't be sure anyway?!

**Mitya.** I am sure!!!

**Dasha.** Absolutely sure? You'll strain your throat.

**Mitya.** She doesn't have a lover. Nobody calls her... Not when I'm around.

**Dasha.** There you have it. He doesn't call when you're around. He calls when you're not around. Maybe she calls him herself, when you're not there. Does she go out by herself, without you?

**Mitya.** Well, sometimes she goes out by herself, of course she does. Visits the shops.

**Dasha.** So that's when she calls him. And in your presence she silently texts to say she loves him, her beloved young man.

**Mitya.** I don't believe it. Women have never cheated on me.

**Dasha.** You had other women?

**Mitya.** But you didn't cheat on me.

**Dasha.** For me you were young and fit. So how many women have you been with?

**Mitya.** Didn't count them. That's my business.

**Dasha.** In short, a harem.

**Mitya.** Call it what you like. I have enough problems right now, and you lay into me about harems. Are you crazy? I've never had anyone but you! And I didn't have anyone in the theatre – I didn't make use of the fact that I was the chief's top director. For me you stood alone on Mount Olympus, the Holy Madonna. Have I ever given you the clap?

**Dasha.** Thank God I was spared that. But I've been concerned for myself lately – your nymphet is so seductive, and you're flagging all the time at work.

**Mitya.** Noticeably flagging?

**Dasha.** Well, you're still a bit of an Apollo. How many times a night d'you come with her?

**Mitya. Dasha.** No need to concern yourself about that. No problem there.

**Dasha.** I'm not at all concerned. What gave you that idea? You come ten times a night?

**Mitya.** A lot more.

**Dasha.** And a lot less with me. (*Starts crying.*)

**Mitya.** Dasha, don't cry. What's the matter, Dasha?

**Dasha.** That shameless Lyalya of yours has a fancy-man killer out to get us and you just look the other way when he aims a gun at me!

**Mitya.** I'm not looking the other way at all! And how does my Lyalya have a fancy man, what's more a killer? You've got the wrong end of the stick, my dear Dashenka.

**Dasha.** They even arranged for your prints to be on the handle of the gun. You've already been reduced to the point that you don't feel what you're groping for: my tits, Lyalka's perky ass or this silenced Colt they used to fire at me but missed, thank God!

**Mitya.** I'll take them to the grave for this, I swear by my naked fingers! (*Grabs the gun.*)

**Dasha.** What are you going to do?

**Mitya.** I have to fire back. Shoot down those killers. Bring down this killer Bill with his own Colt, shoot him right through his killer's eye.

**Dasha.** Why are you aiming at my eye if you're going to shoot this Colt right into this Tarantino Bill killer's eye?

**Mitya.** You're right. I'm going mad. As soon as you get back to Russia you go schizoid from all this 'woe from wit'. (*Puts his arm round her waist.*) I'm sorry I slapped you. If you want you can slap me in the face in return. As you please. Do as you want, I don't mind.

**Dasha.** You're unshaven. It hurts to slap an unshaven face. After all, Monsieur only shaves before going to bed, when he climbs into bed with this Lyalka of his. Does she tie your eyes with a black scarf when you fuck her?

**Mitya.** Why do you need to know?

**Dasha.** Unexpected caresses really turn you on. If you ask me to blindfold you before we fuck, then you're probably asking her the same thing, you maniac.

**Mitya.** So what?

**Dasha.** What are you clutching as you fuck her blindfolded?

**Mitya.** What vulgar questions you ask.

**Dasha.** Do you clutch her springy little ass?

**Mitya.** Is that a bad thing? It feels good.

**Dasha.** And if, like me, she clamps her pussy on the iron rail of your bed, offering her ass like a sweet trembling elastic jelly for you, you bastard, to fuck even harder! And for an easy but firm, springy thrust you grip the rail of your iron bed.

**Mitya.** The Kama Sutra, my dear, in modern living conditions, using an iron bedhead. It's called a dart strike. It's good. You like that technique too, that's what you said.

**Dasha.** During this Kama Sutra you could grip a gun instead of an iron bedrail at that fateful moment, with your eyes closed from the world with a black scarf.

**Mitya.** Wha-at? I'd feel like a hot weapon... A pistol weapon... Understand...

**Dasha.** You understand when you take it out. Yes, all the feelings you have with this Kama Sutra in your half-metre dart, especially with your eyes closed. To whom can you prove that's not the case? Can you prove it to me, Marquis de Sade, you blind putrid maniac?

**Mitya.** I vow to fuck with eyes closed from now on.

**Dasha.** Too late, my moral, oral angel – you've already been framed.

**Mitya.** I vow to fuck with eyes closed from now on!!!

**Dasha.** Will you have fun with me to make our skin breathe?

**Mitya.** I won't do it with anyone.

**Dasha.** As you wish, not with anyone. Prohibition. It starts with five shots and ends with BUTYRKA. I approve.

**Mitya.** Well, I could do it with you, so that everything breathes and shouts.

**Dasha.** If I agree to fuck you at all after this organized shootout aimed at me, a defenceless woman.

**Mitya.** Lyalka couldn't do it. She's such a humane and generous person. Many times she told me to buy you an expensive gift in Paris.

