





Stalker

Stalker is a 1979 art film directed by Andrei Tarkovsky, with a screenplay written by Boris and Arkady Strugatsky, loosely based on their novel Roadside Picnic.

- **Release date:** [October 20, 1982 \(USA\)](#)
- **Director:** [Andrei Tarkovsky](#)
- **Adapted from:** [Roadside Picnic](#)
- **Screenplay:** [Andrei Tarkovsky](#), [Arkady Strugatsky](#), [Boris Strugatsky](#)
- **Cinematography:** [Alexander Knyazhinsky](#), [Georgy Rerberg](#), [Leonid Kalashnikov](#)

Cast

[Alexander Kaidonovsky](#)

Stalker

[Anatoly Solonitsyn](#)

Writer

[Nikolai Grinko](#)

Professor

[Alisa Freindlich](#)

Stalker's Wife

[Natasha Abramova](#)

Marta

Titles. Behind them there's a dark worn-down bar. In the beginning, it is empty, then a barman appears, the light is turned on. Professor comes in; barman serves him coffee and goes behind the bar. Professor drinks coffee. The titles are over; a text is on the screen:

...What was it? Did a meteor fall down?
Was it a visit by citizens of the vast space?
So or otherwise in our little country appeared
the greatest miracle of miracles – the ZONE.
We sent there the troops immediately.
They did not come back.
Then we surrounded the ZONE with police cordons...
And, I suppose, that was the right thing to do...
Actually, I don't know, I don't know...

From an interview with Professor Wallace, the receiver of Nobel's prize, by a journalist of RAI.

Half-dark room, there is a bed at the back wall, in which Stalker, his wife and daughter are lying (there can be heard the sound of a passing train). The wife and the daughter are asleep; Stalker is lying still and looking at his daughter. On the chair besides the bed there is some cotton wool, some kind of medicine and a glass with water. The camera travels: chair, wife, daughter, Stalker, looking at the daughter, daughter, wife who has waked up, chair.

Stalker gets up quietly, takes the watch from the back of the bed, and puts his pants and shoes on. He goes out of the room and, looking at his wife and daughter, softly closes the door. He goes to the kitchen, lights the gas water heater and washes himself.

The lamp flashes and burns out.

The wife appears in the door; she has a sterilizer and a syringe in her hands.

WIFE: Why did you take my watch? Where do you intend to be going, I ask you?! Didn't you promise me, I trusted you! All right, you do not care about yourself. What about us? Think about your child! She is not used to you yet, and you get back to your old business?!

Stalker washes his teeth.

WIFE: I got so old, you destroyed me!

STALKER: Quieter, you'll wake up the Little Monkey.

WIFE: I cannot wait all the time. I'll die!

Stalker rinses his mouth, goes to the window and picks up a plate.

WIFE: You were about to start working! Weren't you promised a normal human job!

STALKER: (eats) I'll be back soon.

WIFE: Oh! It's the prison you'll be back to! Only now you will get not five years, but ten! And nothing will you have all these ten years! No Zone, and ... nothing! And I ... in these ten years I will die (cries)!

STALKER: God, the prison! Every place for me is a prison. Let me go!

WIFE: I won't (tries to hold him)!

STALKER: (pushes her away) Let me go, don't you hear!

WIFE: I won't!

Stalker goes to the room: Little Monkey sits in the bed: Stalker comes back with a jacket in his hands and goes out, slamming the door. A towel falls down.

WIFE: (shouts) Go! Hope you're not coming back! D**ned be the day, when I met you, you scum! God himself cursed you with such a child! And me too because of you, scoundrel! You scum!

She falls on the floor, sobbing and writhing in a hysteric seizure (there can be heard sounds of a passing train and music from Wagner's Lohengrin).

Going out of the home, Stalker crosses a railway bed and stops. There can be heard the voice of Writer.

WRITER: My dear! The world is absolutely dull, and that is why there's neither telepathy, nor ghosts, nor flying saucers ... and there cannot be anything of the kind. Iron laws control the world and it's intolerably boring. And these laws, alas, cannot be broken. They're not able to.

Writer talks nervously going around the Lady.

WRITER: And believe not in the flying saucers. That would be all too interesting.

LADY: And what about the Bermuda triangle? Are you also going to argue that...?

WRITER: I am going to argue. There's no Bermuda triangle. There's a triangle ABC, which is even to a triangle A'B'C'. Do you feel, what a doleful boredom this statement rooms? However, in the middle ages it was interesting. In every home there was a house-spirit, in every church – God... People were young! Now each fourth is an old man. Boring, my angel, oh how boring.

They stand besides an elegant car. Ship docks are in the background, a name of one ship visible is Kobaja.

LADY: But didn't you say yourself that the Zone is an outcome of a supreme civilization, which...

WRITER: That's probably also boring. The same sort of laws, triangles, and absolutely no house-spirits and, of course, no God. Because in case God is the same triangle... hmm, then I simply do not know...

The Lady laughs coquettishly. She is dressed fashionably and her hair is done. The Writer does not look that dejected as Stalker and is dressed quite well. Writer notices Stalker.

WRITER: Ah... He's after me. Wonderful! Good-bye, dear friend. Ah... I'm sorry, mm... (to Stalker) This lady kindly agreed to go with us to the Zone. She is a brave woman. Her name is ... ah ... I'm sorry, I think, your name is ... ah...

LADY: So are you really a stalker?

Stalker appears, goes toward the car.

STALKER: Now... I'll explain everything. (to the Lady indistinctly) Go...

LADY: Idiot!

She climbs in the car and drives away with Writer's hat on the roof. Writer reaches for his head.

STALKER: All the same you got drunk.

WRITER: Me? What do you mean? I just drank a little, as half of the world's inhabitants. The other half, yes, gets drunk. Women and children included. And I simply drank a little (takes a sip from a bottle).

They come to the bar. Stalker goes inside; Writer slips on the porch and falls.

WRITER: D**n all that spill (enters)...

The bar. Professor drinks coffee by the table. He seems to be sullen and reserved. He wears a jacket and a dark skiing cap; by his feet there lies a rucksack. Stalker shakes hands with the barman, says something to him and turns to the Professor.

STALKER: Drink, drink, it's still early.

WRITER: (comes to them) What now? Maybe let's get some drink before we go on, ah? What do you think (puts his bottle on the Professor's table, takes some glasses from the bar)?

STALKER: Take it away...

WRITER: Ok, I see. The Eighteenth Amendment. Alcoholism is the scourge of peoples. All right, let's drink beer (goes to the barman, who pours him some beer).

PROFESSOR: (to Stalker, unsatisfied) Say, is he going with us?

STALKER: It's ok, he'll get sober. He also needs to go there.

WRITER: And you ... are you really a professor?

PROFESSOR: If it pleases you. If you wish...

Writer puts the glasses with beer on the table.

WRITER: Ok, so let me introduce myself. My name is...

STALKER: Your name is Writer.

PROFESSOR: All right, so what's my name?

STALKER: You ... you are called Professor.

WRITER: Aha, I see, I'm a writer, and everybody indeed for some reason calls me Writer.

PROFESSOR: And what do you write about?

WRITER: Oh, about the readers.

PROFESSOR: It's clear that there's nothing else worth writing about...

WRITER: Of course. It's not worth to write at all. About nothing. And you ... are you a chemist?

PROFESSOR: Actually, I'm a physicist.

WRITER: It must be boring too. The search for the truth. It is hiding, you look for it everywhere, and you dig here and there. You dug at one place – aha, the nucleus is made of protons! You dug in another place – what a beauty: triangle ABC is equal to the triangle A'B'C'. My case is though different. I'm digging for that truth and at the same time there happens something with it, so that I was digging out truth, but it appeared to be a piece of, sorry, I will not say what.

Stalker coughs. Professor looks solemnly at the table.

WRITER: Good for you! Say, there stands an antique pot in the museum. It was used to throw leavings in and now it's an object of everybody's adoration because of the laconic ornament and inimitable form. And everybody sings the praises... And suddenly it becomes clear, that it isn't antique at all, but it was one jester who slipped it to the archaeologists ... in order to make some fun. The praises, however, end. Connoisseurs...

