

Stanislav Stratiev

The Roman Bath

Stanislav Stratiev
The Roman Bath

www.stanislavstratiev.org

The Roman Bath

© Stanislav Stratiev, 1974

© Aeolus Project, 2007

Translated from the Bulgarian by Marguerite Alexieva.

All rights reserved. No part of the following text may be staged, performed, reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the copyright holders.

CHARACTERS

IVAN ANTONOV

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, research fellow in Thracology

MARTHA, his fiancée

GEORGIEV, life-guard

TSEKOV, illegal exporter of antiques, icons and coins

DIAMANDIEV, illicit dealer in real estate

GECHEV, activist of the local organization

IVANOV, deaf-mute

PRODUCER

TV ANNOUNCER

WORKMAN who speaks

WORKMAN who doesn't speak

TAXI CALL COLUMN

MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

The Members of the

MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

Commission have

MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION

equal rights

ACT ONE

A street corner with a column for calling taxis. IVAN ANTONOV is angrily pressing the call-button. He has obviously been doing this for a long time, without the slightest result. A suitcase and a bag are beside the column. A pair of flippers are sticking out of the bag. IVAN ANTONOV is off to the seaside and is going to be disastrously late, which may lead to other disastrous consequences.

IVAN ANTONOV: Hello! Hello! Isn't anyone going to send me a taxi?... If only you'd say one little word... Hello... (*He blows into the mike as if into a telephone receiver.*)

The column is silent, giving no sign of life.

Hello!... I've been shouting "hello" for the last half an hour and nobody's answered. Everything's going wrong... Everything's going down the drain, and all because of a column... (*Kicks it. No result – only his leg hurts. He gets still angrier and begins to kick the column and swear at it.*) You stupid lousy piece of painted tin! You bastard, you!

THE COLUMN (*Speaking up unexpectedly*): Look here, you! Stop casting aspersions on other people's mothers! Where d'you think you are?

IVAN ANTONOV: Hello! At last! Send a taxi please! Quick, as quick as you can!

THE COLUMN: You bet we will! You swear at us and expect us to send you a taxi!

IVAN ANTONOV: Please! I've been shouting "hello" for half an hour and nobody's answered.

THE COLUMN: We heard you all right, we are not deaf.

IVAN ANTONOV: I got fed up and...

THE COLUMN: You got fed up! If someone kicked you, would you like it?

IVAN ANTONOV: Friends, please! Send a taxi! I'll be late, I'll miss my plane...

THE COLUMN: We're not your friends. When you learn to behave, we'll send a taxi along.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Involuntarily begins to caress the column*): I apologize, I didn't mean to offend you, my nerves are bad...

THE COLUMN: Everyone's nerves are bad. But not everybody takes taxis.

IVAN ANTONOV embraces the column and presses his cheek to its smooth surface.

IVAN ANTONOV: Forgive me! My mistake. Just send a taxi as I'm already terribly late. I've got to catch the last plane today. I promise not to do it again.

THE COLUMN: Promises are like pie crust, made to be broken.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Looks at his watch and casts himself on the column, hugging it and stroking it with one hand, and wiping its glass with his handkerchief with the other*): Brothers. Please! Send a taxi! Brothers!

THE COLUMN: We're not your brothers. Louts have no brothers!

IVAN ANTONOV (*Pressing his palms together as if for prayer*): I implore you! My voucher will be wasted! My voucher for a seaside holiday!

THE COLUMN: Let it!

IVAN ANTONOV: I've been fighting for it for three years. And they always give me one in January. And there isn't any central heating... Now the boss is sick and they gave me his voucher. I implore you; he may recover at any moment. (*The column is silent. Not a sound from it.*) Late-comers aren't admitted. My voucher will be wasted. D'you hear me? There, I'll kiss it. (*He kisses the column.*) We'll be friends, I assure you. Let us forget the past. (*Hugs the column, strokes it and tenderly wipes the dust from its display.*)

GECHEV, the local activist, comes by at this moment.

GECHEV: The place is full of sex maniacs. Look at them, they've started on the columns. Women aren't enough for them... If only this was in another borough – but it's in ours... We'll lose the competition. (*Steps forward firmly.*)

IVAN ANTONOV: I'll send it a card from the seaside. Come, let bygones be bygones. Let's make it up like human beings. (*Hugs the column again.*)

GECHEV (*In a hypocritical voice*): Excuse me!...

IVAN ANTONOV (*Sees the activist*): Yes? What is it?

