

Mikhail Volokhov

BULLETS IN CHOCOLATE

A tragicomedy

CHARACTERS

Short Soldier

Tall Soldier

Girl

The present

Onstage we see a couple of tree stumps, a couple of stones. Two Soldiers crawl towards each other.

Short Soldier. Hey, there – you on the horizon!

Tall Soldier. Why are you yelling at me from behind that tree stump?

Short Soldier. Why are you lurking behind a boulder, like just another boulder?

Tall Soldier. Think you're just another tree stump?

Short Soldier. I'll cut such stumps from you for creeping up on me, dammit, you boulder.

Tall Soldier. Okay, calm down, tree stump, what's your game? Long time since you had a fuck? What's eating you? If you were born a stump, who's to blame for that? Only the Lord God can answer for that, stump.

Short Soldier. You've really overstepped the mark now, boulder – I'll grind you to dust right now.

Tall Soldier. What axe will you grind me with, you rotten stump, a branch?

Short Soldier. I'll pulverize you with a volley from my Kalashnikov, get my drift, you miserable trench soldier.

Tall Soldier. Your Kalashnikov volleys ended long ago, little soldier.

Short Soldier. Then why hide from me behind a boulder? Pissing yourself at the very thought of my Kalashnikov volleys?

Tall Soldier. I'll let off a Kalashnikov volley myself, right now, between your ribs and the back of your head, just to say hello.

Short Soldier. Oh yeah, your machine gun's empty – and I can empty your leaky skull right now.

Tall Soldier. I'm really losing my cool now, you fucking idiot. (*Gets up, dusts himself off, perches on the boulder, takes out a cigarette, looks for a light.*) Got a light hidden away there?

Short Soldier. Might have. What's that you're smoking?

Tall Soldier. Anything that comes my way.

Short Soldier. The Lord God told us we must share our wealth.

Tall Soldier. Catch, you miserable druggie! (*About to throw him a cigarette.*)

Short Soldier. (*Gets up, approaches Tall Soldier.*) Hey, don't throw, it'll get lost! (*Grabs the cigarette. They light up.*) Wow, like oxygen, the real thing.

Tall Soldier. Awesome.

Short Soldier. Right on. How come you're still fighting a war at your age?

Tall Soldier. I don't want to die from bedsores between the sheets.

Short Soldier. Fuck me. You want to be shot at, out here in the fresh air?

Tall Soldier. Maybe. Or simply have a shell blow my head off and that's it, kaput.

Short Soldier. You're serving your country.

Tall Soldier. And what will you do?

Short Soldier. I'll still be a soldier.

Tall Soldier. I see. What kind of soldier?

Short Soldier. What kind? A good soldier.

Tall Soldier. I see.

Short Soldier. And what will you do?

Tall Soldier. I'll be an intellectual soldier.

Short Soldier. No need for pretentious statements. And me, don't you think I'm an intellectual soldier?

Tall Soldier. How can I put it? At first sight you look more of a sensual soldier.

Short Soldier. A sensual soldier, you must be joking. (*Points his bayonet at the Tall Soldier.*) How did you figure out so immediately and so accurately about my sensuality?

Tall Soldier. I'm a specialist in meditation. What's your zodiac sign?

Short Soldier. According to which zodiac?

Tall Soldier. When were you born? Date of birth, year.

Short Soldier. 28th of March, 1963.

Tall Soldier. That is Aries by the Western zodiac, and you're a Tiger by the Chinese zodiac. On the cusp you're a sabre-toothed tiger.

Short Soldier. I'm a sabre-toothed tiger? What's this beast of a tiger going to tear apart here, who can I bite!?! (*Points his bayonet at a the Tall Soldier*).

Tall Soldier. Well, that's how your parents gave birth to you – on a sabre-toothed tiger date. You should be happy – a sabre-toothed tiger is a natural innovator, an inventor, very generous, both financially and emotionally. And the unbridled feelings inherent in you from birth plus your charm and artistry should attract a horde of women. Rejoice. The stars make you the centre of attention, centre-stage. (*As he speaks the Short Soldier is exactly centre-stage*).

Short Soldier. You're not the first person to tell me that. And what's your zodiac sign?

Tall Soldier. According to the horoscope I'm a mystical goat, my friend.

Short Soldier. Even if you're mystical, you're probably a billy goat, not just a goat. No need to hide intimately horoscopic personal military stellar positions, infantryman.

Tall Soldier. Listen here, soldier, you sabre-toothed tiger – I'm a mystical goat, with very sharp, long horns. There are no mystical or even non-mystical billy goats in the stellar horoscope. Billy goats only walk and jump around here on earth.

Short Soldier. Why are you trying to brainwash me – like I don't know these idiotic horoscopes. Even my girlfriend according to your horoscope turns out to be a hybrid goatibex according to your zodiac, she's a Capricorn, dammit.

Tall Soldier. Yeah, there are no goatibexes in the zodiac. And according to the zodiac Capricorns don't have any goatish or billy-goatish characteristics.

Short Soldier. Capricorns aren't goats – that's a shameless lie. What are they then – they're goats, if not billy goats, even if my girlfriend was a Capricorn, goddammit. I told her myself – you're not a Capricorn, you must be a She-Goat Capricorn. And she said, no, I'm a Capricorn. Those bloody feminists, can't tell them anything.

Tall Soldier. And what's your girlfriend by her birth year, in the Chinese zodiac?

Short Soldier. She was born in the Chinese year of the Ox.

Tall Soldier. Ox and goat. That's definitely a hybrid goat – a unicorn. In that case, I don't envy you, as a sabre-toothed tiger.