PROFESSOR: And you think about it all the time?

WRITER: God protect! I never think too often. It's unhealthy for me...

PROFESSOR: It's impossible to write and at the same time always think about success or, let's say, the other way round, about failure.

WRITER: Natürlich! However, from the other side, if nobody reads me after a hundred years, so why should I write at all? Tell me, Professor, why were you entangled into this ... this story? Ah? What do you want from the Zone?

PROFESSOR: Well, I'm in a way a scientist... But why do you need it? A popular writer. Female admirers must be falling under your feet.

WRITER: Inspiration, Professor. Lost inspiration. I'm going to ask for it.

PROFESSOR: So you mean that you wrote yourself out?

WRITER: What? Yeah... I think so, in a way.

STALKER: Do you hear? It's our train (looks at his watch).

Stalker takes a dark bundle out of his pocket, Professor gives him the keys, must be, of a car.

STALKER: Yes, did you take the roof of the car off?

PROFESSOR: I did, I did...

Writer and Professor go out to the porch.

STALKER: (to the barman) Lüker, if I do not come back, visit my wife.

Barman nods and Stalker leaves.

On the porch Writer looks around and returns to the door.

WRITER: Hell, I forgot to buy cigarettes.

Professor stops him, still standing inside the bar.

WRITER: What?

PROFESSOR: Do not return – you should not do that.

WRITER: Why so?

PROFESSOR: You mustn't.

WRITER: You are all of the same kind.

PROFESSOR: What kind?

WRITER: That believes in all that nonsense. So I'll have to keep it for a rainy day (goes out of the view). Are you really a scientist?

Stalker leaves the bar.

"Land rover" (licence plate number M 46721) is parked somewhere nearby, the street is dirty, all puddles, it's raining. Writer and Professor go toward the car; splashing in the puddles Stalker comes running to them. They get in the car, lights are turned on and "land rover" goes through also dirty side streets, turns creaking to some kind of gates and brakes suddenly. Stalker jumps out of the car and falls flat on the ground.

STALKER: Get down! Don't move!

Professor and Writer bend down, so that they cannot be seen behind the low sides of the car. On the wall to the left there can be seen a graffiti – initials "A. K." Further away appears a motorcyclist, comes nearer and it becomes clear that he is a police officer. There is a sign on his helmet, letters A and T set together. He drives away; Stalker gets in the car again, turns around and drives away.

"Land rover" stops by an open gate to some premises, probably a warehouse.

STALKER: Look if there is anybody there. (Writer gets out of the car, runs through the gate, and looks around.) Make haste, my God!

WRITER: There's nobody here.

STALKER: Go to that exit!

"Land rover" drives away. It can be seen through the gates, that a diesel locomotive follows it. By the exit at the opposite side Writer gets into the car, and Stalker notices immediately, that a motorcyclist appeared again in the street.

STALKER: So how did you, Writer!..

He stops the car, rears, police officer on the motorbike drives out to the street and Stalker drives the "land rover" on.

The gates bar the railway, seemingly somewhere very nearby, on the same street. A railway man opens the wire gates, letting the locomotive with platforms pass; it's loaded with huge insulators. Immediately after it the "land rover" jumps in, the railway man looks after it, closes the gate and runs away. A police officer on the motorbike drives through the street.

Half dark cellar. "Land rover" drives in; Stalker gets out of the car.

STALKER: Look around here, please.

He goes further in, to the window and sees how railway man runs away from the gate.

STALKER: Did you remember to take the tank?

PROFESSOR: It's here, full (goes to another window).

Writer, sitting in the car, continues the dialog with Professor.

WRITER: Here I told you recently... It's all lies. I don't give a nuts to all this inspiration. Moreover, how should I know, how should I call that... what I want? And how should I know that I do not want that what I want? Or, let's say, that I actually do not want that what I do not want? It's all these empirical things: if you name them, their meaning disappears, melts, vaporizes... like a jellyfish in the sun. Have you ever seen that? My consciousness desires the victory of vegetarianism in the whole world, but my unconsciousness dreams about a piece of juicy meat. And what do I want?

Professor listens standing by the window.

WRITER: I...

PROFESSOR: To rule the entire world...

STALKER: Silence!

PROFESSOR: ...at least. What do they need a locomotive in the Zone for?

STALKER: It serves the guards. It's not going further. They don't like to go there.

A cordon by the railway: a barrier, two buildings on the sides of the railway, spotlights. A police officer runs across the railway. There can be heard some voices, probably through the loudspeakers (...Everybody to their places! Is everyone in their places? ... The guards came. And switch off the TV ... Look also underneath it...).

The barrier rises. The locomotive with the platforms enters the premises of the cordon; police officers surround and search the train.

Stalker observes the scene through the window, runs to the car.

STALKER: Hurry up!

"Land rover" leaves the cellar, brakes screeching on the turn.

The train leaves the cordon through the gates; Stalker's car jumps in after them and immediately turns aside. Police officers open fire, the siren wails. The bullets crush the porcelain insulators on the platform, cut a console with wires from a lamppost. "Land rover" enters a yard. Shooting continues, boxes fall down in the yard, a windowpane falls out.

The car stops by the ruins: remains of the wall protrude from the ground; the space between them is flooded.

STALKER: Listen, go and look if there is a trolley (dresine) on the railway over there?

WRITER: What dresine?

STALKER: Go, go...

Writer gets out of the car and goes forward. Shots. Bullets fall nearby and frightened Writer falls down into the flora.

PROFESSOR: Go back, I'll do it myself.

Professor passes the Writer and carefully goes on by the border of an immense bog. Sub-machine gun serials; bullets fall into the water.

On a railway tracks there stands a dresine. Splashing across the water Professor goes to it, frees the brakes, tries if the wheels are free, and waves his hand. "Land rover" drives over.

STALKER: The tank!

WRITER: D**n it (gets the tank, Stalker remembers his bag)...

Stalker and Writer, gasping for air, make their way to the dresine. Writer hauls the tank.

STALKER: Come on!

Professor puts the tank and his rucksack on the dresine.

WRITER: Throw away that rucksack of yours! It's inconvenient.

PROFESSOR: It's you, as I can see, who's going light, like for a walk.

Shots. Bullets reach the water besides the dresine.

STALKER: If anybody is hit, do not scream, do not fuss: if they come to see you – they'll kill you... Later, when it gets quieter, crawl back to the cordon. You'll be picked up in the morning.

Stalker starts the engine of the dresine and they leave.

The dresine rumbles by a dump, by some buildings.

WRITER: Can they catch up with us?

STALKER: No way... They are afraid of it as of fire.

WRITER: Of what?

A long journey on the dresine. Writer dozes, Professor is solemn and calm, Stalker intensely gazes at the surroundings.

The dresine stops on a high slope (colors).

STALKER: Here we are... Now we're home.

PROFESSOR: How quiet!

STALKER: It's the quietest place in the world. You'll see it for yourself later. It's so beautiful here! There isn't a soul here...

WRITER: But we are here!

STALKER: Well, three people cannot ruin everything here in one day.

WRITER: Why they cannot? They can.

STALKER: How strange! The flowers do not smell. I... Can you feel the smell?

WRITER: A marsh stinks – that I can smell.

STALKER: No, no, it's the river. There's a river... There had been a flowerbed not so far away. But Porcupine tramped it down, evened it with mud! The smell though stayed here long. For many years...

PROFESSOR: Why did he ... tramp it?

STALKER: I don't know. I also asked him "why?" And he used to say: later you will understand it yourself. I think he simply hated ... the Zone.

WRITER: Is it a kind of s-surname – Porcupine?

STALKER: Of course, not. It's a nickname, just as yours. He led people into the Zone for many years and nobody could stop him. My teacher. He opened my eyes. And he wasn't called Porcupine then, he was called just – the Teacher. And later happened something with him, something broke inside of him. Maybe, I deem, he was punished. Help me. Here are the metal nuts; these strings of gauze must be tied to them. I'll take a little walk, I think. I need there... (pause) Just don't stroll too far away here.