**Dasha.** A gift bought with someone else's money – very generous.

**Mitya.** Well, she's, you know, so empathetic about you having to share me with her now. She's wanted to meet you on many occasions, but you always refuse. How could she ever want to kill you because of my greenbacks? She'd never do that.

**Dasha.** Maybe out of jealousy?

**Mitya.** With her beauty, how could she be jealous?

**Dasha.** You don't know women.

**Mitya.** I don't know women? I don't know anybody or anything in this world apart from women. I'll call her now and ask straight off why her killer lover, this mythical Tarantino Bill, wanted to kill you.

**Dasha.** He's far from mythical. You'll scare her, just scare her. Maybe we should find everything out gradually, little by little? And for sure it's a good idea to discover her with her killer lover in your bed. That would really hit the spot.

**Mitya.** Ugh – no way! For the time being we'll keep tabs on them, or they'll kill you outright, no doubt about it.

**Dasha.** What a nightmare life has become. What else can I say?

**Mitya.** I'm calling her now. Where's the phone. (*Picks up the phone.*) Put it straight, like a tank gun aimed at her head.

**Dasha.** So you think she'll tell you everything over the phone. If you want to lie with a voice, just ask a modern computer-generated girl. You have to look for the truth, the womb of truth, in her eyes with your eyes, my dear.

**Mitya.** Well, let's bring her here and confront her. As a pair we can look her in the eye and find the truth. At the same time you'll get to know her. She'll be here in two

minutes, she lives opposite. I keep a lookout on rear positions according to the square footage of my apartment. I'm dialing now. (*Dials the number.*) Hi there! Lyalya! I'm at Dasha's. Like I told you. Dasha's fine, as always. We're discussing the trip to France. She wants to meet you, too. Thanks. (*To Dasha.*) She's blowing you a kiss.

**Dasha.** I'm blowing her a kiss too.

**Mitya** (*into the phone*). She kisses you too. A big big kiss, and from me too. Hurry over, right now. That's it. The building opposite. Twelfth floor. Apartment 115. Come on then, we're waiting for you. OK. (*Turns off the phone*). She'll be here in a minute.

**Dasha.** I'll press some orange juice.

*Pause.*

*The doorbell rings.*

**Mitya.** Great, she's here already. And I'm asking you, Dashenka – no vulgarity. She's a child. Let's be well-mannered boys and girls now – we must show a good example to the younger generation.

**Dasha.** Blindfold sex, I note, is an excellent example.

**Mitya.** Dashenka, I'm opening the door. For my sake, please – you must love her with eyes wide open! That's all.

**Dasha.** Now let's show an example of love to young people, Mitya, with eyes wide open – don't worry, like in Stanley Kubrick's best movie, in the best villas in Nice, on the Côte d'Azur.

**Mitya.** Just don't rock the boat, Dashenka.

**Dasha.** Get on with it, boatswain – give the girl a cabin on our boat.

**Mitya.** Captain, captain... Smile...

*Mitya opens the door, Lyalya enters.*

**Mitya.** Lyalechka!

**Lyalya.** Mitenka! Hi there! I'm Lyalya. So you're Dasha?

**Dasha.** Hello, Lyalechka, yes, I'm Dasha.

**Mitya.** We've said such a lot of good things about you, Dashenka – you can't imagine how very, very much Mitya loves and appreciates you, and I feel the same!

**Dasha.** And how many kind and sublime things we said about you, Lyalechka. We talked about you and only you all the time. You cannot imagine how much Mitya loves you, adores you, appreciates you, praises you, and I feel likewise.

**Lyalya.** I'm so pleased. You can't imagine how pleased I am about that. You're such a famous, talented actress. When I was ten years old, five years ago, my mother and I went to see 'The Seagull' on the stage. You played Nina Zarechnaya – the unfortunate and probably not so talented actress with her sad love story. But you played this, as I said, not very talented actress, with such talent that we really felt sorry for her, because in your performance she was so talented, there was so much real, sincere love in her. You were such a lurid, sublime, heavenly seagull. And when Treplev shot himself I cried. Thank God that at least you survived, or I'd have gone mad with grief.

**Dasha.** What a sweet girl, you're a prodigy of fabulous fairy-tale realms.

**Lyalya.** A miraculous whale-fish.

**Dasha.** You dream of becoming an actress too?

**Lyalya.** Haven't decided yet. Mitya wants to give me lessons. But these days economics rule: you have to learn languages, understand computers and big business. If you manage to become an actress and become famous, then it must happen by itself – it's God's will.