GECHEV: Why don't you go to the next column? There are plenty of free taxis there.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Makes off for it at once*): Why yes, of course, I'll be off...

GECHEV: What about your suitcase? You're forgetting it.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Coming back*): Oh yes. Thanks. Thank you very much. (*Seizes the suitcase and runs off.*) Thank you very much indeed.

GECHEV: Not at all. A pleasant journey to you. All the best! (*Waits until ANTONOV has gone.*) Let him kiss the columns of the neighbouring local organization! (*Goes out.*)

SCENE ONE

The living room in IVAN ANTONOV's house. There was a large bookcase full of books in the room, and pictures hung on the walls. We can see an old cabinet at the back, now turned sideways, many bottles of different makes of whisky are on it, all empty. Above the cabinet is the box of a wall clock; the clock itself is somewhere among the furniture. There was a table in the middle of the living room, low, massive and convenient. There also was a large desk, dark brown, an old massive piece of furniture, covered with books, sketches of some kind,

designs, sheets of paper, and pens and pencils of all colours. The telephone stood on the desk, with a wicker reading lamp. A guitar hung over the desk. Two comfortable leather armchairs were covered with plaid travelling rugs. A divan, covered with a tufted blanket in lovely red. Everything in this home spoke of cosy comfort and calm.

No longer.

When we first see it, everything in the living room has been turned upside down, everything has been moved, scattered, crushed; books are strewn on the floor, the rug has been rolled up, the divan is standing on one end against the wall, the telephone is somewhere around among the furniture, the rugs and the chairs are piled up in a heap. But the most important change in the hall is that in the middle of it there is a Roman bath. It is a pool made of pink marble, with mosaics inside and, along the edge, pictures of matrons bathing. There are holes in the floor at three or four other places. Inside the pool a man in a lounge suit is crawling about observing something. Boards have been placed over the holes so that one can pass over them, there is scaffolding at the back, with whitewashed planks sticking out.

A TV interview is about to be transmitted, there are cables trailing all over the place, the cameras are focused on the Roman bath, the spotlights are on, all sorts of devices are scattered around; the producer, in a leather jacket, is giving final orders.

THE PRODUCER: Silence! I don't want to hear another sound. We've only got one minute. Bring on the workmen.

The organizer ushers in the **WORKMEN** – they trip over the cables, stiff with embarrassment, one wearing a suit and a new white shirt, the other just a white shirt and trousers. They follow the organizer like doomed men.

THE PRODUCER: What is this, both in white? And his shirt is stained. This is colour TV here. Quick, find another shirt...Or better get rid of that guy. Quick, we haven't any time!

The **WORKMAN** in the white shirt starts back in confusion, but the announcer seizes him by the collar and brings him back.

THE ANNOUNCER: We can't get rid of him. He's the speaker.

THE PRODUCER: What? The other guy isn't deaf and dumb, is he?

THE ANNOUNCER: No, but we've rehearsed with this one. Who knows what the other might do. This one's lost his tongue already.

THE PRODUCER: There isn't any time! The broadcast's beginning! Give him a jacket! Quick!

A panic-stricken search for a jacket. It turns out that they all have white shirts. Just then the door opens and **ANTONOV**, tanned from his holiday, enters his living room. He is holding a suitcase and a bag from which a pair of flippers stick out. He is wearing a blue shirt. **IVAN ANTONOV** stops at the threshold as if nailed to the spot and scarcely able to believe his eyes.

THE PRODUCER: The broadcast's beginning! (*Looks around feverishly and*

notices IVAN ANTONOV.) Take his shirt, it's coloured. Be quick. (*Pointing at IVAN ANTONOV.*)

Several people make a dash at the dazed IVAN ANTONOV, strip him of his shirt and don it on the workman, over the workman's head. IVAN is left on the threshold bare to the waist.

THE PRODUCER: Attention! We're coming on air!

The red lights on the cameras go on; they are pointed at the Roman bath. In it are the two WORKMEN, the man in the lounge suit and the ANNOUNCER, seated on four chairs.

THE ANNOUNCER: I'm very happy to be the first to tell you about an impressive discovery made by our archaeologists, proof of the great material and cultural civilization which once flourished in our lands: the first entirely preserved Roman bath of the reign of Pompilianus had been found!... We've asked those who made that discovery, who are with us, in the Roman bath, to tell us about the importance of this unique find and how it came to light. If you please. (*To the workman dressed in IVAN ANTONOV's shirt.*)

The WORKMAN looks at him, startled and does not say a word. The ANNOUNCER smiles at him and holds the mike closer to his mouth.