Stalker gives the bag to Professor and leaves. Professor stands and searches the bag, with his back to the viewer.

WRITER: Where is he going?

PROFESSOR: Maybe he just wants to be alone.

WRITER: Why? It's not too comfortable here to be three.

PROFESSOR: A date with the Zone. He is a stalker.

WRITER: So what?

PROFESSOR: You see... To be a stalker is in a way a calling.

WRITER: I imagined him otherwise.

PROFESSOR: How?

WRITER: Well, various Leather Stockings, Chingachgooks, Big Serpents...

PROFESSOR: His biography is more terrible. He was jailed several times, he was mutilated here. And his daughter is a mutant, a victim of the Zone, as it is said. She is presumably without legs.

WRITER: And what about that ... Porcupine? And what does it mean "was punished"? Is it a figurative expression?

PROFESSOR: One fine day Porcupine came back from here and suddenly became rich. Unbelievably rich.

WRITER: Do you call that a punishment?

PROFESSOR: And after a week, he hanged himself.

WRITER: Why (intends to sit down, springs up)?

PROFESSOR: Silence!

There can be heard a strange wailing sound.

WRITER: What's this now?

A field or forest outskirts. There are some metal objects lying in the grass, a tree is covered with cobwebs. In the distance there can be seen an abandoned building. Stalker kneels in the grass face to the building, then lies down into the thick tall grass; a millipede is going across his hand. Then he turns over and lies on his back with eyes closed.

Professor sits on a sleeper, Writer stands beside him.

PROFESSOR: About 20 years ago there fell kind of a meteorite. It burned down a village. People looked for that meteorite, but, of course, they didn't find anything.

WRITER: Hmm, why "of course"?

PROFESSOR: Later people began to vanish here. Went there and didn't come back.

WRITER: So?

PROFESSOR: (speaks while he ties the gauze to three metal nuts) So they decided finally ... that that meteorite ... is not really a meteorite. To begin with, they put up a fence with barbed wire, that the curious ones wouldn't take risks. Then people started to talk, that somewhere in the Zone there is a place, where one's wishes come true. And of course ... the Zone came to be guarded as the pupil of the eye. Who knows what wishes one can get?

WRITER: And what was it, if not a meteorite?

PROFESSOR: I tell you, it's not clear.

WRITER: And what do you think yourself?

PROFESSOR: I don't have a slightest idea. Everything you'd like. A message for the people, one of my colleagues says ... or a gift.

WRITER: Quite a gift it is. Why did they need this?

STALKER: (voice) To make us happy!

Stalker climbs up the slope, a console from the pole falls down, and he goes to the dresine.

STALKER: The flowers blossom again, simply they do not smell anymore of one reason or another. I beg your pardon that I left you here, but it was anyway too early to go. (The strange sound can be heard again.)

WRITER: Oh, did you hear?

PROFESSOR: (gives the metal nuts to Stalker) Perhaps it's true, that somebody lives there.

STALKER: Who?

PROFESSOR: You told me that story. That one about the tourists who were standing here when the Zone appeared.

STALKER: There's nobody in the Zone and nobody can be here. All right, it's time to go...

Stalker starts the engine of the empty dresine (handcar), picks his bag from it at the last moment and the trolley disappears into a fog with a soft rumble. Everybody looks after it.

WRITER: How are we going to return?

STALKER: One does not return here...

WRITER: What do you mean?

STALKER: Let's go, as we have agreed. Each time I will show the direction. It's dangerous to diverge from this direction. The first landmark – that last pole (shows). Go... You go first, Professor. (Professor goes down the slope.) Your turn. (Writer coughs slightly.) Try to follow his footsteps.

Writer goes down, goes on keeping a rather long distance to the Professor. Stalker observes how they are going.

Rusted half-rotten bus, inside it there is something like human remains. Stalker and Professor appear, and then Writer comes after them. Professor casts a glance inside the bus, turns aside. Writer looks at the remains and is frightened.

WRITER: My God! And where are... Why had they been left here? People?!

STALKER: Who knows? I just remember how they loaded at our station, preparing to go here, into the Zone. I was a little boy then. Everybody thought then, that somebody wants to occupy us. Wise guys (casts a metal nut, it falls into the grass between the remains of war machines)... Go on, Professor. (Professor goes.) You, Writer...

Writer casts a frightened glance at the bus again, goes down. Stalker follows him. There is a meadow in front of them and half-rotten war machines lie here and there: tanks, armored carriers. Professor picks up the metal nut, Writer joins him, Stalker comes and gets the metal nut from Professor and casts it again. Writer goes first and picks up the nut. Professor comes to him, they look at something.

STALKER: (the three of them standing together) There is your Room. We're going there.

WRITER: Are you trying to raise the price, or what? It's just a couple of paces away!

STALKER: Yeah, but the paces must be extremely long. That's not possible for us (casts a metal nut in another direction).

The nut falls into the grass. Professor approaches it very carefully and picks it up. Writer saunters after him whistling. Reaching Professor, Writer bends, pulls a wire tied to a little tree and keeps on whistling.



STALKER: (frightened) Leave it! It's forbidden (picks up a piece of a metal pipe, lying on a metal block)! Don't... Do not touch! (casts the metal object, it does not hit Writer; goes towards Writer, shouting) Stop touching it!

WRITER: What are you doing? Are you nuts? What do you mean?

STALKER: I told you, it's not a place for peaceful walks. The Zone requires respect to itself. Otherwise, it punishes.

WRITER: "Punishes"!.. Just try once again something similar... Don't you have a tongue?

STALKER: I asked you!

PROFESSOR: Are we going there?

STALKER: Yes, climb up, enter and ... immediately to the left. All the same, we are not going that way. We'll go round.

WRITER: Why?

STALKER: One does not go that way. In the Zone on the whole the straight way is not the ... shortest. The longer the way is, the lesser the risk.

WRITER: Well, if you go straight ahead, so what – is it deadly?

PROFESSOR: You're told that it's dangerous.

WRITER: But the roundabout way is not so?

STALKER: It's dangerous too, but I tell you: one does not go that way here.

WRITER: People do not go all kind of ways. Say, if I anyway...

PROFESSOR: Listen, you ... what...

WRITER: So we are supposed to plod somewhere to go round! While here everything's in front of one's nose. Here it's risky, and there it's risky. What a hell!

STALKER: You know you take it very light-minded.

WRITER: I'm fed up with all these metal nuts and gauze. To hell with it! You do as you wish, but I'll go!

PROFESSOR: But he is simply irresponsible!

WRITER: You yourself, you know (takes out a bottle)...

STALKER: (very politely) May I?..

Writer gives him the bottle. Stalker goes a little aside.

STALKER: The wind rises ... can you feel? The grass (pours the liquor out of the bottle and puts it on a concrete block)...

WRITER: All right then, especially now.

PROFESSOR: What "especially now"?

Professor and Writer start to go. Professor goes a little bit in front, casts glances at Writer as if he wanted to say something, but cannot bring himself to do it. Stalker catches up with them.

STALKER: Stop (puts his hand on Writer's arm)!

WRITER: Hands off!

STALKER: All right. Let then Professor be a witness that I did not send you there. You go there yourself, of your own free will...

WRITER: Myself and of free will. What else?

STALKER: (very softly) Nothing. Go. (Writer goes.) And may God help you to succeed.

Writer goes rather far away.

STALKER: (shouts) Listen! If you suddenly notice something or even only feel something, something specific, come immediately back. Otherwise...

WRITER: Just do not throw any metal gadgets at me.

Writer goes slowly towards the building. He stops, looks around, very slowly continues his walk, then stops. The wind rises. A cobweb or a translucent cloth falls down at the entrance of the building.

VOICE: (off screen) Halt! Do not move!

Stalker and Professor look towards the building. Stalker climbs on a concrete block, glances at Professor.

STALKER: Why did you?

PROFESSOR: What "why"?

STALKER: Why did you stop him?

PROFESSOR: How come? I thought it was you...