Short Soldier. She's such a tiny girl, my girlfriend, even shorter than me, but she's a real unicorn-multi-horn goatibex, a demon in a skirt, a real hybrid. And you, what does being a mystical goat mean according to the zodiac?

Tall Soldier. Most importantly, the mystical goat has more brains than it needs. Mystical goats were supposed to be sacrificed to the gods. These goats may seem deceptively simple-minded, but after getting to know them better partners soon rethink that opinion. A mystical goat can be a very good adviser or judge. Their personality is quite altruistic, valuing both their own freedom and the freedom of others, so they develop warm, friendly relations with most people.

Short Soldier. Must be hard for you to be an enemy soldier, my friend.

Tall Soldier. Absolutely. Shooting a soldier from the opposite side brings me to tears.

Short Soldier. Well, you don't have to actually kill me. Seems like we made our peace just by talking.

Tall Soldier. I'm all for peace between soldiers.

Short Soldier. How does the mystical goat behave zodiacally speaking in family life?

Tall Soldier. The mystical goat isn't well adapted to family life. The mystical goat believes his partner is unworthy of him. Only in very rare cases can such a person meet a worthy partner and become a good family man.

Short Soldier. Then what's life like as a mystical goat?

Tall Soldier. There's nothing you can do about it – I live as a mystical cosmic goat, but also as a hardy tin soldier with a heart full of human love.

Short Soldier. Yes, you're an interesting mystical soldier. You should be a writer, a prophet, but you're still a soldier here, an unknown and unmystical soldier soldiering on, up hill and down dale.

Tall Soldier. The highest rank is to be an unknown field soldier with a cold.

The soldier with a cold in the winter snow, in a trench,
Three o'clock in the morning, the enemy begins a tank attack
The soldier has pneumonia, there's no penicillin
There's no warm bed for him in the nearest infirmary
The soldier with a cold has lost the will to live
He spits blood on the snow with a temperature of forty
The nearest enemy tank is a hundred metres away,
Storming ahead with barrel aimed at the foot soldier
The soldier gets up and smiles, steps towards the tank with a grenade
And it seems to him that his beloved flies towards him, instead of a tank,
And he's holding flowers in his hand, not a grenade
He wants to hug his beloved so much
That even the tank fails to shoot, entranced
And time stops in the war for a moment of love between the soldier and

the tank

But the next second a shell from the tank strikes the chest of the soldier
There's no penicillin, it's no longer needed
The soldier falls, he's dead, he no longer has a cold

Short Soldier. Thank God it's summer here. You're so cultured, not tin at all, you don't even seem to have a cold. You definitely have a human heart. Don't be sad. Maybe you regret not shooting me with a lead bullet half an hour ago?

Tall Soldier. All my bullets flew away like birds long ago.

Short Soldier. We've been fighting for a long time. And as for birds, by the way, I still have a bayonet beak. (*Holds a bayonet to the throat of the Tall Soldier.*) Well, have you finished, you goat-hybrid intellectual orator-soloist?

Tall Soldier. I've got a bayonet, too.

Short Soldier. But where's your bayonet – your bayonet's behind you. My bayonet's here at your throat.

Tall Soldier. But I thought we made peace, my good man. Just take your bayonet away from my throat. The reflected sun's shining in my eyes – since childhood I can't bear sunbeams and anything that reflects them, anything made of iron or mirrors. (*Pushes the Short Soldier's bayonet away from his throat.*)

Short Soldier. The bayonet's my brother, he's loyal. I often look at my bayonet as I look in a mirror when a midge gets in my eye and I need to remove that midge.

Tall Soldier. With the bayonet?

Short Soldier. Not with the bayonet, no. If you stick a bayonet in your eye you can gouge your eye out and end up like Leshy the One-Eyed – come off it, dude – absolutely not. You just look at the bayonet, like in a mirror, then you lift the upper eyelid a little bit, then you lower it a little bit, just below the lower eyelid, and so you rub it on the lower lid, you rub it again, and you lift it, you lift the upper eyelid. Are you memorising this first aid technique? Then the midge falls from the edge of the lower eyelid to the ground, according to the law of gravity, you get my drift? Dude.

Tall Soldier. I get it. You know a lot, too.

Short Soldier. War's the most reliable teacher.

Tall Soldier. You've got bright brains in your skull – like your bright shiny bayonet. My poor old bayonet got rusted over.

Short Soldier. Rusted with blood.

Tall Soldier. How could it be blood? You rip open someone's guts and there's hydrochloric acid in the guts. There's an immediate chemical-thermal reaction with the metal and the bayonet gets rusty.

Short Soldier. At least you winced when you remembered the guts with hydrochloric acid – an intelligent gutter.

Tall Soldier. Yes, this war weighed heavily on me, left me like a wrinkled morel.

Short Soldier. You should rub it with machine oil, at least the bayonet, after contact with the guts. It's not the bayonet's fault that human guts are filled with hydrochloric acid.

Tall Soldier. Where do I get machine oil during a battle?

Short Soldier. Well, after the battle, back at camp.

Tall Soldier. Well, after the battle, back at camp, of course, you can lubricate it with engine oil there if you can find it, no problem.

Short Soldier. If you look, you'll find. What can't you find in war?

Tall Soldier. Best not to look. After all, if a rusty bayonet gets under the skin of some terrible enemy, it'll be even better for him, he'll die faster, from blood poisoning, too.