THE WORKMAN: Traycho Georgiev Dyulgerov, address: 73 Tsar Boris Street. (*Stops.*)

THE ANNOUNCER: Yes?

THE WORKMAN: I've got two children – girls...

THE ANNOUNCER: Tell us about the bath, will you?

THE WORKMAN (*Looks at his mate for encouragement and begins*): Well, you see, we had to mend this man's floor. How were we to know that we'd make such a mess? He went off for his holiday, poor guy, to the seaside, and left us the keys...

THE ANNOUNCER: Tell us about the bath, please.

THE WORKMAN: Oh, yes, about the bath. We lifted the old boards, because they were rotten, you see, and dug a little deeper, to make a foundation, so that the boards wouldn't rot again and...

THE ANNOUNCER: Yes?

THE WORKMAN: ... and some kind of mosaics appeared... well, a kind of pink. Then Kiro (*nods at the other workman, who bows*) he says: "Here, let's dig a bit more... we might come across a gold coin or two, you never know..." And...

THE ANNOUNCER: And?

THE WORKMAN: So we dug some more. But we didn't find any gold coins, but... Then Kiro, his son-in-law (*nods at the man in the suit, the ASSOCIATE*

PROFESSOR), well, he isn't his son-in-law yet, but he's supposed to be going to be, found out... Well, that we'd been digging... Kiro let it out in front of his daughter, and...

THE ANNOUNCER: And?...

THE WORKMAN: And before we'd covered it up... they found out.

THE ANNOUNCER: Thank you. Professor Ananiev, would you tell us your side of it, as a specialist, please?

ASSOC. PROF.: First of all I must ask our viewers to excuse my emotion, it's easy to understand, but this is my first discovery on such a scale, and I can't help getting excited when I talk about it. I shall permit myself to call it a unique find, no matter how immodest it may sound. And it is unique, without the slightest doubt, because nowhere else in the world is there such a completely preserved pool from the period of Pompilianus and Gaius Lucius; it is the only one of its kind in the world. A Roman bath, a pool four by three metres, decorated with matrons typical of the period, suns and Pompilianus's motto "Always and to the end!" All this is made with remarkable skill, the amazing talent of the unknown sculptor is apparent; he undoubtedly belonged to the school of Marcus Antonius Octavian, the celebrated school that created so many other marvels. To my mind, this find is equal, if not many times superior in value, to the Thracian Tomb in Kazanluk. Hitherto most scholars have assumed that baths of this period were irreparably destroyed by the barbarians and forever lost to mankind. Individual fragments of similar baths, parts of mosaics, which are only thought to date back to the period of Lucius and Pompilianus are preserved in Rome, in California and in the British Museum. But to this day we have no conclusive scientific data about them. And yet, here before us, complete, untouched, simply ready for bathing if only you filled it with water, is a Roman bath. There isn't the slightest doubt that the excavations, which are to continue in the kitchen and perhaps in the toilet as well, will bring new surprises, new joys and we shall...

On hearing about excavations in the kitchen and the toilet, *IVAN ANTONOV* can contain himself no longer and jumps, bare to the waist, into the pool on top of the *ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR*

IVAN ANTONOV: No! Don't touch the kitchen. Leave me the kitchen at least!...

There is a tussle, the cameras swing away from the bath at once, men rush in to drag *IVAN ANTONOV* away, and he fights them.

THE PRODUCER: Studio! Studio! Play some music! And show the picture with the swan lake!

CURTAIN

SCENE TWO

IVAN ANTONOV is standing in his messed-up, dug-up living room, thinking, clutching his head in both hands. The pink pool is in front of him. It is beginning to grow dark. IVAN is alone, all the rest have gone.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Walks about the messy room, picking up and putting away his scattered belongings*): Just my luck! No such thing is it to be found anywhere else in the world and they have to go and discover it in my living room! I'm to live like a Roman emperor now. (*Drags out the bedspring, drops it and stares at the pool.*) Those matrons aren't half bad... Obviously that Pompilianus wasn't just any Tom, Dick or Harry. (*Walks about.*) I've been going to the local pools all these years, and yet under my very nose...

Suddenly the light is switched on, a bright light which drives out the semi-darkness. The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR has entered the hall.

ASSOC. PROF. (*Sternly*): Who are you? And what are you doing here?