Writer stands still for a moment, then hastily, panting runs back.

WRITER: What happened? Why did you stop me?

STALKER: I did not stop you.

WRITER: (to Professor) Who then? You? (Professor shrugs his shoulders.) D**n it...

PROFESSOR: Well done, citizen Shakespeare. It's frightening to go forward; it's a shame to go back. Therefore, you commanded yourself in a strange voice. You even became sober out of fear.

WRITER: What?

STALKER: Cut it.

WRITER: W-why did you empty my bottle?

STALKER: (screams) Cut it now; I insist (goes to the side)! The Zone – it's ... a very complicated system ... of traps, let's call it, and all of them are deadly. I do not know what happens here, when humans are away, but if only people appear here, everything starts moving. Previous traps disappear, the new ones emerge. The safe places become impassable and the way one moment is simple and easy, the other – turns to be insuperably complicated. This is the Zone. It may even seem that it is capricious, but in every moment it is such as we made it ourselves ... with our inner state. I will not hide, it has happened, that people were forced to return empty-handed from the halfway. There were also such who ... perished on the very doorstep of the Room. Nevertheless, everything what happens here, depend not on the Zone, but on us!

WRITER: The good ones it lets pass and it cuts the head off for the bad ones...

STALKER: N-no, I do not know. I'm not sure. It seems to me, that it lets pass those who has ... no more hope left. Not the bad or the good, but the ... unhappy? However, even the unhappiest one will perish with ease if he does not know how to behave! You were lucky, it warned you, but it may have happened otherwise!..

PROFESSOR: You know, I think I'd prefer to wait for you here, until you go back, made happy (takes the rucksack off, sits down).

STALKER: It's impossible!

PROFESSOR: Believe me; I have sandwiches with me, thermos...

STALKER: First, you cannot endure here an hour without me.

PROFESSOR: And second?

STALKER: Second, here one does not return the same way one comes.

PROFESSOR: And anyway, I'd prefer to...

STALKER: Then all of us go back immediately. I will return you the money. Of course, minus a certain sum. For ... well, for trouble, or what...

WRITER: So, Professor, you got sober?

PROFESSOR: All right (gets up, puts on the rucksack). Cast your nut.

Stalker casts a nut. Professor goes forth, Writer and Stalker – after him. Writer is smoking. A cuckoo can be heard not so far away.

Titles of the second part. Behind the titles – Stalker, he looks around and goes forth.

Stalker stands by a building. A cuckoo can be heard louder.

STALKER: Hey! Where are you? Come here!

Writer lies on the stones, Professor is sitting beside him.

STALKER: What, are you tired?

Professor stands up coughing slightly, he is tired.

WRITER: Oh, God! He'll preach a sermon again, it seems... According to his tone...

There can be heard a rumbling sound. Water in a well is disturbed and choppy, subsides slowly. At the same time, Stalker's voice can be heard off-screen.

STALKER: Let it come true what has been planned. Let them believe. And let them laugh at their passions; for what they call a passion is only a friction between the soul and the outer world. And above all, let them believe in themselves and become helpless as children, because weakness is great and strength is worthless...

Stalker makes his way on the cornice of a wall, presumably, it's a dam. His inner monologue continues.

STALKER: ...When a man is born, he is weak and supple, when he dies – he is strong and callous. When a tree grows, it is tender and gentle, and when it is dry and hard, it dies. Hardness and strength are companions of the death, suppleness and weakness express the freshness of living. That is why what has hardened, will not win (enters a metal tunnel, speaks aloud). Come here! (Writer and Professor appear.) We're going quite well. The "dry tunnel" will be soon, there it will be easier.

WRITER: Take care not to put an evil eye.

PROFESSOR: What, are we leaving right now?

STALKER: Of course, why?

PROFESSOR: Wait! I thought that you ... that you only want to show something for us! What about my rucksack?

STALKER: And what happened to the rucksack?

PROFESSOR: What "what happened"? I left it there! I didn't know that we are already going on!

STALKER: Now you cannot do anything.

PROFESSOR: No way. We must return.

STALKER: It's impossible!

PROFESSOR: But I cannot continue without the rucksack!

STALKER: Here one does not come back! Remember, nobody ever returned the same way here!

Professor looks confused around.

WRITER: Spit upon that rucksack. What do you have in it – diamonds?

STALKER: You forgot where you are going. The room will give you anything you wish.

WRITER: Indeed. You'll get loaded with rucksacks.

PROFESSOR: And how far is it to that very Room?

STALKER: Straight – about two hundred meters. In a straight line, but straight lines do not exist here, that's the problem... Let's go.

They go to the exit.

WRITER: Leave that crawling empiricism of yours, Professor. The miracle is not in the empirics. Remember how Saint Peter nearly drowned.

Stalker stops before something we cannot see, and drops a metal nut down there. Splash.

STALKER: Go, Writer.

WRITER: Where to?

STALKER: Down that ladder. (Writer goes.) Professor, where are you?

Stalker goes to the ladder. Down there is a river. Professor's and Writer's bags by the similar entrance, where a metal nut is hanged. There are several lamps, and waterfall. Stalker and Writer look around. In front of them there is an exit or an entrance, the torrents of the water, crashing from the dam. Stalker and Writer stop.

STALKER: Here's the "dry tunnel"!

WRITER: Very dry it is!

STALKER: It's a local joke. Usually you have to swim here! (Goes against the torrent under the ark of the dam, securing the way with a stick.)

WRITER: Wait, but where is Professor?

STALKER: What?

WRITER: Professor disappeared!

STALKER: Professor! Hey, Professor! How could you! He was going behind you all the time!

WRITER: He fell back, it seems, and got lost.

STALKER: He did not get lost! He went back perhaps after the rucksack! Now he will not make it!

It gets darker.

WRITER: Perhaps we should wait a little?

STALKER: We cannot wait here! Every minute everything changes. The two of us will have to continue!..

The rumble of the water gets quieter, it becomes lighter. There can be seen cracked tile floor, right in the water smolders live coal. There can be heard voices off-screen.

WRITER: Look, what's this? Where is it from?

STALKER: I have explained that to you!

WRITER: What have you "explained"?

STALKER: It's the Zone, do you understand? The Zone! Make haste, here... Let's go!..

The floor is covered with water; there are syringes, a sterilizer and pieces of paper in it (calendar, 27th).

Writer and Stalker exit the tunnel and meet Professor who is sitting by the fire and drinking coffee.

WRITER: Here he is!

PROFESSOR: I am of course rather grateful that you ... only...

STALKER: How did you get here?

PROFESSOR: The biggest part of the way I ... was crawling on all four.

STALKER: Unbelievable. But how did you manage to outrun us?

PROFESSOR: What do you mean by "to outrun us"? I came back here after the rucksack.

STALKER: After the ruck...

WRITER: Where is our metal nut here from?

STALKER: (speaks panting) My God, it's ... it's a trap! Porcupine hanged a metal nut here on purpose. How did the Zone let us pass? Heaven, I will not make a step now, until... What a deal. Enough! Rest (staggering goes around the Professor's fire)! Just keep away from that nut, just in case. I already sinfully thought that Professor wouldn't make it. I really... (coughs) I actually never know what kind of people I am leading. Everything becomes clear only here, where it can be too late.

While he is talking, Writer goes aside. Professor puts out the fire with some water.

WRITER: Forget about us, the main thing is that Professor's bag with underwear is sound!

PROFESSOR: So do not poke your nose into others' underwear, if you cannot understand.

WRITER: And what should I actually understand here? Oh, some binomial theorem...

Writer lies down on a tiny dry island by the shore of the channel.

WRITER: Oh, some psychological abyss. In the institute we are disliked, our expedition cannot be financed. So ... let's stuff our rucksack with various manometers and crappmeters, let's get into the Zone illegally... And let's verify all the miracles of the place with algebra. (Professor leans at a sloping wall.) Nobody in the world has an idea about the Zone. And there, of course, a sensation! Television, female fans dying at your feet, bringing crowns of laurel... (Stalker lies

down on the rocks, coughs.) ...our Professor appears all in white and declares: “mene, mene, tekel, upharsin”. And, naturally, everyone opens... (Professor is lying with his legs tucked.) ...their mouths, shout in chorus: Nobel’s prize for him!..