Short Soldier. Well I never... you're an intellectual from a horror movie, you tell it like it. You arrange everything neatly in the recesses of a burial crypt, you crematorial bastard. I'd be glad to make short work of your goatish muzzle, right now.

Tall Soldier. The war completely soured my soul and ate away my conscience. I can't kill anymore, but I'm killing.

Short Soldier. I kill everyone there and then – I just don't look them in the eye, even when I kill from half a metre away with this bayonet.

Tall Soldier. I look them in the eye. It's as if I'm looking into my own eyes, as if I'm killing myself. That way I can live and go on killing. That's my military experience, the horror of it. It's a pity to drink – there's no vodka to quench a burning soul with someone else's blood.

Short Soldier. You're insulting me, veteran. *(Takes a flask from his pocket, offers it to the Tall Soldier.)* Drink while you're alive.

Tall Soldier. What can we drink to? *(Pours alcohol into the lid of his flask, passes the flask itself to the Short Soldier.)*

Short Soldier. For all soldiers, may they live in peace and love.

Tall Soldier. The heartfelt words of army and fraternity. *(Drinks.)*

Short Soldier *(drinks)*. Who's your commander?

Tall Soldier. The commander on horseback.

Short Soldier. Horses are like warm stoves in the cold.

Tall Soldier. Living stoves.

Short Soldier. Your commander's lucky... mounted on a stove.

Tall Soldier. My commander on a stove... isn't lucky any more.

Short Soldier. The horse got killed?

Tall Soldier. He himself got killed.

Short Soldier. I thought you meant the horse.

Tall Soldier. No, they shot him right through the forehead with a targeted

shot. At five hundred metres from your trenches. It sounds like a difficult target, what's more they got him in the middle of the forehead. He only leaned out of the trench for a second. I actually told my commander – don't stick the top of your head up in this light, you'll end up in the next world. And that's just what happened.

Short Soldier. They shot him straight through the forehead?

Tall Soldier. Right in the middle. Straight through.

Short Soldier. So you lost your commander yesterday, at 10:20?

Tall Soldier. You're exactly right... You bastard, you have such good aim you can shoot to kill? (*Grabs the Short Soldier's shirt front.*)

Short Soldier. How could I know that was your commander? (*Pause*). What was his name?

Tall Soldier. He had a good name! My commander had a very good name!!! Such an irreproachable man. If you'd only known him. If you'd only known him, you miserable sniper.

Short Soldier. I'm sorry. Well...

Tall Soldier. You can forgive. But not forget. How can I go on without my commander?

Short Soldier. You can follow your own orders.

Tall Soldier. My commander's gone.

Short Soldier. War is such a beast, little brother. You should be glad you're still alive – a tall man like you makes a walking target.

Tall Soldier. I think ahead, when to get out of the trench, when not.

Short Soldier. I expect the girls love you, you're so intelligent and charming. You probably have a whole regiment of good-lookers. An entire division. Eh?

Tall Soldier. Not one.

Short Soldier. Not one?

Tall Soldier. Not one in the whole world. They love me, but I don't love them. Isn't that the case with you?

Short Soldier. It's not like that with me at all. Nobody loves me, I'm too short.

Tall Soldier. Never mind, you're thriving here in the war – you're still alive. It's hard to hit a wild one like you as you run and jump from side to side. How many bullets would I waste trying to shoot you?

Short Soldier. I've got enough for you too, a whole cartridge. That's a lot of money from our budget. You're so fidgety, you're lean as a snake, you can crawl through any crack in the stones so they don't kill you.

Tall Soldier. Well, I want to live.

Short Soldier. Everyone wants to live – especially in a war. We're fighting for our life.

Tall Soldier. We're dying for life.

Short Soldier. We'll die for life, brother. My commander was even

shorter than me. But your bastard bullets got him just the other day.

Tall Soldier. At the bears' watering hole?

Short Soldier. At the bears' watering hole.

Tall Soldier. The morning after the full moon?

Short Soldier. The morning after the full moon.

Tall Soldier. Three weeks ago?

Short Soldier. Three weeks ago. A sniper. Hit in the forehead. Right between the eyes.

Tall Soldier. A sniper. In the forehead. Right between the eyes. I shot him.

Short Soldier. You?

Tall Soldier. I'm sorry.

Short Soldier. That's why the Lord used me yesterday to eliminate your commander, too, you bastard. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away.

Tall Soldier. You took him for God? Then I did it for God too, but for Our God alone.

Short Soldier. Our God gave this land to us!

Tall Soldier. Excuse me, you're mistaken – it was our God gave this land to us.

Short Soldier. We'll see about that.

Tall Soldier. Oh no, we'll see about that! Division! Salvo!! Fire!!!

Short Soldier. You bastard. You scumbag! Without warning. Squadron! Division!!! Salvo!!! Fire!!!!!!

Tall Soldier. AAH! Oh dear me! (*Crumples to the ground.*)

Short Soldier. What's the matter with you, division? Huh?

Tall Soldier. Blood pressure, squadron.

Short Soldier. Blood pressure – that's bad – could give you a stroke.

Tall Soldier. That's what I'm afraid of.

Short Soldier. A stroke can keep you paralysed, bedridden, for ten years.

Tall Soldier. That's what I'm afraid of, more than anything.

Short Soldier. Is there no one to take care of you?

Tall Soldier. Not really. Theoretically – doesn't bear thinking about.

Short Soldier. If some little vessel bursts in my brain, I can take potassium cyanide there and then, it's in this capsule. See? (*Shows him a capsule.*)

Tall Soldier. I see it. You're like Dr. Pleischner – poison insured. That doctor was a good man. You don't find doctors like that anymore.