IVAN ANTONOV: I happen to live here. This is my own home. What are you doing here?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Feels annoyed and frowns*): Oh, yes, I had quite forgotten. You're Ivan Antonov, aren't you?

IVAN ANTONOV: Yes, I am. You're not saying that you're Ivan Antonov, are you?

ASSOC. PROF.: My name's Ananiev. Ananiev, associate professor.

IVAN ANTONOV: Is associate professor your Christian name?

ASSOC. PROF.: No, that's my title. It isn't my Christian name.

IVAN ANTONOV: A friend of mine called his dog Associate professor. To have his revenge on some associate professor or other who ploughed him every time he sat for an exam on the technology of metals. It was a most intelligent creature.

ASSOC. PROF. (*without irony*): The associate professor?

IVAN ANTONOV: No, the dog. So my friend didn't have his revenge after all. Instead of insulting the associate professor, he insulted the dog.

ASSOC. PROF.: The dog ought simply to have sat the exam instead of your friend. He would have taken it at once and that would have settled the matter. What about you, haven't you got a dog?

IVAN ANTONOV: Have you got exams by any chance? I can find you a dog. But let's talk about the dog afterwards. Tell me about the bath. When are you going to move it? Tomorrow?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Doesn't understand at first*): What bath?

IVAN ANTONOV: This one here. The Roman bath. The unique one.

ASSOC. PROF.: Where am I to move it?

IVAN ANTONOV: What d'you mean – where? To the museum. Or to some subway. Where everybody can see it. Or do you intend to make a special subway through my house?

ASSOC. PROF.: You see, moving such finds is usually a most difficult matter. And what's more important still, it's a risky business. That's how the matter stands, on principle. And at an early stage of the research, such as is the case here, I'd say it was almost out of the question. We can't possibly take such a risk.

IVAN ANTONOV: What risk can't you take?

ASSOC. PROF. Removing the bath. We haven't yet studied the composition and lasting qualities of the welding material, the structure of the mosaic, the chemical parameters of the marble; we don't know how it will react to changes of temperature, to corrosion...

IVAN ANTONOV: So you don't know, eh?

ASSOC. PROF.: We don't. We haven't studied the climatic and temperature conditions in your room either, perhaps they are specific and impossible to replicate; perhaps there are some particular bacilli in the air which secure cohesion, like "bacillus Bulgaricus", you understand, don't you, the one that helps make yoghurt.

IVAN ANTONOV: Yes, yes, and then?

ASSOC. PROF.: Perhaps, when we take it out, it will fall to pieces and turn to dust. It's centuries old.

IVAN ANTONOV: Why don't you move it to your living room? Perhaps there are bacilli there, too?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Smiles condescendingly*): Excuse me, but that's not a serious suggestion, you are no longer talking science here.

IVAN ANTONOV walks about his dug-up room thoughtfully.

IVAN ANTONOV: So you won't be moving it soon?

ASSOC. PROF.: Perhaps we shan't move it at all.

IVAN ANTONOV: Can I fill it with water then?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Horried*): With water? Whatever for?

IVAN ANTONOV: To have my bath in it. Since I've got a bath in the middle of my living room, what else am I to do with it?

ASSOC. PROF.: But that's a crime. We still don't know...

IVAN ANTONOV: All right. It's a crime for me to have my bath in it, too. And can I put a bed in it?

ASSOC. PROF.: What? A bed?

IVAN ANTONOV: A wide single bed.

ASSOC. PROF.: That's out of the question.

IVAN ANTONOV: Why? D' you think it won't go in?

ASSOC. PROF.: You haven't the faintest idea of the value of this pool.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Walking about*): Will it take a desk?

ASSOC. PROF.: Why not an electric cooker? You could fry hamburgers, or cook sauerkraut on it... What more could a man want!?!

IVAN ANTONOV: Very well. I agree to all that. But where am I to live?

ASSOC. PROF.: What d' you mean, where are you to live? I don't understand.

IVAN ANTONOV: Where am I to sleep? Where am I to work? Where am I to drink tea? Where am I to play the guit... Excuse me, but where is my guitar?

ASSOC. PROF.: Behind the bookcase.

IVAN ANTONOV gives him a dazed look and goes to the bookcase. From behind it he drags out only the fingerboard of the guitar.

ASSOC. PROF.: That's nothing to do with me.

IVAN ANTONOV: That's nothing to do with you... And where are my children to be born?