**Dasha.** You believe in God?

**Lyalya.** God can be found in good people, and I believe in them.

**Dasha.** How true those words are. You don't just speak, you sing.

**Lyalya.** Oh, if only I could sing, I'd be so happy.

**Dasha.** I'll teach you.

**Lyalya.** Thank you. But I don't have the right voice.

**Dasha.** You have an excellent voice – you babble like a nightingale.

**Lyalya.** If only that was so.

**Dasha.** Mitya, I congratulate you and Lyalechka the little nightingale.

**Mitya.** Thanks.

**Lyalya.** And I congratulate you and Dashenka, Mitya. Oh, apologies, what's your patronymic?

**Dasha.** Why bother with my patronymic, Lyalechka. You can just call me Dashenka. I hope I'm not so old that you call me by my patronymic.

**Lyalya.** Oh, sorry. Please forgive me. I didn't want to offend you.

**Dasha.** Not at all. How could you possibly offend me, my child?

**Lyalya.** Sometimes I'm taken aback by the things I say myself.

**Dasha.** You're right. Mitya, how come you never introduced me to the charming Lyalechka before?

**Mitya.** Just never got round to it... I wanted to. As God is my witness, I wanted to.

**Dasha.** I envy you so much, Lyalya. You're expecting a baby?

**Lyalya.** Mitya told you? I'm not sure yet.

**Mitya.** We're waiting...

**Dasha.** Let's all wait together. Our whole life is before us. That's the magic of it. Let's raise a glass of orange juice to celebrate our meeting!

*She pours juice into glasses. They all drink.*

**Lyalya.** Delicious. Vitamin C.

**Dasha.** Yes. I've never had a baby.

**Lyalya.** That's terribly sad. But you know, these days you can just adopt a child.

**Dasha.** So I could even adopt you?

**Lyalya.** I already have parents, though.

**Dasha.** It's good to have parents.

**Lyalya.** Of course.

**Mitya.** But having friends is even better. We choose our friends ourselves.

**Dasha.** And betray them ourselves.

**Lyalya.** You mustn't betray friends.

**Dasha.** But we do.

**Lyalya.** That's bad.

**Dasha.** It's just unbearably bad.

**Lyalya.** But we won't betray one another. Let's drink to true and lasting friendship.

**Dasha.** Of course.

**Mitya.** To inexhaustible, sincere friendship, dear ladies!

**Dasha.** To that alone! (*They drink juice.*) And now our friendly and sincere Mitya will let us say everything about him in his presence!

**Lyalya.** Oh, how wonderful!!! (*Claps her hands.*) At last we will find out everything about Mitya.

**Mitya.** What is there left to find out?

**Dasha.** And when we share our sacred, secret knowledge, we'll find out what each of us doesn't know about you yet.

**Mitya.** Well, girls, you're real hard-core fatal criminals.

**Lyalya.** Mitya loves watermelons and honeydew melons more than anything.

**Dasha.** Mitya's keen on pickled garlic with vodka.

**Lyalya.** I didn't know that.

**Mitya.** And what else?

**Dasha.** Mitya likes to fuck after drinking vodka.

**Mitya.** Come on, that's enough.

**Lyalya.** Mitya likes fucking after eating watermelons and honeydew melons. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!!! (*Claps her hands.*)

**Dasha.** And most of all, Mitya loves to fuck blindfold.

**Lyalya.** Exactly!!!

**Mitya.** Girls, you're real recidivists.

**Lyalya.** Are we, Dashenka, real recidivists?

**Dasha.** Girls who fuck with their eyes open absolutely cannot be recidivists.

**Mitya.** Why can't girls who fuck with their eyes open be recidivists?

**Lyalya.** Girls who fuck with their eyes open, Mitenka, cannot be recidivists because they honestly see with open eyes how they're fucking. They see and know what they're doing. They make love with open eyes!

**Dasha.** Love only happens with open eyes. Bravo! Bravissimo!!! Lyalechka!!! (*She claps her hands, kisses Lyalya.*) Love with closed eyes is just vulgar sex. And can you imagine – you can't imagine – I was faithful to this vulgar sex, to this fucking prick with closed eyes by the name of Mitya – for a whole twenty years. For a whole twenty years I loved him with my eyes wide open, and he, like a recidivist maniac, fucked me with his eyes closed and enjoyed my body alone. As he came the saliva sprayed from his mouth onto my tits. For some reason that disgusted me, but he didn't notice because he fucked me with his eyes closed. His blue eyes were tightly covered with a black silk scarf, moreover, I gave it to him myself for his bohemian neck... to obscure the light of love. But even with his eyes closed, Mitya felt that my body had aged. As for my soul... a soul without a body is only good in church.

**Mitya.** Oh, Dashenka...

**Dasha.** A slobbery womanizer knows all about the immoral holy fucked bodies they call my beloved... But why listen to me. I'm an old mop that's been thoroughly screwed, and now it's thrown overboard. That's my fate. Lyalechka, with the grace of God may it be too late for him to throw you overboard. You're lucky. When Mitya's well over fifty you'll only be thirty. How will he satisfy you when he's bald and grey? That's his problem. Why feel sorry for a male who lovingly devoured only your

nymphet meat. That's how our fairytale, beautiful, magical, sublunary world is organized.