PROFESSOR: You’re a poor little bedraggled writer, a home-grown psychologist. You should better write on the walls of the lavatories, you ungifted sham.

WRITER: Languid. Languid! You are not able to!.. (A dog runs across the water, stops.) You do not know how it has to be done.

PROFESSOR: All right. Ok, I’m going to ask for a Nobel’s prize. And what are you rushing there for? You want to award the mankind... (Stalker is lying on the rocks face down, his arm under his head.) ...with pearls of your bought inspiration?

WRITER: I don’t give a fig for the mankind. In all your mankind... (The water: there can be seen a piece of gauze, a piece of a mirror, Stalker’s hand; Stalker turns his face to the others.) ...I’m interested in only one person. That’s me. All the same if I am something worth or the same piece of nuts as some others.

PROFESSOR: And if you come to know, that actually you are...

WRITER: You know what, Mister Einstein? I do not wish to argue with you. In the arguments the truth is born, d**n it. Listen, Chingachgook... (Stalker is lying with his head resting on his fist (sepia).) ...didn’t you lead here a great number of people...

STALKER: (colors) Not that many as I would have liked to...

WRITER: We-ell, it’s all the same, that’s not the point... Why did they go here? What did they want?

STALKER: I suppose happiness.

WRITER: Well, yes, but what exactly kind of happiness?

STALKER: People do not like to speak about the innermost. Moreover, it should concern neither you nor me.

WRITER: Anyway, you are lucky. I have not seen a happy man in whole my life.

STALKER: (opens his eyes, turns his head to them) Neither did me. They return from the Room, I lead them back and we never meet again. Wishes do not come true in a moment.

WRITER: Didn’t you have a wish to ... ah ... use this pretty Room? Ah?

STALKER: Ah ... it’s ok for me as it is.

The dog comes running towards the Stalker (sepia), lies down by his bent legs. Stalker turns away. In the water besides him, there’s a vial, a piece of a burnt newspaper.

Writer is lying with his hand under the head. He speaks, gradually falling asleep.

WRITER: Professor, listen.

PROFESSOR: Yeah?

WRITER: Still about the bought inspiration. Let’s say I enter that Room and I return to our godforsaken city as a genius. Do you follow me?.. But a man writes because he is suffering, has doubts. He needs to prove all the time for himself and for the people surrounding him that he is worth something. And suppose I will know for sure that I’m a genius? Why should I write then? What a hell? Actually, I must say, mm, we exist only for...

PROFESSOR: Make me a favor and leave me alone! Let me take a little nap at least. I didn’t sleep tonight at all. Keep your complexes for yourself.

WRITER: Anyway, all this technology of yours ... all these blast-furnaces, wheels ... and other vanity of vanities, so that one could work less and could devour more – it’s only crutches, artificial limbs. And mankind exists for creating ... pieces of art... It’s, anyway, unselfish, as a contrary to all other human actions. The great illusions... Images of the absolute truth... Are you listening to me, Professor?

PROFESSOR: About what unselfishness are you talking? People still starve to death. Did you fall down from the Moon, or what? (Professor is lying with his eyes shut.)

WRITER: And these are our brain aristocrats! You are not able to think in an abstract way.

PROFESSOR: I hope you do not intend to teach me the meaning of life. And to think at the same time?

WRITER: It’s useless. Although you are a Professor, you’re ignorant.

The river is covered with thick yellowish foam. The wind drives flakes of the foam above the river, rocks little stones. Stalker is lying with eyes opened and he hears the voice of his wife.



WIFE: And there an immense earthquake took place, and the Sun became dark as sack cloth, and the Moon was like covered with blood... (Stalker with closed eyes (sepia).) ...And the stars of the heaven fell to the ground as if a fig-tree, shaken by a great wind, let its unripe figs fall down. And the sky hid itself, rolled up as a scroll; and various hills and isles moved from their places (laughs)... And the kings on earth, and the dignitaries, and the rich, and leaders of the thousands, and the powerful, and all the free hid themselves in the caves and mountain-gorges and they told the mountains and the rocks: fall on us and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come, and who can withstand it? (Laughter.)

Water. In it there can be seen a mud island with a snail on it, a syringe, a plate, a mirror, an aquarium with fishes, a sterilizer, an extractor, a religious icon, coins, some gauze, a gun, metal part, an industrial spring, a page from a calendar (28th), some metal parts, some wire, Stalker's hand in the water (sepia).

On a concrete platform lies a dog. The dog gets up.

Stalker is sleeping, breathing heavily in his sleep. He wakes up, looks up and sits up.

STALKER: (whispers) And that day two ... of them... (Professor and Writer sleep side by side.) (whispers) ...went to a village about sixty stadia away ... (indistinctly) called ... (indistinctly) and talking together about all these events, and when they were talking and discussing it together ... (indistinctly) and He came up to them, went with them, but their eyes were held (Writer wakes up, looks at Stalker), so that they did not recognize Him. He asked though, what they were (sighs) all the time talking together about and why they were so sad. One of them, called...

Professor lies with opened eyes and attentively looks at Stalker.

Stalker looks at the water, then at Writer and Professor, and then turns his glance away again.

STALKER: Are you awake? You were talking recently about the meaning... (Moss, rocks, still water in the river.) ... of our ... life ... unselfishness of art... Let's take music... It's really least of all connected; to say the truth, if it is connected at all, then in an idealess way, mechanically, with an empty sound... Without ... without associations... Nonetheless the music miraculously penetrates into the very soul! What is resonating in us in answer to the harmonized noise? And turns it for us into the source of great delight... (Professor and Writer are sitting and listening.) ...And unites us, and shakes us? What is its purpose? And, above all, for whom? You will say: for nothing, and ... and for nobody, just so. "Unselfish". Though it's not so ... perhaps... For everything, in the end, has its own meaning... Both the meaning and the cause...

Darkness. (The creaking sound of metal doors being opened.) Stalker and his companions stand by the entrance to an underground corridor. There's a metal door covered with dusty cobwebs.

WRITER: Hmm, what, are we supposed to go there?

STALKER: Ah ... I'm very sorry ... but there is no other way.

Professor and Writer stand by the opened door, Stalker stands behind them.

WRITER: It's a little bit dim, what, Professor? Here somehow I would not like to go first, Big Serpent never volunteers...

STALKER: I'm sorry; it seems we have to draw lots. Do you have anything against?

WRITER: Yes, I'd prefer that a volunteer would go there.

STALKER: Do you have matches? (Professor gives him a box of matches.) Thank you... (turns away from them, takes two matches from the box) The long one goes. (Writer pulls a match.) The long one... This time you were not lucky.

WRITER: You could at least cast a metal nut in there, or what.

STALKER: Sure... No problem...

He picks up a big stone, casts it and immediately shuts the door. He opens the door and looks in.

STALKER: More?

WRITER: All right... I go...

ECHO: I... go...

Writer goes through the corridor. He makes a couple of paces. Looking at him Stalker pushes Professor away from the door and goes to the side himself. Writer disappears behind a turn.

STALKER: Hurry up, Professor!

Professor in front and Stalker behind him run through the corridor. The water is running from the ceiling.

Writer looks around frightened. Professor and Stalker stop and look from around the corner of the corridor. Writer goes slowly further, his breath rattling. He stumbles and falls. Stalker goes on, hiding himself behind Professor. They stop too. Writer goes on again, still slowly and heavily. The two make one more run. Writer, panting, goes on the broken glass. He stops and shouts.

WRITER: Here... Here is a kind of door!

ECHO: Here is a kind of door...

Professor and Stalker come running and look from behind a turn.

STALKER: Now in there! Open the door and go in!

Writer looks at the metal door. He takes out a handgun, thingies the piece.

WRITER: Me again... And me to go in...