Short Soldier. When he took poison and threw himself from the fifth floor I felt so sorry for him. I cried so much my mother wouldn't let me watch the rest of the TV series.

Tall Soldier. I wept bitterly along with my mother. My mother let me watch all the series.

Short Soldier. How I envy you. That's why you're so cultured and

pedagogical. It was all due to your mama.

Tall Soldier. Thanks. All mamas are good.

Short Soldier. But not all women are our mothers.

Pause

Tall Soldier (*looks round*). A girl, she's coming this way.

Short Soldier (*looks round*). She's in a hurry, too...

The Girl enters.

Short Soldier. So who are you – a little doe... appearing from nowhere.

Tall Soldier (*to the Girl*). Who are you, sweetie?

Girl. Just call me Girl.

Tall Soldier (*to the Short Soldier*). She's called Girl.

Short Soldier (*to the Tall Soldier*). Girl? A sweetie. In the middle of a war?

Tall Soldier (*to the Short Soldier*). Says she really is here in the middle of a war. But she's a sweetie.

Short Soldier. You're really here in the middle of a war, sweetie?

Girl. Want me to get undressed?

Short Soldier (*to the Tall Soldier*). D'you want her to get undressed?

Tall Soldier. Yes, in general, I've nothing against girls getting undressed, but I don't know. I haven't washed for three days. Maybe it's a bit awkward right now?

Short Soldier. Yeah, and I haven't washed for a week. She's on our front-line border territory, so to speak she's divided in two, spiritually and bodily.

Tall Soldier. Is she all by herself, unguarded?

Short Soldier (*to the Girl*). Are you all by yourself, unguarded?

Girl. I'm all by myself, unguarded. But I washed yesterday. Also all by myself. In the river – I even dived.

Tall Soldier. Oh, in the river, all by herself – it doesn't count.

Short Soldier. A girl, washing in the river, especially all by herself – it doesn't count.

Tall Soldier. I'm not the only one who washes in the river every day. Especially when the attack goes back and forth across the river. Or when you have to give them the run – then too.

Short Soldier. That's right, there can be so many attacks in one day, especially along the river, from one bank to the other, and you jump in, you're up to your throat along the bank behind the enemy. You can't fool us by saying you swim and dive in the river alone. It doesn't count.

Girl. And does bathing in a hot tub alone count?

Tall Soldier and **Short Soldier** (*together*). Of course bathing in a hot tub counts! Even if you're not alone.

Girl. Well, today I actually washed in a hot tub.

Short Soldier. Where could you find a hot bath here today in the field, in an unpredictable combat situation? What kind of lies are you telling us, girl? Aren't you ashamed?

Girl. I'm very ashamed.

Tall Soldier. It must be two hundred kilometres from here to the nearest houses, little girl.

Girl. I was dropped here by plane – by parachute.

Short Soldier. So where's the parachute?

Girl. The river swept it away. I landed in the river. I unfastened the parachute in the river or I'd have drowned. What else could I do?

Tall Soldier. Well, you did the right thing, generally speaking.

Short Soldier. What, you're a spy? A saboteur?

Girl. I'm doing research, that's all.

Tall Soldier. Research into what?

Girl. People, of course – customs, folklore.

Short Soldier. Well I never! She's a stormer! Our own military girl, so to speak.

Girl. Are you going to rape me?

Short Soldier. Why rape such a nice, appetizing girl? Right away, without wooing her a little first? What's your star sign?

Girl. Capricorn.

Short Soldier. How come you're Capricorn?

Girl. I was born on the 6th of January. In the month of Capricorn and the year of the Ox.

Tall Soldier. You were born in the year of the Ox?

Short Soldier. Unbelievable. Another goatibex hybrid.

Girl. Are you going to rape me?

Short Soldier. There she goes again, she's a nymphomaniac. No, we don't rape goatibexes. The goatibexes rape us, after all. You see a beautiful girl, so what, but in fact she's a goatibex, a nymphomaniac rapist.

Girl. So you really will rape me.

Short Soldier. You're getting on my nerves – my friend here is suffering from low blood pressure. How can he rape you, even if he really wants to?

Girl. Low blood pressure is very dangerous, it can give you a stroke.

Short Soldier. I've been telling the idiot that for the last hour.

Girl. What does he say?

Short Soldier. What does he say? That all strategic information is being processed.

Girl. A nasty turn like that could leave him paralysed and bedridden for the next ten years.

Short Soldier. Just what I said.

Tall Soldier. Yes, such words have international implications.

Short Soldier. You're serious?

Girl. Absolutely serious.

Short Soldier. You see, and I was the first to tell him these internationally, even globally prophetic words.

Girl. He should eat hazelnuts. They're recommended for atherosclerosis.

Tall Soldier. There are many beneficial foods, my girl. But where do we get hazelnuts in the steppes, two hundred kilometres from the nearest settlement?

Girl. I've got some hazelnuts, here you are. (*Hands them some nuts.*) They didn't get wet – I had them inside an airtight plastic bag in my backpack.

Short Soldier. Hazelnuts for veins make a man wise. (*Eats.*) So what's atherosclerosis?

Girl. It's when this plague-fly junk clogs up your veins.

Tall Soldier. Blocking the blood vessels.

Girl. Exactly.

Short Soldier. So that's it – first the goddam plague-fly junk clogs your veins, then you have a stroke. I see. Then you're bedridden for ten years with paralysis. Then they put you on a bedpan and you crawl round like a cripple. You can't turn on your left side, or your right. If there's nobody there to turn you.