**Mitya.** Well, Dasha, you like to act out tragedies. You're doing it brilliantly.

**Lyalya.** I love Mitya very much. And Mitya...

**Mitya.** Yes.

**Dasha.** I love Mitya very much. And Mitya used to love me.

**Mitya.** I still love you.

**Dasha.** The third party has to disappear without acting out any tragedies, true enough. And if the third party doesn't disappear voluntarily, she is simply done away with. In our economic times, that's what they do. And fast. Time is money. By pressing the trigger at the right time and in the right place. But best to shoot accurately. Let the eye be gouged out by a bullet, that way death is instantaneous.

**Mitya.** You see, Lyalya, someone shot at Dasha. From this silenced gun. (*Shows the gun.*) Fortunately they missed.

**Lyalya.** No!

**Dasha.** Lyalechka, you didn't know? Fortunately they misfired. They'll try again.

**Lyalya.** You're serious?

**Mitya.** It can't get more serious – you can see how upset she is.

**Lyalya.** That's terrible. Blatant, untamed, disgusting, total lawlessness!

**Dasha.** They should have hired an experienced killer and, in any case, they should not have fucked this young killer before he performed such a responsible combat mission to eliminate the first love of the loving president of a modern theatrical-oil nymphet-candy, transatlantic financial company. First love – of course, I exaggerate my role in the retinue apparatus. I understand that the killer needs to fill his stomach with meat so his penis will stand like an oak, so he can thoroughly fuck a virginal fifteen-year-old nymphet for inspiration. But then, of course, how can he shoot accurately when all the inspired blood from the brain of this sighting went into his stomach and then into his penis, respectively – I've no idea, of course.

**Lyalya.** I don't understand any of this. Killer, meat, dick, brains, stomach, president. A springlike virgin of fifteen. You mean me?

**Dasha.** God forbid.

**Lyalya.** Although I can be a virgin of fifteen. No problem. As you wish.

**Dasha.** Aha, you're still a virgin? Mitya, my congratulations!

**Lyalya.** Sorry, I'm not a virgin, forgive me, no big deal – just like you, I'm no longer a virgin...

**Dasha.** Like Nina Zarechnaya in 'The Seagull'...

**Lyalya.** Yes, yes! And who'll be our president? Mitya?

**Mitya.** Well, I am the president of my marketing office.

**Lyalya.** And you, Dasha, are the first love of Mitya our president? I understand everything. And you were shot at, just like they shot President Kennedy. Who's the killer then?

**Dasha.** Well, probably Mitya's the killer.

**Mitya.** Wha-at?! I'm the president!

**Dasha.** And the killer's alibi is that he's the president?

**Lyalya.** Yes.

**Dasha.** I see.

**Mitya.** Wha-at?! Then who's the president? With no protection?!



**Dasha.** The president without protection is the one cheated on by the underage fifteen-year-old virgin killer.

**Lyalya.** Precisely! Yes! Hurrah!!!

**Mitya.** Wha-at?!

**Dasha.** Now everything is clear, Mitya – you’re not necessarily the killer – stay as you are, a cuckolded president with no protection. Her fifteen-year-old lover may well be the killer.

**Lyalya.** Whose fifteen-year-old lover may well be the killer?

**Dasha.** Lyalechka, your own fifteen-year-old lover may well be the killer.

**Lyalya.** Well I never! What liberties this ballerina allows herself! I understand nothing. Mitya!

**Dasha.** This ballerina is only defending herself, nothing more! (*Takes the gun.*) The killer was you after all, Mitya. Admit it. After having sex with eyes closed, after vodka with pickled garlic and meat, Mitya’s hands were unsteady, he was so tired he could hardly keep his eyes open, and Mitya’s bullet missed his first presidential slut – me. Is that what happened, my homicidal comrades?

**Lyalya.** We were in France!

**Dasha.** Killers always have an excellent alibi!

**Mitya.** Is the gun loaded?

**Dasha.** Well and truly loaded! (*Shoots towards the kitchen, we hear the sound of breaking glass.*) Is the parliament still in doubt?

**Mitya.** What have you hit?

**Dasha.** I hit a glass jar kept for pickling your garlic. Don’t worry – in your coffin you won’t need pickled garlic any more. And I don’t eat it, anyway.

**Mitya.** Are you kidding or not kidding, Dashenka? Are you crazy?

**Dasha.** Admit it, this blunder drove you to make an attempt on my life?

**Lyalya.** Just a mop! And you’re worse than a mop – you’re just a ragged, disintegrating Zarechnaya floor cloth! Tell her, Mitya, that she’s a ragged, rotten floor cloth that you can and should wipe your dirty feet on! (*Hiding behind Mitya.*)

**Mitya.** Lyalechka! Dashenka!!! Calm down, girls!

**Dasha.** Get back, Mitya, I’ll shoot her down like a quail!

**Lyalya.** Like a quail?!

**Dasha.** It’s me that’s shooting and I can call it what I want when I rip off your head!

**Mitya.** I’m begging you, Dashenka! (*Throws herself on his knees before Dasha.*)

**Lyalya.** What gave this virago such a fright that she thinks you shot at her?

**Mitya.** The killer dropped the gun. Right, Dasha? There you are. Dasha is no fool, so she picked up the gun. Her actress friend Svetochka’s lover is a fingerprint analyst.