STALKER: The lot fell on you... Go, one should not stay here long... What do you have there?.. Here... Here the guns are forbidden! You will perish yourself and will ruin us as well! Remember the tanks!.. Cast it away, I beg you!..

PROFESSOR: Don't you understand?

STALKER: (to Professor) Silence! (to Writer, the voice is begging – persuasive) If ... if something happens, I will pull you out, and at all... Ach... I beg you! Whom... (almost crying) Whom are you going to shoot there?

ECHO: Shoot there...

Writer drops the gun.

STALKER: Go! (Echo: Go...) We have little time!

WRITER: (opening the door) There's water!

Behind the door, there can be seen flooded premises. On the opposite side, there is a metal ladder, going up out of the water.

STALKER: It's ok! Hold on to the railings and go down!

Writer submerges into the water up to his shoulders, makes some paces and climbs up the ladder.

STALKER: Just do not go anywhere! Wait up there, by the exit!

Professor nears the door.

STALKER: I hope you do not have anything similar with you?

PROFESSOR: What?

STALKER: Well, something like a handgun?

PROFESSOR: No, if the worst comes to the worst I have an ampoule.

STALKER: What ampoule?

PROFESSOR: Oh, an ampoule sewn in, poison.

STALKER: My God! What, has everybody come to die here, or what?

PROFESSOR: (begins to go down the stairs) Ah... It's just so, just in case an ampoule.

Professor goes across the water, holding the rucksack above his head. Stalker is looking down. On the ground lies the handgun. Stalker carefully pushes it with fingertips into the water.

STALKER: Writer! Go back! Hey come back, you suicide! Haven't I told you to wait at the entrance! Halt! Do not move!

Writer goes on, looks around. It's a huge hall with sand dunes (barkhans).

By the entrance to the hall appear Professor and Stalker. Stalker casts a metal nut, and they both fall flat into the sand.

The metal nut slowly jumps on the surface of sand barchans.

Writer covers his face with his hand.

Above the sand a big bird flies and disappears. Another one follows it and lands on a barkhan.

Professor raises his head and looks at Writer.

PROFESSOR: It's all because of your pipe!

STALKER: What?

PROFESSOR: Nothing! You should have gone first through it! Here he crawled the wrong way out of fear.

They hide themselves behind a barkhan again.

Writer is lying in a bog. He stands heavily up, water running down him, he sits down on a border of a well, coughs. He stands up, takes a stone and casts it into the well. (A hollow sound.) He sits on the border of the well.

WRITER: Here you have ... one more experiment. Experiments, facts, truth is the highest instance. But facts do not exist at all, especially here – in a long time. Here everything is fabricated by somebody. Everything's somebody's stupid fib. Don't you feel that?.. And you, certainly, desperately want to know whose. But why? Is your knowledge worth anything? Who is going to get pangs of conscience? Me? I do not have conscience. I have only nerves. Some scoundrel scolds me – a wound. Another scoundrel praises me – one more wound. You put your soul in it, you put your heart in it – they will devour both the soul and the heart. You extract the baseness out of the soul – they devour the baseness. All to the last of them are literate; every one of them has a sensory hunger. And all of them flock around: journalists, editors, critics, some uninterruptible women. And everyone demands: "Give! Give!.." What, hell with it, am I for a writer, if I hate to write? If for me it is a torture, an illness-like, shameful occupation, something like hemorrhoids. And I did think earlier that somebody becomes better because of my books. But nobody needs me! I will croak, and in two days they will forget me and begin devouring somebody else. For I wanted to remake them, but I myself was remade! In their own image. Earlier the future was only a continuation of the present, and all the changes loomed somewhere behind the horizons. And now the future became one with the present. Are they ready for that? They do not wish to know anything! They only devour!

Further away from Writer stand Professor and Stalker.

STALKER: How lucky you are! My God ... really now... You will live a hundred years now!

WRITER: Yeah, and why not forever? Like Wandering Jew?

Writer stands up and goes towards them, dust rises from the surface.

Premises by the sand hall. It seems like there has been a laboratory here. It is a very abandoned place, almost in ruins. The room besides is flooded, laboratory flasks lie and float in the water.

STALKER: You surely are a wonderful person! Of course, I didn't have any doubts, but you endured such a torture! This pipe is the most horrible place! The most horrible ... in the Zone! We call it "meat grinder", but it is worse than any meat grinder! So many people have perished here! And it was there Porcupine laid his brother (goes to the window). He was so slim, gifted... Just listen:

"Now the summer is gone,
As if it hasn't been here.
In the sun it's warm.
But it is not enough.

Everything what could come true
Like a five-fingered leaf
Fell straight into my palm,
But it is not enough.

Neither evil, nor good
Was lost in vain,
Everything burned in light,
But it is not enough.

Life kept me under its wing,
Took care of me and saved me,
I was lucky indeed.
But it is not enough.

The leaves were not burnt,
The branches were not broken...
The day is clean like glass,
But it is not enough."

(Note: a poem by Arsenij Tarkovsky)

It's good, isn't it? It's a poem by him.

WRITER: Why are you all the time wriggling? Why do you fuss? Good?..

STALKER: I just...

WRITER: I'm sick of looking at you!

STALKER: You cannot imagine how glad I am! It does not happen too often that everyone who left reaches destination. And you behaved in a right way! You are positive, good, honest people, and I am proud that I did not make a mistake.

WRITER: He, you see, is glad to death that everything succeeded! "Fate"! "Zone"! I am, you see, a wonderful person! And you think I did not see that you gave me two long matches?

STALKER: No – no! You do not understand...

WRITER: Oh of course, how could I! I beg your pardon, Professor, but ... I do not want to say anything malicious, but this very leech of one reason or another has chosen you as his favorite...

STALKER: Why are you saying this!

WRITER: And I... (The dog runs in.) ...like a second-rate creature, was shoved into that pipe! "Meat grinder"! What a name! But what a right do you have to decide who has to live, and who has to be put into the "meat grinder"?!
A flooded room. In the middle Professor is sitting on a chair. Writer is standing by the window. Stalker sits down beside him. The telephone rings.

STALKER: I do not choose anything, believe me! You chose yourself!

WRITER: What did I choose? One long matchstick out of the two long ones?

STALKER: Matches is a mere nothing. Already there, under the metal nut, the Zone let you go, and it became clear (telephone rings) that if anybody could pass the “meat grinder”, so it’s definitely you. And we after you.

Telephone rings persistently.

WRITER: You know what...

STALKER: I never choose myself, I’m always afraid. You cannot imagine how terrifying it is to make a mistake... But somebody has to go first!

WRITER: (picks up the receiver) Yes! No, it’s not a clinic (hangs up the receiver). You see, “somebody has to”! How do you like it?

Professor leans towards the telephone.

STALKER: Don’t touch!

Professor picks up the phone, dials a number.

WOMAN’S VOICE ON THE PHONE: Yes?

PROFESSOR: The ninth laboratory, please!

WOMAN’S VOICE: One minute...

Professor leaves the room with the telephone in his hands.

VOICE OF A MAN: I listen.

PROFESSOR: I hope I do not disturb you.

VOICE OF A MAN: What do you want?

PROFESSOR: Just a couple of words. You hid it; I found it, the old building, fourth bunker. Do you hear me?

VOICE OF A MAN: I am immediately contacting the security corps.

PROFESSOR: Yeah... Do it! You may contact them, you may write information against me, you may gather my colleagues against me, but it’s simply too late! I am actually two paces aside from that very place. Do you hear me?

VOICE OF A MAN: Do you understand that it is the end for you as a scientist?

PROFESSOR: So rejoice!

VOICE OF A MAN: Do you understand, what happens ... what happens, if you dare.

PROFESSOR: Are you trying to scare me again? Yeah, I was afraid of something all my life. I was even afraid of you. But now I am not scared at all, believe me...

VOICE OF A MAN: My Goodness! You are not even Herostratus. You... Simply all your life you wanted to make me harm. Because of that that twenty years ago I slept with your life, and now you are captivated, that finally you succeeded in settling a score with me. All right, go, perform your ... vileness. Don’t you dare to hang up the phone! Prison is not the worst what is waiting for you. The essential is that you will never forgive this yourself. I know... I can really see you hanging on your own braces above the toilet!