Girl. Why is there nobody there?

Short Soldier. Could turn out to be nobody.

Girl. Could that really happen?

Tall Soldier. Anything can happen in our fucked-up, egoistical life, we're fighting, fighting away, taking other people's lives for no reason, as if it meant nothing.

Girl. But you can turn from side to side – that's not fighting, that's absolutely necessary.

Short Soldier. If you can, then of course it's necessary. Bedsores form if there's no movement, when there's no friend or relative nearby to turn you from side to side. D'you know what bedsores are? It's when a person, a still living person, begins to rot on his back. A living person is lying there, rotting on his back. And he needs to turn over urgently, otherwise everything will rot. But nobody's there to turn this poor man on his side. And nature doesn't tolerate a vacuum. Putrefactive bacteria on the person's back see it as a beneficial, putrid, nutritious, free-loading haven, and where there's poor blood circulation they grow and proliferate, these putrefactive little microbes. These, in turn, bear fruit in

love with their microbial children. Then the worms come, too. These worms are only too ready to devour your rotten bedsores, to eat us, living people, alive. This execution is scarier than any war. I apologise, of course, that I started to speak of such things in front of a beautiful girl, when I only want to talk of something else... to speak of sublime love in imperishable words. But I'm tired and nervous here in the war, I'm afraid I'll die a crazy man, without ever falling in love with the most beautiful girl in the world... Although everyone calls me very brave, because I consider myself very brave.

Tall Soldier. That's not really true at all.

Girl. Of course. (*To the Short Soldier*) You understand everything so deeply, so openly-fearlessly.

Tall Soldier. Yes, he understands everything so deeply, so openly-fearlessly. He's a very brave man, a military man – being always ready to sincerely proceed straight ahead to victory over the enemy is the main thing.

Short Soldier. Okay, okay, whatever. I really do know everything that I really know, when I not only think, but also feel. And I always think sensitively in this way, therefore I feel like a thinker, like a general.

Girl. What worthy, intelligent general's soldiers you are.

Short Soldier. It's just always necessary to think specifically with a specific thought, and sensitively, too. How else? My children. Everything in our world is so absolutely sensitively mental that Absolute Mental Knowledge can only be comprehended by a subtly loving heart. Therefore we must believe in God, the One God, only with a feeling heart. You don't want to, you don't believe, you don't love with this brain of yours, but nevertheless, through this brain I don't love, through this terrible, catastrophically mathematical means I don't believe – I don't want to – it's necessary through force, overcoming all my pernicious atheistic thoughts, my unwillingness, you have to Believe, Believe Only To Believe – as the great prophets bequeathed to us. In war you realize most acutely that without Faith in God you will never meet the most charming girl on the battlefield, two hundred kilometres from the nearest settlement.

Tall Soldier. I Believe!

Girl. And me! And me!! And me!!!

Short Soldier. Thank you. What can I say. I Believe in this too!

Tall Soldier. You're such a good fellow – I didn't expect it. You're more than an intellectual – you're the nucleus of the people – a divine prophet.

Girl. We must be like him. We must be worthy of this prophet, this Chrysostom, in the war!!!

Short Soldier. Leave it out. Prophets get killed – I'm still alive and I want to live a while longer.

Girl. But in order not to die, even as a prophet in a peaceful life from these ill-fated bedsores, you only need take korenade.

Short Soldier. What's korenade?

Girl. Tablets.

Tall Soldier. Tablets?

Short Soldier. He says it's tablets.

Tall Soldier. Korenade?

Girl. Korenade.

Short Soldier. I never heard of these tablets.

Tall Soldier. They're imported?

Girl. Our own! Made here!

Short Soldier. Made here – that's better. As soon as you swallow a domestic pill you immediately feel you really swallowed some fucking metaphysical substance to the power of x in integral notation.

Tall Soldier. Are these pills made from natural ingredients?

Girl. Based on garlic.

Short Soldier. Garlic therapy has existed for centuries. Sehr gut.

Girl. Gut without a doubt, from centuries ago.

Short Soldier. Why korenade? They call garlic korenade now?

Girl. No, korenade is an anti-cancer agent found in all coloured vegetables and fruit. But korenade tablets provide this precious korenade in a very concentrated form. One korenade tablet has the same amount of this concentrated, precious korenade as several hundred kilograms of coloured vegetables and fruits. It's a fact. One pill in the morning, another in the evening, and you get a self-fulfilling-dosage – so prophesy, prophesy, please be a Prophet of this medicine!

Short Soldier. You already take it, this korenade pill?

Girl. I take them all the time. Are we friends now?

Short Soldier. Sorry, yes of course.

Girl. Excellent. My name's Elena.

Short Soldier. And I'm Charles. It's a pleasure, Elena. (*Kisses her hand.*)

Girl. Oh, it's a pleasure for me, Charles!

Tall Soldier. I'm Ferdinand.

Girl. Pleased to meet you, Ferdinand!

Tall Soldier (*kisses her hand*). My pleasure is a hundred times greater!

Short Soldier. So tell me, Elena, you already take this korenade yourself?

Girl. Of course I take it!

Tall Soldier. And it helps?

Girl. Of course it helps!

Short Soldier. So you don't have a stroke?

Girl. I don't know about strokes. I take korenade to protect me from cancer.

Short Soldier. You've got cancer?

Girl. No, I don't have cancer.

Short Soldier. So you treat yourself, just in case?

Girl. Yes.

Short Soldier. Wow, you're a real, pure natural, sincere medicinal girl, Elena!