**Lyalya.** A live-in fingerprint analyst? That’s impressive.

**Mitya.** He’s a good guy. Fingerprinters get a decent wage these days.

**Lyalya.** And then.

**Mitya.** And then this fingerprinter took fingerprints, first from the gun, then from my nightstand at Dasha’s, where I still keep my underpants and socks. The evening Dasha was shot someone called her on the phone and advised her to take fingerprints both from the gun and the bedside table to compare. Is that right, Dasha?

**Dasha.** That’s right.

**Lyalya.** And you believe this jealous bleating goat?

**Mitya.** I always believe this cute goat of mine with her lovely soft smooth fur.

**Dasha.** And you'll die now for this belief, you perverted self-seeker! And not just you! (*She fires towards the kitchen, the sound of breaking glass.*)

**Mitya.** How brilliantly you shoot, Dashenka, who taught you?

**Dasha.** Someone who really loves me. But you're not destined to find it. Say thank you that you will die instantly right now, you parasite!

**Mitya.** Thank you, Dashenka, thank you. But maybe we can live a bit longer, at least till morning, then we might sober up a bit?

**Dasha.** If we sober up we won't remember. But if you want you can do it your way. (*She fires towards the kitchen, the sound of breaking glass.*) There are still five bullets left, enough to remember.

**Lyalya.** But how could Mitya's fingerprints appear on this gun in a phantasmagorical way a week ago here in Moscow, when a week ago we were in Nice on the Côte d'Azur, and Mitya's fingers never left my skin for a second?

**Dasha.** You already helped him finger the gun before the trip to France, you miserable hit-woman.

**Lyalya.** Hah! I helped him finger the gun before the trip to France? And you stay silent, Dmitry, while she curses at me?

**Mitya.** She's only taking pot shots, dearest Lyalechka!

**Dasha.** Her pot shots are no joke!

**Lyalya.** I helped him finger the gun? How, where – is she crazy? Answer her, Mitya!

**Mitya.** Well, maybe Dashenka's right in saying I fucked you with my eyes closed, Lyalechka. True enough, we trembled like cats perched on my iron bed head, my hand accidentally brushed against the gun. That's true, isn't it, Lyalechka, Dashenka?

**Lyalya.** What does Dashenka have to do with it?

**Dasha.** What's more, I'm a very good shot! I can even hit the evil eye! (*Fires the gun towards the kitchen, we hear the sound of breaking glass.*)

**Dasha.** How sad it all is, birds, beasts and men! (*Fires towards the kitchen and again we hear the sound of breaking glass.*)

**Lyalya.** Logically-poetically-scary – she's a real grown-up bitch! Mitya, just who were you living with? That means, my young killer lover takes this silenced pistol carefully fingered by Mitya and fires at this worthless, shameless Ninochka, this spurned klutz?! I'd have killed this so-called actress myself – just for the hell of it!

**Dasha.** A top-hole theatre critic is dying and will now finally die for sure! (*She gives Mitya and Lyalya photos.*) I'm in a really good mood today. Lucky you, chromosomes. I also give you five minutes of life for free. Enjoy the art of these photos, my darlings. I first learned to shoot with a photo gun from my window at your open or closed windows – Mitya's a lecher, Lyalya's the same. Don't judge – you're not the judge, you're the victim.

**Mitya.** This naked killer in here, and you're kissing his chest, Lyalya, in my apartment!

**Lyalya.** Yes, Mitya, that's Kilya in the photo! A superb masterpiece!

**Mitya.** That's Kilya in the photo?! What does Kilya mean?! Killer?!!

**Lyalya.** No, it's only my friend Kilya from the ice cream booth. The booth over there in our yard. Kilya dreamed of selling ice cream since he was a boy, and now his childhood dream came true. He's studying computer programming at college, too, he already completed his first year. He doesn't take money from his parents and he

helps them out, he's such a hard worker.

**Mitya.** A real hard worker.

**Lyalya.** No, he's just a cute, funny little boy. I can introduce you to him. That way you'll understand everything right away.

**Mitya.** It's clear then, you fucked him like a horny cat?!

**Lyalya.** Whatever are you saying? He never even kissed my hand!

**Mitya.** Well, you're kissing his chest in the photo! And he's in his underpants, with his chest bared above your lips.

**Lyalya.** It's Kilimanjaro, Mitya!

**Mitya.** What? Kilimanjaro? So that's what they call it, Dashenka, the younger generation's new in-word for fucking – Kilimanjaro.