Professor hangs up the receiver.

WRITER: What is that that you have designed, ah, Professor?

PROFESSOR: Can you imagine what happens if everybody comes to believe in this very Room? And when all of them will rush in here? And it’s a question of time (returns to the room)! If not today, so tomorrow! And not in tens, but in thousands! All those emperors, great inquisitors, fuhrers of all kinds, that didn’t go through. Such benefactors of the human race! And not after the money, not after the inspiration, but to remake the world!

STALKER: No! I do not take such ones in here! I do understand!

PROFESSOR: Oh what can you understand, you funny man! And you are not the only stalker in the world! And not a stalker ever knows, with what those, whom they lead, come in here and with what they leave. And the number of unmotivated crimes is rising! Isn’t it your work (goes around in the room)? And military coups and mafia in the governments – are they not your clients? And lasers, and all these supreme bacteria, all that repulsive filth, until the right moment hidden in safes?

WRITER: Won’t you stop this sociological diarrhea! Do you really believe in these fairytales?

PROFESSOR: In the scary ones – I do. In the good ones – I don’t. But in the scary ones – absolutely!

WRITER: Oh, stop it, stop it! A single person cannot possess such hatred or, let’s say, such a love ... that could be passed over the entire mankind! One thing is money, woman, or revenge that your boss would be hit by a car. It’s a trifle. But to rule the world! The right society! Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth! It’s actually not a wish, but an ideology, measures, conceptions. Unconscious compassion is not yet able to come true. Well, like a usual instinctive wish.

STALKER: (stands up) No way. How can one be happy at the expense of somebody else’s unhappiness?

WRITER: And I can absolutely clearly see that you have planned destroying mankind with some kind of unimaginable benevolence. And I have completely no fears! Neither for you, nor for myself and especially not for the mankind, because you will not make it. At the best you will receive your Nobel's prize, or, very likely, something totally absurd, about what you, it seems, haven't thought a thought. Telephonic... You dream about one thing, but you get something different (switches on knife-switch; the light flashes).

STALKER: Why did you do that (hides his face; the lamp burns out)?

WRITER: Telephone... Electricity (picks up a box of medicine)... Look, wonderful tranquilizers. They do not make such anymore. Where from there's so many of it?

STALKER: Perhaps let's go there? Evening draws near, it will be too dark to return.

Professor leaves the room.

WRITER: Besides I fully understand that all these poetry readings and going in circles is nothing else but a certain form of apology (leaves the room). I understand you. Difficult childhood, social environment... But don't you get fascinated. (Writer until now had in his hand something like a branch or a piece of wire; now he has bowed it and put it on his head like it was a crown of thorns) I will not forgive you!

STALKER: You should not do that, please... (leaves the room)

The dog is lying on the floor and yelps. In the corner by the wall there are two skeletons, holding around each other. Shutters opens and closes.

STALKER: (off-screen) Professor, come to us.

Professor goes away from the window towards Writer and Stalker by the edge of the flooded hall.

STALKER: Just a moment, do not hurry.

WRITER: And I am not hurrying anywhere.

Stalker goes away from them, then squats in front of an entrance into somewhere.

STALKER: I know you will be angry... Anyway, I must say to you... Here we are ... standing on the doorstep... It's the most important moment ... in your life; you must know that ... here the most secret wish of yours will come true. The most sincere one! The one achieved through the most suffering! (approaches them) You do not have to say anything. You only have ... to concentrate and try to remember the whole your life. When people think about the past, they become better. And, above all... (pause; goes towards the Room) The most important is ... to believe! Ok, and now you can go. Who wants to go first? (to the Writer) Maybe you?

WRITER: Me? No, I do not want to.

STALKER: I understand. It's not that easy. But don't worry, it will pass soon.

WRITER: I doubt whether ... it will pass. First, if I start remembering my life, I don't think I will become better. Then, can't you feel how it's all ... shameful?... Abasing yourself, sniveling, praying.

Professor goes to his rucksack and gets busy with it.

STALKER: And what's wrong with a prayer? You speak so because of pride. Calm down, you are simply not ready. It happens and quite often. (to Professor) Maybe you can go earlier?

PROFESSOR: (comes to them) I... (returns to his rucksack, takes out a cylinder shaped object)

WRITER: Voila! Here we see the new invention by professor Professor! An instrument for investigation of the human souls! Soulmeter!

PROFESSOR: It's just a bomb.

STALKER: What - what?

WRITER: A joke...

PROFESSOR: No, simply a bomb. Twenty kilotons.

WRITER: Why?

Professor assembles the bomb.

PROFESSOR: We assembled it ... with friends, with my ex ... colleagues. This place, as we can see, cannot make anybody happy. (punches in the numbers; assembling is over) If it falls into the wrong hands... Actually, I do not know now. Then we realized ... that one shouldn't destroy the Zone. If it is... If it even is a miracle – it is a part of nature, and it means it is a kind of hope, so to speak. They hid this bomb... And I found it. The old building, fourth bunker. It seems there must be a rule ... one should never perform irreversible actions. I do understand, I'm not a maniac (sighs), but while this ulcer here is open for every scum... I will neither be able to sleep or to rest. On the other hand, maybe the innermost will not let it happen. Ah?

Writer is looking at Professor.

WRITER: Poor thing picked himself a little problem...

Embarrassed Stalker goes by. Professor stands up and goes towards Stalker. Stalker throws himself upon Professor.

STALKER: Give it to me!

Stalker tries to take the bomb from him. Professor falls down; Writer throws himself upon Stalker, knocks him down. Stalker falls, gets up and attacks Professor again.

STALKER: Give it to me!

Writer knocks him down with a fist, he falls into the water.

PROFESSOR: (to Writer) Aren't you an intelligent person!

Stalker attacks Professor again, Writer flings him away.

PROFESSOR: (to Writer) Why are you doing this? How come?

WRITER: You, hypocritical nit...

STALKER: (cries) What for? What for did you ... me? He wants to destroy it; he wants to destroy your hope! Give it to me!

Writer flings him to the side. Stalker gets up, sobbing and wiping his face with his hand.

STALKER: There's nothing else left for the people in the world, is there! It's the only ... only place where one can come if there's no more hope left. You came here, didn't you! Why are you destroying the faith?!

He wants to throw himself upon Professor again, but Writer pushes him away.

WRITER: Shut up, you! I can see you through! You don't give a d**n for all these people! You earn money on our ... grief! And it's not even about the money. You relish here, don't you, here you are the king and the God, you, hypocritical nit, decide who will live and who dies. And he makes choices, decisions! I understand why your brother stalker never enters the Room himself. Why should he? Here you are dizzy with power, secrecy, and authority! What other wishes could be here!

STALKER: It's not true! Not true! You... You are wrong! (kneels in the water, washes tears and blood from his face, crying.) A stalker must not enter the Room! Stalker ... must not enter the Zone on a selfish purpose at all! He must not; remember Porcupine! Yes, you're right, I'm a nit, I haven't done anything in this world and I cannot do anything... And neither could I give anything to my wife! And I do not have any friends and I cannot have, but you cannot take what's mine from me! Everything is already taken from me, there, on the other side of the barbed wire. All I have is here. Can you understand! Here! In the Zone! My happiness, my freedom, my dignity – everything's here! For I lead the same as me in here, unhappy ones, suffering. They... They have no other hope left! And I – I am able to! Can you understand – I am able to help them! Nobody else can help them, but I, nit (shouts), I, nit, am able to! I am ready to shed tears of happiness that I am able to help them. That's all! And I want nothing else.

Professor looks at Stalker, goes to the window, and adjusts his wet jacket. Writer sits beside Stalker holding around him.

WRITER: I don't know. Maybe. Anyway – I'm sorry, but... You are so foolish ["God's fool"]! You don't have an idea about what's happening here! And how do you think, why did Porcupine hang himself?

STALKER: He came to the Zone with a selfish purpose and sacrificed his brother in the "meat grinder" because of the money...