ASSOC. PROF.: There you go, now it's children. I don't know about them. Everybody looks after his own children. You're the one to think about your children. Although I ought to tell you – you won't get anything by thinking, you need action. At least at first – if they're to be born. As to the rest, Antonov, science demands sacrifices. Progress is unthinkable without them.

IVAN ANTONOV: Then make the sacrifices – you're a research worker. Why should I make them? I've nothing to do with science. You live with it. Why are other people always asked to make sacrifices?

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR is silent, smiling condescendingly.

IVAN ANTONOV: And on the top of it all, you're going to dig in the kitchen and the loo. What do you expect me to do, dematerialize?

ASSOC. PROF.: Antonov, you're putting your private interests above the public interest. That's egoistic. The public will lose incomparably more if we take the risk and move the bath than you will. You'll find other housing, there's so much building going on – our country is one large construction site. And science can't take the risk of moving this unique find.

IVAN ANTONOV: So the risk can't be taken?

ASSOC. PROF.: No.

IVAN ANTONOV: Then I'll take it.

ASSOC. PROF.: You? How?

IVAN ANTONOV: I'll throw it out into the street, that's how. (*Jumps into the bath.*) With a pickaxe, a hammer, a hoe, and a drill. That's how. It wouldn't be the first case in Bulgaria, would it?

ASSOC. PROF.: You're a barbarian.

IVAN ANTONOV: All right, I'm a barbarian. What's more, I'm a barbarian in my own home. And I don't like it at all when visitors stay too late. I go to bed early, almost with the birds. The door is on your left.

IVAN goes to the kitchen. The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR lights a cigarette with suppressed irritation. IVAN comes back.

IVAN ANTONOV: Are you still here?

ASSOC. PROF.: If I understand you correctly, that's a hint.

IVAN ANTONOV: Yes. I'm giving you a hint. I'm hinting that it's high time you got out of my home. You've entered it without having the slightest right, you've dug it up, you've broken the furniture, you've turned everything upside down. And on top of it all, you've got the nerve to call me a barbarian. Get out!

ASSOC. PROF.: But this isn't only your home now.

IVAN ANTONOV: And whose else is it? Perhaps yours?

ASSOC. PROF.: It belongs to the public. There are hundreds of thousands of homes like this one, but only one bath of the period of Pompilianus.

IVAN ANTONOV: Get out and take your bath with you.

ASSOC. PROF.: So that you can destroy the Roman bath. This very night. And face us with a fait accompli. No.

IVAN ANTONOV: Why wait until tonight? I shall start in a little while and I'll do it in half an hour. After that I'll send it to you by post, one bit every day.

What size pieces do you want – larger or smaller? The size is according to the customer's wishes.

ASSOC. PROF.: And after that I'll send you cigarettes.

IVAN ANTONOV: Where?

ASSOC. PROF.: In prison. Cigarettes will be supplied according to the customer's wishes. Mankind will not forgive me if I allow what is probably the last bath of the reign of Pompilianus to be destroyed. Think, Antonov, this bath will be lost to mankind. Think of mankind.

IVAN ANTONOV: So you're thinking of mankind, are you? And who thinks about the individual? The man of whom mankind is composed? I'm sick and tired of having care lavished upon mankind, without anybody bothering about humans. It's easier like that, isn't it? Mankind is a rather abstract idea, it's always the other one, only never the one who is before you and wants something. What am I, eh? Where am I? Mankind, all four thousand million of it, is on one side, and on the other, Ivan Antonov. He isn't mankind, because a Roman bath

has been found in his living room.

ASSOC. PROF.: That's sophistry.

IVAN ANTONOV: And that's the door. The door through which you leave.

(Points at the door.)

Just then the door opens and Martha, the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR's fiancée, comes in.

MARTHA: Good evening!

IVAN ANTONOV: Good evening, good evening.

MARTHA *(To the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR)*: You said we'd be alone.

IVAN ANTONOV: O-o-o-oh!

MARTHA: What's that man doing here? Is he a friend of yours?

IVAN ANTONOV: A childhood friend. From earliest childhood. His best friend.

My name is Ivan Antonov.

ASSOC. PROF.: His name really is Ivan Antonov, but he's no friend of mine.

MARTHA: Then what's he doing here at this time of day? Is he here on a service matter?

IVAN ANTONOV: Just think of it! I live here.

MARTHA: What d'you mean, you live here?