**Lyalya.** Not at all – with Kilya everything is Kilimanjaro if it's good in a human-friendly way.

**Mitya.** Kilya loves Sir Hem, Ernest Hemingway?

**Lyalya.** He really loves Hem, sure enough.

**Mitya.** But he loves other people's girls even more?

**Lyalya.** Wait... I can explain. I went shopping in the supermarket and had my hands full. On the way back, as usual, I passed the ice cream booth and wanted to get some for dessert. I bought a few ice creams but my hands were full. Kilya saw I had my hands full with all the bags and he offered to take the ice cream upstairs to my apartment. Naturally he took one of the bags, even two, to help me. He hung a sign on his booth that he'd be back in fifteen minutes. That's how this photo got taken.

**Mitya.** How did it happen that Kilya's standing in one shot, then he lies naked, and you kiss him, lying on his naked chest?!

**Lyalya.** I'm telling you – it's Kilimanjaro. We came in the entrance, called the elevator and rode up to the tenth floor. When the elevator doors opened I stepped out first, as a woman, and Kilya, as a man, followed me out. He's a real gentleman, so gallant. Really. But Kilya was gaping at something, because of Kilimanjaro, he told me, and the elevator doors shut on him and the bag of ice cream. The ices squashed all over his chest, real Kilimanjaro, so funny, so gross. Well of course I had to undress him, I thoroughly washed him in the shower and gave him a clean shirt. By the way, it was your shirt, Mitya. Kilya washed, dried and ironed it, then he brought it back two days later, he's very disciplined.

**Mitya.** Did you wash him yourself in the shower?

**Lyalya.** No, Kilya's a simple kind of guy, of course, but he's not as vulgar as that.

**Dasha. Kilya.** What a beautiful name. His full name must be Nikolai, or maybe Innokenty?

**Lyalya.** I never asked. He's Kilimanjaro.

**Mitya.** Kilimanjaro. The killer. Let's clarify this. Bring this Kilya here!!!

**Lyalya.** Why should Kilya come here?

**Mitya.** I want some ice cream – we can cool down a little for dessert.

**Lyalya.** I can go get him.

**Mitya.** So you can tell him what to say? No need.

**Lyalya.** What would I tell him to say? Lord Almighty. How crazy you old people are round here. Businessmen, directors, actresses with famous surnames. You're as corrupt as they come, but you preach morality to us. Naturally – you believe in the debauchery you yourselves created, we have to swim away from it, but you can't

prevent us from surfacing ourselves from time to time. I'm terribly sorry. Mitya... Dasha... I really didn't want to tell you all this. You're such clever guys. Good guys. I like you. I knew what I was in for...

**Mitya.** Lya... lyeckka... You're just a kid...

**Dasha.** Parents are educated by children – that's good... It's good that you don't cry.

**Lyalya.** Have you got any potatoes here?

**Dasha.** What d'you need potatoes for?

**Lyalya.** From here too you can throw a potato from the window, right on the roof of Kilya's ice-cream booth. If your aim is good. Kilya will definitely come out, that's the signal we agreed on.

**Mitya.** The signal you agreed on?

**Lyalya.** Yes. Why not? Then I'll shout from the window and he'll bring ice cream here for our dessert, after the orange juice. Kilya hasn't got a mobile at the ice-cream stall. The ice-cream stall boss is a real sadist and doesn't allow the use of mobiles during working hours – like it interferes with the business of selling ice cream. And our Kilya is hyper-honest, diligent, well raised, a good lad. He's easy going, no worries there. I'm exhausted from explaining everything to the two of you. But when Kilya turns up I'll be cheerful and kind right away. I'm sorry, I'll say it again. It's all my fault. Mitya plus Dasha... Go on, give me the potatoes.

**Dasha.** How many potatoes do you need – Lyalya plus Kilya?

**Lyalya.** Well, it depends. Usually I need four potatoes to score a hit.

**Dasha** (*brings four potatoes from the kitchen*). Here you are – four tubers.

**Mitya.** What if you hit a passerby? You'll kill someone else. Maybe I should get Kilya myself?

**Dasha.** Mitya, you're the director, but you're spoiling the whole performance. It's my turn, I'll throw first.

**Lyalya.** Why?

**Dasha.** I'm sorry, but this is my apartment, my potatoes, and I'm the most depraved – it's my deal. (*Throws a potato from the window.*) I scored a hit! Hooray!!! Scored the first time. Now it's clear why I'm unlucky in love.

**Lyalya.** Kilya will come out straightaway. Let me shout to him. He'll be surprised when he sees me in this building, not the usual one. (*Yells from the window.*) Kilya!!! I'm here!!! Hi, Kilya!!! Bring us four popsicles. Thanks! Twelfth floor. Apartment 115. We're waiting.