Girl. I'm a very natural girl, Elena the eco-friendly, radiant, sunny medicinal girl! Thank you!

Tall Soldier. But we're talking about a stroke leading to bedsores. Let's be serious.

Short Soldier. Plague-fly-atherosclerosis! If a person has a stroke coming, it's right there on their nose! (*Points at the Tall Soldier's nose.*)

Girl. They get a stroke on their nose? (*Peers at the Tall Soldier's nose.*) I can't see a stroke on Ferdinand's nose.

Tall Soldier. Are you stupid or just pretending?

Girl. Just pretending.

Short Soldier. She's an absolutely real, very philosophical, insightful girl with a sincere and sparkling heart, a female mind here in a heroic war, listen to what she has to say, my friend.

Girl. I'm a very, completely real insightful girl with a sincere and sparkling heart, an intelligent female mind in this heroic war. Although I really want to undress and sunbathe... To fully convince you that I'm just a totally academic and very sensible girl.

Short Soldier. Well, of course, let's get undressed right away and sunbathe, what's the problem, we're very impatient to confirm that you're definitely this academic, sensible girl Elena. There's enough space for everybody under the sun.

Girl. Oh! Thank you for this brilliant resolution of such a difficult and eternal gender-cultural issue.

Tall Soldier. But... wait! I'm getting a hard-on!!!

Short Soldier. Well, get a hard-on, my friend, it's good for the health. I'm getting a hard-on too, but the thought will strengthen the hidden secret – Rozanov's boy is indisputable.

Tall Soldier. But I could get a stroke any minute!

Short Soldier. True. He's right, Elena. Just don't look at her. Let her calmly sunbathe for her health, but don't look at her – gaze calmly inside your soul, you'd do better to mentally compose intelligent poems in your mind right now, but I can give you a fountain pen and a sheet of white paper, even on a tablet.

Tall Soldier. But how can I calmly gaze inside my soul if she sunbathes naked here in front of us?

Short Soldier. How, how – it's elementary. If you stand with your back to her, like a castrated Origen – he spewed holy thoughts about love and

friendship. And I will face her – just like the Holy Spirit, like this. That’s the way. We’ll even continue talking about your stroke and ‘korenade’, so you feel even calmer. Everything very simple is elementarily solvable. **Girl.** Everything natural, pure and ingenious is always so easily solvable. (*She undresses behind the Tall Soldier.*)

Tall Soldier. But I’ve got eyes on my back!!!

Short Soldier. Where are your eyes on your back? Why are you fooling around, where are these eyes on your back?! (*Peers at his back.*) What an idiot. Says he has eyes on his back. Maybe you have eyes on your ass, too?

Tall Soldier. Who gave you the right to insult me in front of the Girl, you lout?!

Short Soldier. Lout?! And what are you on about in front of the Girl, saying you’ve got eyes on your back. Maybe you have eyes on your ass, too? It’s an insult, no messing.

Tall Soldier (*takes this to heart, sits on the tree stump*). I don’t have eyes on my ass. If I had eyes on my ass, I wouldn’t be able to sit on a stump.

Short Soldier. Why couldn’t you? You could close the eyes on your ass and sit on a stump to eat your pie. You see, Elena, what kind of idiot I have to contend with, you understand me?

Girl. Yes, I understand only too well. But maybe Ferdinand also has, according to him, a sick heart – but it’s only a military trick to mislead the enemy?

Short Soldier. You must hand it to her – she gives you truth from the heart, puts the truth out there on the front line. Admit it, Ferdinand – is your sick heart just to mislead the enemy?

Tall Soldier. My heart’s barely beating at all, guys. I’m in a bad way, a bad way. (*He lies down on the ground.*)

Girl. Is he dead? Ferdinand!

Short Soldier. We must take his pulse. (*Feels for Ferdinand’s pulse.*) Ferdinand, are you dead? Stop fooling around.

Tall Soldier. Can you feel my pulse?

Short Soldier. I can feel it.

Tall Soldier. Then I must be alive.

Girl. He’s alive! He’s alive, Charles!!! (*Flings her arms round Charles.*) What happened to you, Ferdinand?

Tall Soldier. I need my mother, I really need my mother. But she’s not here – my mother passed on from this world.

Girl. Listen, Charles, your Ferdinand is so restless, so defenseless, helpless, so sick – I understand your plight, Charles. I’ve fallen in love with him as deeply as you did, Charles.

Short Soldier. What makes you think I’m deeply in love with Ferdinand?

Girl. Well you didn’t kill Ferdinand your enemy – you didn’t finish him

off, not even when he was just now at death's door. You brought him to his senses with all your strength! That says a lot.

Short Soldier. Well, first of all, treachery and humanism aren't the last word as far as I'm concerned. And secondly, I thought he was a traitor and about to die anyway, by himself, without outside help. If the enemy perishes by himself, why interfere, why waste energy, nervous energy – not to mention bullets, when there's none left.

Tall Soldier. What a sophist you are, Charles, an impossible sophist!

Short Soldier. No, I'm not a sophist. It's just that bullets actually cost more than this dead Ferdinand. That's the reality, the truth of it. It's an unpleasant thought, yes, but it's still true, unbelieving traitors.

Girl. Why are we unbelieving traitors?

Short Soldier. What else are you? How can you sunbathe behind Ferdinand's back, then make up to him right in front of Charles. I was expecting it. As God is my judge, I expected treason! And me? I'm just endlessly naïvely talkative – which destroys me primitively.

Girl. But Charles, what's that got to do with it? We don't want any betrayal – we want everything to be open, very talkative-naïve, but not primitive, Charles!