WRITER: That I can understand. But why did he hang himself? Why did he decide not to return – absolutely not after the money this time, but after his brother? Ah? Why did he give up?

STALKER: He wanted to, he... I don't know. In several days he hanged himself.

WRITER: (speaks very firmly) He understood here, that not all dreams come true, but only the most precious ones! And you're just shouting in vain!..

All three gather at the entrance to the Room. Stalker sits on the floor, crouches, lowering his face to the knees.

WRITER: That, what is in accordance with your nature, your essence, is what comes true here! That essence that you have no idea about, but it sits in you and rules you all your life! You understood nothing, Leather Stocking. Porcupine was not overcome by his greed. He crawled on his knees in this very puddle begging for his brother. And he got a lot of money, and couldn't get anything else. Because a Porcupine gets everything what's porcupine-like! And conscience, throes of the soul – it is invented, it's brain work. He understood that and hanged himself. (pause; Professor bends to the water and moistens his neck) I will not go into your Room! I do not want to spill all the trash that has accumulated inside me, on anybody's head. Even on yours. And afterwards run my head into the noose like Porcupine.

I'd rather drink myself to death quietly and peacefully in my stinky writer's private residence. (Professor examines the bomb) No, Big Serpent, you are bad in sorting people out, if you lead such ones like me into the Zone. And then afterwards ... ah... How do you know, that this miracle really exists? (To Professor) Who told you, that dreams really come true here? Did you see anybody, who would have been made happy here? Ah? Maybe Porcupine? And actually, who told you about the Zone, about Porcupine, about this Room?

PROFESSOR: He did.

WRITER: Oh!

Writer stumbles and almost falls through the threshold into the Room, but Stalker steadies him.

The telephone rings. Professor disassembles the bomb, casts its parts to all sides. Writer and Stalker sit on the floor tight to each other.

PROFESSOR: Then I do not understand anything at all. What is the meaning to come here?

Writer claps Stalker on the shoulder. Professor sits down by them, still busy with the bomb.

STALKER: How quiet... Do you hear? (sighs) So, perhaps I should leave everything; take my wife, the Little Monkey and move in here. Nobody will hurt them.

It starts raining, colors become monochromic. Professor casts the last parts into the water. They sit still. The rain is over. Flooded tile floor. In the water there are lying parts and dial-plate of the bomb. Above them swim fishes. A big blot of raw oil comes floating. (There can be heard noise of a train passing by and music, Bolero.)

By the entrance to the bar Stalker's wife rests children's crutches against a bench, seats her daughter on the bench. Then she comes up to the porch and enters the bar.

Writer and Professor stand by the table. Behind them stands Stalker. He feeds the dog. Stalker's wife comes to them.

WIFE: You came back? (takes notice of the dog) And where is that from?

STALKER: There it stuck to us. We couldn't forsake it.

Wife sits helplessly down on the windowsill. Through the open door of the bar there can be seen the bench and The Little Monkey, sitting on it.

WIFE: (gently) So what, let's go? Little Monkey is waiting. Ah? Let's go?

She goes to the exit by the barman. Barman looks sadly after her. Writer drinks beer. Stalker casts a glance at the dog and also goes towards the exit.

WIFE: Does anybody of you need a dog?

WRITER: I have five pieces of the kind at home.

Wife goes to the door and stops. The dog runs towards her.

WIFE: What, do you like dogs?

WRITER: E-eh, what?

WIFE: It's good...

Stalker joins her, gives her the bag.

STALKER: All right, let's go.

They leave, going down the porch. Writer and Professor look after them. Writer lights a cigarette.

The girl is sitting on her father's shoulders. Her face is calm. Her head is wrapped with a shawl. Stalker carries his daughter on the shoulders, his wife carries the crutches. They go down the slope and then by the shore of an immense dirty bog or lake, presumably the cooling ponds of a power plant, visible on the other side of the water. The dog is running around them.

Stalker's home. The wife is pouring some milk into a bowl. The dog laps. Stalker lies down on the floor.

STALKER: (sighs) If they only imagined how tired I am! Only God knows! And they call themselves intelligentsia. Those writers! Scientists (hits the floor with a fist, the bowl bounces, the dog goes away)!

WIFE: Calm down!

STALKER: They do not believe in anything. That their ... organ with which they believe has atrophied!

WIFE: Calm down!

STALKER: Because it's of no use!..

WIFE: Stop, stop. Let's go. Lie down. Don't... Go to bed, go... It's too damp for you here... You must not lie here... Take it of...

Stalker breathes heavily, sighs. His wife helps him up, leads him to the bed. She helps him to take his jacket, shoes and pants off, puts him to bed and sits down by his side.

STALKER: My God, what kind of people they are...

WIFE: Calm down... Calm down... It's not their fault... One should pity them, and you're getting angry.

STALKER: Haven't you seen them, they're eyes are empty.

His wife gives him a pill, then, holding his head, gives some water from a glass. Then she strokes him and washes his face. He is crying, closes his eyes.

STALKER: And they do think every minute how not to be sold too cheap, how to sell themselves for a higher price! That everybody paid them for every movement of their soul! They know that "they are born to some purpose"! That they "have a calling"! For they live "only once"! How can such ones believe in anything?

WIFE: Calm down, stop... Try to fall asleep, ah?.. Sleep...

STALKER: And nobody believes. Not only those two. Nobody! Whom should I lead in there? Oh, God... And the most terrifying thing is ... that nobody needs it anymore. And nobody needs that Room. And all my efforts are worthless!

WIFE: Why are you saying this. Don't.

STALKER: I will not lead anybody in there anymore.

WIFE: (with compassion) Well... If you'd like to, I will go with you. There. Do you want?

STALKER: (opens his eyes, looks at her) Where?

WIFE: Do you think I have nothing to ask for?

STALKER: No... You mustn't...

WIFE: Why?

STALKER: No-no... And if suddenly you will not ... succeed either.

Stalker closes his eyes and turns his face away, a track of tears now visible across his dirty cheek.

His wife sits down on a stool, takes out a pack of cigarettes. Then she goes to the window and sits down on a windowsill, lights a match, then her cigarette and talks directly into the cam.

WIFE: You know my mom was very much against it. You must have, I suppose, understood, he is blessed/"God's fool". The entire district laughed at him. And he was a blunderer, such a miserable one... And my mom said: isn't he a stalker, isn't he a condemned man, isn't he a perpetual jail bird! And children. Remember what children stalkers get... And I... I even... I didn't even argue... I knew myself all this: both that he is a condemned man, and that he is a perpetual jail bird, and about the children... And what could I have done? I was sure that I'll have it fine with him. I knew also that a lot of grief there will be, but sorrowful happiness is better than ... grey and sad life. (sobs, smiles) And perhaps I invented that afterwards. And then he simply came up to me and said: "Come with me", and I went. And I never ever regretted after that. Never. And there had been a lot of grief, and it was frightening, and it was shameful. But I have never regretted and I have never envied anybody. It's just such a fate, such a life, such us. And if there was no grief in our life, it would not be better, it would be worse. Because then there would be ... neither happiness, nor hope. That's it.

Stalker's daughter sits by the table reading a book. She still wears a shawl. She lowers the book and starts moving her lips without uttering a sound.

LITTLE MONKEY: (voice-over)

"Your eyes, my friend, I love,
Their magic play of flames,
When suddenly they look up,
And like a heavenly lightning,
Hastily look all around...
But there is a stronger spell:
The downcast eyes
In moments of the passionate kiss,
When there through the lowered eyelashes

Burns a dreadful, dim fire of the wish."

(Note: a poem by F. I. Tutchev)

There stand some glass items on the table. Little Monkey is looking at them and forced by her look they start moving – (train whistle) first a glass, (whistle again) then a pot, (whistle again) then a tall glass. The dog is yelping, the girl looks at it, it stops. The tall glass falls over the border of the table. The girl lays her face on one cheek on the table (the sound of the passing train, the window-panes are shaking; "Ode to the Joy" can be heard more and more clearly). It darkens (shaking of the window-panes).