**Dasha.** Now all the neighbors will know we love popsicles.

*Pause.*

*The doorbell rings.*

**Lyalya.** That's Kilya. I'll open it. May I?

**Dasha.** Bien sûr, as the French say.

*Lyalya opens the door, Kilya enters.*

**Kilya.** Hello - Happy New Year! (*Gives everyone a popsicle.*)

**Lyalya.** Let me pay you, Kilya. (*Gives Kilya money.*)

**Kilya.** No need, it's my treat.

**Lyalya.** Take it, take it, this is my treat. (*Puts the money in his jacket pocket.*)

**Kilya.** Yeah, no way to live without money these days, it's hard.

**Dasha.** Was it ever easy to live without money? What a great name you have, Kilya. What's it short for?

**Kilya.** Kilimanjaro.

**Mitya.** The mountain in Africa – the snows of Kilimanjaro.

**Kilya.** Sure thing, it's a volcano in Tanzania. 5,895 metres above sea level. The snows of Kilimanjaro, that's right.

**Dasha.** So why is that your nickname?

**Kilya.** I'm crazy about this Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, that's all. Gives me a high, like Ernest Hemingway when he wrote 'The Snows of Kilimanjaro'. That dude was a real American genius.

**Dasha.** Sure thing, a real American genius.

**Kilya.** Happy New Year, ladies and gentlemen! (*Slurps his ice cream with a sucking-kissing motion, swallows a mouthful.*) Kilimanjaro, New Year's Eve – what a buzz!

**Mitya.** But what's New Year got to do with it? It's summer.

**Kilya.** It may be summer here, but on Kilimanjaro it's winter, and the New Year's a buzz! (*Slurps his ice cream with a sucking-kissing motion, swallows a mouthful.*)

**Dasha.** Yeah, a buzz!!! (*Slurps her ice cream with a sucking-kissing motion, swallows a mouthful.*) I want to visit Tanzania – and Kilimanjaro!!!

**Kilya.** Cool! Me too. If I save enough money we can go together.

**Dasha.** Yeah, together, Kilya, let's do it! Kilimanjaro! (*Kisses Kilya.*)

**Kilya.** What perfume! What refined ladies!

**Mitya.** Lyalya said you're studying to be a programmer.

**Kilya.** Are you her dad?

**Mitya.** Yes, her dad.

**Kilya.** You see, dad, I really want to climb Kilimanjaro, but it's not at all easy. Every step to the summit has to be programmed down below. So first I need to study programming.

**Mitya.** Wouldn't it be wiser to learn mountain climbing first, in your fanatically Kilimanjarian case? So you don't fall off the mountain.

**Kilya.** Dad, I've been climbing since childhood. It's been my hobby since birth.

**Mitya.** Vysotsky taught everyone to climb mountains. And Hem's an American.

**Kilya.** Vysotsky's a singing Hem.

**Dasha.** Exactly. I'll go with you, Kilya, we can climb Kilimanjaro together, just the two of us, listen to Vysotsky and read the genius Hem together. How about it?

**Kilya.** The two of us can do it together, in a threesome or foursome, but you have to program everything in advance.

**Dasha.** Maybe just the two of us can go?

**Kilya.** Sure, but you still need to program everything beforehand.

**Mitya.** Dasha, what's the rush? How well do you know Kilya?

**Dasha.** I've known Kilya for ages, I've always bought my ice cream from him! (*Puts her arms round Kilya.*)

**Kilya.** Well, of course ice cream's a buzz – like Kilimanjaro. Your mouth, after a glassful, is like Africa, Tanzania burning in the heat. Then you put the frosty ice cream in your mouth – and harmony, cool beauty, like snowy Kilimanjaro in Africa –

and wow.

**Mitya.** This specialist is versatile. And what else, Kilimanjaro, did you do naked? With my daughter?

*Shows Kilya the photos.*

**Kilya.** Who took this photo? What a thrill, Kilimanjaro – will you give me the photo as a keepsake. Will you?

**Dasha.** Please take it. Let it be your treasure.

**Kilya.** Oh thanks! What a buzz – Hollywood on speed.

**Mitya.** Why were you here in the nude, Hollywood?

**Kilya.** Come off it, daddy, why are you picking on me. I got smeared with ice cream in the elevator. I carried Lyalya's groceries to her apartment, along with the ice cream. I got abstracted, thinking about Kilimanjaro, and the elevator doors closed on my chest, and not in a poetic way. You can't think about Kilimanjara everywhere.

**Mitya.** In this photo Lyalechka, well, Lena to you, my daughter, of course, is kissing your bare Kilimanjarian chest.

**Lyalya.** The ice cream got smeared all over his chest, dad. The only ice cream left was on Kilya's chest. And I wanted... the Ice cream... so much...

**Kilya.** Yeah, the ice cream was stuck all over my chest, like Kilimanjaro, dad. It really tickled. And when the ice cream stuck, it tickled. And when your Lena licked ice cream off my chest that was nice and tickly, too. There's nothing left of the Kilimanjaro ice cream in the photo. It was frozen on my chest, sticking up like Mount Kilimanjaro. Well, I had to lie down then, of course. If I hadn't, all of Kilimanjaro would have fallen off. And your Lena couldn't have sucked it from my Kilimanjaro, dad.

**Mitya.** And you got pleasure from that, Kilya, that is, fuck it, Kilimanjaro, that is, Kilya, when Lyalya, that is, Lena, sucked on your fucking chest, Kilimanjaro? Was it pleasant or not for you, as a natural climber and programmer?