Short Soldier. Open treason will still be the most heinous treason, you insignificant, vile little people from the underworld. Argh! (*Hand on heart.*) My own heart aches. (*He sits on the ground.*) And I was already dreaming that someone would need me in paralysis, in love... Fucky-fucky...

Girl. But Charles! (*Embraces Charles.*) No one here was going to cheat on you, Charles.

Short Soldier. I saw everything, Lenchka. I saw what kind of eyes you have.

Girl. What kind of eyes do I have?

Short Soldier. You have magical, bottomless, brown, gypsy eyes. And your hair is an aetherial brown, like the boundlessness of mystery... like magical flowers at Maytime... my beloved Lenchka – I love you so much that... I'm just dying... (*Clutches his heart, collapses on the ground.*)

Girl. How about that! Who would believe it!! Eh?! Charles! Don't die!! Charles!!! (*Shakes the Short Soldier.*)

Tall Soldier. Pulse! Take his pulse!

Girl (*feels for the Short Soldier's pulse*). Seems to be beating.

Short Soldier. I'm not dead, I'm not dead. (*Gets up.*) No need to rejoice so eloquently.

Tall Soldier. You really know how to pull a fast one, don't you.

Girl (*to the Short Soldier*). Are you jealous, Othello?

Short Soldier. Othello isn't jealous. Othello is suffering. Then he does

away with whoever's just asking for it, and whoever else, unfortunately, fortunately. C'est la vie – extinguish the candles – there is no happiness on earth or under the sun...

Girl. Ooh, I love you both so much, I love you equally. You're so different, but with so much personality. Unbelievable.

Short Soldier. You can't love both equally. What kind of family is that, for God's sake, if you love us both equally. I'd like to have my children with you, just our loved ones and relatives.

Tall Soldier. I'd like that too.

Short Soldier. To have kids you need at least more or less a right-angled erection, without any of this crippling low pressure.

Tall Soldier. I can get a hard-on. Very high and beautiful, it stands at ninety-five degrees. Want to check, dwarf with the high blood pressure?

Short Soldier. Periodically I check mine too, you know, you stroke-artiste.

Tall Soldier. You also got hit by a stroke. You keel over from your high-pressured heart like you've been knocked down – you don't know what to do, what korenaides to get.

Girl. But it's better than falling into bed from a stroke with low blood pressure. (*To the Short Soldier.*) Charlemagne.

Tall Soldier. What?

Short Soldier. Charlemagne?

Girl. Charlemagne.

Tall Soldier. But why is it worse to keel over from a stroke with low blood pressure in bed than to keel over from a stroke with high blood pressure, Lena?

Girl. Well, in some respects it's worse, but in other respects it's better, Ferdinand. (*Strokes the Tall Soldier's head.*)

Short Soldier. In what respect is it worse to keel over from a stroke with high blood pressure, may I ask?

Girl. Well, in what respect? If you have a stroke with low blood pressure, you can't even crawl two metres to the phone.

Tall Soldier. What?!

Girl. But in my opinion it's much worse when you have a stroke with high blood pressure. In that case you can call the neighbours, in time to call an ambulance. But then, even if an ambulance arrives and they give you some shots, either necessary or not, you'll still be paralyzed, immobile for the rest of your future life.

Tall Soldier. All the same I'd choose a stroke with high blood pressure. I'd rather lie in bed for another ten years in a living form, although motionless. I'd close my eyes and move wherever I wanted – to the Caribbean, or Hawaii. I'd find somewhere to go.

Short Soldier. And who'd take care of you in such a displaced immobile

state for ten miserable years of imprisonment, Ferdy?!

Tall Soldier. Whoever, I don't know who. I'm not asking you. And maybe Lenchka doesn't have to be asked.

Girl. He's right.

Short Soldier. Wha-at?! In your dreams. You stroke-ridden cripple, when your low-pressure stroke hits your brain you won't even crawl two metres to the phone. And he was dreaming about my stroke with high blood pressure, the bastard. Only so that Lenchka would take care of him.

Tall Soldier. Well, Lenchka wouldn't have brought me to this insidious stroke with low blood pressure. And that's it!

Short Soldier. What are you trying to infer? Lenchka wouldn't have brought you to this insidious stroke of yours with low blood pressure?!

Girl. No, I wouldn't!

Short Soldier. I see. There is still treason in the Danish kingdom. It's so funny, it's sad.

Girl. I wouldn't have brought you, Charles, to this terrible stroke with high blood pressure either, if we were only united by fate in love!

(Embraces Charles.)

Tall Soldier *(with tears in his eyes)*. You, you, my beloved Lenchka, are a prick-teaser! Charles! She's a prick-teaser! That's what she is! You must be very careful with her, Charles!!! Can't you see, she's spinning us around, it's like riding a scooter on broken asphalt!

Short Soldier. Well, a beautiful woman, Ferdy, has the right to roam wherever her animal nature takes her, sorry, wherever her picturesque soul and breasts and buttocks take her. Let her stretch her wings and shake off this demoralising household entropy – so that she really does correctly decide on one of us, without a moment's doubt, now and forever. And you, Lena, don't take chances, time only marches on towards death from this fucking stroke. I want to live, and not in a bed with bedsores only on my back.

Girl. Well, how will I choose you – on what basis, if I like you both to the point of losing my super-warm-hearted female reason?

Short Soldier. Well, your super-warm heart is indeed spiritual and sublime, but you have to choose on the basis of male, reduced lethality.

Tall Soldier. Cicero.