**Kilya.** Well, daddy, licking Kilimanjaro is a buzz, true enough. Tell him, Lena. I'd lick Kilimanjaro myself, but how can I reach it? No need to get so uptight, dad. What are you trying to say, dad – Lena and I didn't, couldn't have done anything. I'm a virgin, dad.

**Dasha.** Are you a virgin, Kilya?

**Kilya.** I'm a virgin. Are you her mom? I understood right away – they're like two peas in a pod. And here I am, a virgin programmer and climber, so far, anyway. We're all saving our energy for Kilimanjaro.

**Mitya.** What d'you mean, you're a virgin? How is that possible? I don't understand anything.

**Dasha.** You don't understand, how can you understand when you're a complete pervert, Mitya, unfortunately.

**Mitya.** How old are you, virgin?

**Kilya.** Only seventeen, I'm still a student.

**Mitya.** You're studying to be a virgin? You're a lecher, but you're studying to be a virgin?

**Lyalya.** Kilimanjaro's definitely a virgin, Mitichka, daddy of course, I know it for sure.

**Mitya.** How do you know? You tried it with him?

**Dasha.** He's a virgin, Mitya – I tried it with him.

**Kilya.** Wha-at?!! How?!! When did you try it with me, citizen, I mean, mom?

**Dasha.** In my imagination. As a popsicle without a stick. Can't I try you out in my imagination? What kind of materialistic people are gathered here – they won't let you dream, cowards quavering in the bushes. Yuck. (*Shakes her fingers.*) They come here, don't you know, to the apartment of a lady. The one they shot at. And you call yourself Kilimanjaro.

**Mitya.** Maybe they shot at you in imagination?

**Dasha.** The fingerprints weren't imagination, Mitya wasn't dreaming.

**Kilya.** Have you been shot at? Oh my God. When and why? And where? Who? With a gun? This one? (*Points at the gun lying on the table.*) Can I hold it?

**Dasha** (*takes the gun, puts it away in the nightstand*). As long as you're a virgin, Kilya, you mustn't touch such evil things.

**Kilya.** I wish I could shoot my virginity someday.

**Dasha.** Well, if you want I can deprive you of your fabulous virginity in a more humane way, without firing. And give you magical love in return! Is that what you want, Kilimanjaro?

**Kilya.** Well, as I said, I've wanted that for a long time, of course – it doesn't go beyond my program, but is very much part of it, frankly speaking. Just recently, in particular. If I don't lose my virginity humanely, I'll explode like a nuclear bomb. So you and Lyalechka-Lenochka-Mitya's dad no longer live as a family? Of course, it's none of my business, but... You're just good friends?

**Mitya.** Like Kilimanjaro! (*Goes up to Dasha, puts his arm round her waist.*)

**Kilya.** That will disrupt my program. I was serious when I asked.

**Lyalya.** Will you let me seduce you, Kilya?

**Kilya** (*turns round*). If you really want to, then you can, you must, even. (*Swallows saliva.*) If daddy and mommy don't mind. I mean, agree.

**Dasha.** We agree with Lyalechka, Kilya. In the sense that we agree.

**Kilya.** In that case I'll close the ice cream booth until morning, I'm lazy. And...

**Lyalya.** Come to me right away, Kilimanjaro! I'm a very humane, Kilimanjarian girl, Kilya.

**Kilya.** Oh, I just hope I don't explode before... shall we do it here, or there? Where the Hollywood photos were taken?

**Mitya.** Where she gobbled from your chest, Kilimanjaro, you can go there.

**Dasha.** Lenochka will get there first.

**Kilya.** Total Kilimanjaro, unbelievable, there's a real buzz going here! I'll run down and close the ice cream stall, Lenochka, then come up in the elevator, just as I brought the ice cream to you, up there in Kilimanjaro!!!

**Lyalya.** I'll come with you.

**Kilya.** Good night everyone, dad, mom – you're Kilimanjaro!

**Lyalya.** Ciao, parents – love you lots. I'm sorry, okay?

*Kilya and Lyalya run off.*

**Mitya.** We forgive you. Ciao-ciao.

**Dasha.** Good night. Nice kids. Lyalechka plus Kilya. Hope everything goes well for them.

**Mitya.** Where did you get the gun, Dasha?

**Dasha.** From the nightstand. I told you. A man was killed. I was walking beside him. The killer ran away. He threw his gun on the asphalt. I picked it up and put it in the nightstand with your underpants and socks. The killer wasn't you, of course, Mitya. But it seemed like my beloved Mitya was shooting at me. And the thing about your fingerprints – that was all lies and bluff. Forgive me, if you can.

**Mitya.** I love you so much... And you?

**Dasha.** Mitya, Mitya, now it's our time together.

**Mitya.** Forgive me, Kilimanjaro. I just wanted a baby from her...

**Dasha.** You're a good guy... My Kilimanjaro... (*Steps towards Mitya, embraces him.*)

*Moscow, 1998 – 2016*