Girl. Cicero the glorious. *(Gives the Short Soldier a smacking kiss.)*

Tall Soldier. Leave it out, if Cicero is the second, I'm the first to leave. *(Makes to leave.)*

Girl *(stops him)*. But I chose you, my dear Ferdinand-Cicero – with all my exalted heart I will live only with you and for you.

Short Soldier. Wha-at? What about me – I'm no longer your first dear Cicero?

Girl. You're a good man, very good, my smartest first Charles-Cicero, but I want to be one with Ferdy, with Ferdinand. He's so tall, kind, strong – he won't let anyone offend me, you're smart – you understand – you'll be our best friend.

Tall Soldier. It's a wonder how wonderful she is, Charles! The blessed Elena!!! (*Kisses the Girl.*)

Short Soldier. Ferdy, can't you see what she's up to! She shamelessly ignored the potential stroke of poor me from high blood pressure, so she wouldn't sit at my bedside with my future stroke-paralysis for ten painful hard-labour years in the future. You, Ferdy, get a stroke with low blood pressure, and you instantly fly off to Tartarus forevermore. This Lena girl won't have to suffer with you.

Girl. That's not true, Ferdy, don't listen to him, he's a bastard.

Short Soldier. I'm a bastard only because of my honesty and the frankness of my intuitive mind, of course.

Tall Soldier. Charles! Lenchka!! Charles!!! Charles, you evoke such inhumanly human feelings in me, Charles! (*Puts his hand on the short soldier's shoulder*). You know, Charles – you should know who Ferdinand is. I... I... How sad I am – immensely sad, but... but I make way for you, take our heavenly Lenchka, Charles.

Girl. Wha-at????!!!

Tall Soldier. Lenchka, I concede you to the great, wise, Confucian Charles – may you know heavenly happiness in love, earthly beings.

Short Soldier. Thanks, Ferdinand – you're a true connoisseur of the most beautiful truth – I never stopped believing in you, as in God, not for a moment. (*Hugs the Tall Soldier.*)

Girl. But I don't want him!!! I don't want Charles!!! I want Ferdinand!!! Ferdinand!!! (*Weeps.*)

Short Soldier. Do you see, Ferdy, how this little girl, this little bird, sings so realistically and stylishly?

Tall Soldier. I see it – I see everything through my tears.

Short Soldier. Little girl, little girl, Lenchka-Marusya. Who's going to ask you here in the war what you want, what you don't want? Okay, kiddies, you know Charles's heart is stricken by high blood pressure – I yield to you, Lenusya, Ferdinand – only don't cry, it gets on my nerves, they're already worn down to bacilli.

Girl. I'm not crying. I don't need Ferdinand any more, either. You men can do anything you like. You can be unfaithful, give up the women you love, declare war, surrender young lads to the war, fill your pockets with dollars, and at the same time say that Peace is pointless, worse than wars – for future wars. In short, if you want to apportion me to one or the other, go ahead and fight to the death right now, before my very eyes. Whoever is the winner, I'll love him to death.

Short Soldier. You want blood spilled, Girl?

Girl. Yes, I want blood spilled, Tom Thumb.

Short Soldier. Well, what a transformation, from angel to full-on vixen. Well I never, it turns out she's such an incredible, bloodthirsty, old-fashioned girl – straight out of ignorantly gross chivalrous times. I'm not the goatibexical sheep whose blood you want spilled. I'm a sabre-toothed tiger, I'm warning you. It's Ferdy over there has a goatish whiff to him, but with sharp horns too, if need be.

Girl. What have all these animals got to do with anything, Charles, Ferdinand!

Short Soldier. But you want our blood, you goatibex, godammit!

Girl. What's a goatibex got to do with it? I'm not a goatibex. It was always like that – the girl goes to the winner! You're still fighting, anyway.

Short Soldier. We wanted to make peace, unhappy one – we truly wanted to make peace, and not for future wars, as you rightly, sacredly say, golden girl.

Tall Soldier. In short, here's a rusty bayonet (*gives the Girl the bayonet*), all the same you'll slay whoever you wish as your goat.

Girl. No, you're not goatibexes, for God's sake... Let's live all three of us together – but we must go on living. You agree?! Or I'll stab myself with this bayonet.

Short Soldier. Give me that weapon! (*Confiscates the bayonet.*) Suicide's not an option.

Tall Soldier. What shall we do?

Short Soldier. What shall we do, what shall we do?? I don't know what to do. She's suggesting love in a threesome. You agree to that?

Tall Soldier. Surely that's better than just killing one another?

Short Soldier. Otherwise we'll morally die in this apparently immoral world. Can you really live with this slut in a threesome, in a morally immoral threesome?

Girl. I'm not a slut yet!

Short Soldier. Let's start living together as a threesome – then you'll be a slut right away, my dear.

Girl. And I dream of being a slut, my dears!!!

Tall Soldier. You dream of being a slut, Lena?

Girl. I dream of being a slut, guys – but only with you! Aah...

Two soldiers with Kalashnikovs leap onstage from different directions and shoot the Short Soldier and Tall Soldier point-blank.

One Soldier (*approaches the Tall Soldier*). Ha, one of ours, you bitch, Chizhik, traitor, bastard.

The Other Soldier (*approaches the Short Soldier*). Ha, one of ours, you bitch, Pyzhik, traitor, bastard.

With cries of 'bitch', 'bastard', 'swine', they shoot one another.

Girl. But whose bitch am I? I'm nobody's bitch. Just nobody's, nobody's bitch, nobody's slut... (*Clutches her heart, grows weak. She lies down on the ground and... falls quiet.*)

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