IVAN ANTONOV: In the most ordinary way – I sleep here, I eat courgettes with yoghurt; I work; sometimes I get up on the sideboard and jump onto my bed from there. But I don't do that very often because of the springs. It damages them.

MARTHA: I thought the house had been expropriated. You told me that...

ASSOC. PROF. *(Irritably)*: Yes, yes, I have taken all the steps, but... They're so slow, there are bureaucrats everywhere...

MARTHA: And you also told me that the man who lived here received...

IVAN ANTONOV: What did he receive?

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha, it's not the time for such talk now, I'll explain everything to you afterwards.

IVAN ANTONOV: No, no, no! What did he receive? What the heck's going on here? A man goes to the seaside for his holiday for three weeks and... *(Waves his hand.)* What expropriations are you talking about? They have to ask me about that, don't they?

MARTHA: This Roman bath is beginning to get on my nerves. Since you discovered it everything has been topsy-turvy...

IVAN ANTONOV *(Breaking in and showing the mess with his hand)*: Yes, yes, exactly, topsy-turvy...

MARTHA: You're away for weeks on end, you spend the night here, in this pool; you've changed, you've become quite different; sometimes I simply don't know you any more. These matrons here seem to be more precious to you

than anything else.

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha!

IVAN ANTONOV (*Ironically*): Am I in your way?

MARTHA: You're suspicious of everybody, you're afraid of everybody, you have odd views.

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha, this is neither the time nor the place to discuss my views.

IVAN ANTONOV: Chiefly the time. Besides flying, the time is far advanced, and as I have already had the honour of informing your... I don't exactly know what he is in relation to you... I go to bed early, with the birds. It's an old-fashioned habit of mine. And I like to sleep alone. Very funny, isn't it? I simply feel uncomfortable undressing in front of strangers.

ASSOC. PROF.: Stop talking in that silly way! Where do you think you are?!!!

IVAN ANTONOV (*Dazed*): Where do I think I am?

ASSOC. PROF.: You can go for a walk, it's a lovely evening.

IVAN ANTONOV: I don't feel like going for a walk, I want to sleep. You go for a walk.

ASSOC. PROF.: You can go to bed in the kitchen.

IVAN ANTONOV: On the cooker?

ASSOC. PROF.: You can take an armchair in there.

IVAN ANTONOV: And why should I sleep in an armchair in the kitchen? When I've got a living room specially for that purpose?

MARTHA (*Annoyed*): You promised that we'd be alone. It's so long since we were alone together. You told me that we'd be alone this evening. Do something about it.

ASSOC. PROF.: Why don't you go for a walk, Antonov? It's such a lovely evening, fresh and cool...

MARTHA (*Having realized the humiliating situation*): Let's go somewhere else.

ASSOC. PROF.: If I leave the place he'll destroy the bath.

IVAN ANTONOV: I most certainly will.

MARTHA: How can you do such a thing? It's a unique monument.

IVAN ANTONOV: And why did you destroy my room? It was unique, too. I only had one room.

MARTHA: But the Roman bath...

IVAN ANTONOV: I'm not against the Roman bath, I'm happy that it was found in my room and not somewhere else. I'm proud that the only bath like it exists in our town and nowhere else. But just take it away. Put it in a museum, take it to your home. I haven't any place to live. Give me another house and, although this was my father's house, which was quiet, cosy and comfortable, I'll sacrifice it, in the name of science. But to go for a walk when I've got a house of my own, even though it's been messed up – no. And now I'm off, but only as far as the

loo, so don't be overjoyed too soon. (*Goes out.*)

MARTHA: He's in the right. Why don't you give him another house?

ASSOC. PROF.: Who'll give him a house? It's easier to get a coronary than a house nowadays.

MARTHA: But can't your Institute give him one?

ASSOC. PROF.: Our Institute deals only with things that are more than a thousand years old. It doesn't distribute houses.

MARTHA: But why don't you move the thing somewhere? To a museum or to your Institute?

ASSOC. PROF.: Do you know what you're saying? That's the last thing I need, to move it. Next thing the lions will be all over it and nothing will be left for me. One professor will write a dissertation, another will make a communication about it, a third will get to attend a conference in Rome... No, no, if I move it, the discovery is no longer mine, and anyone can make use of it. No, under no circumstances whatsoever.

MARTHA: But the man can't live in the street.

ASSOC. PROF.: Do you know what that bath is for me? It's a chance that comes once in a lifetime – if you miss it, that's the end.

MARTHA: Don't forget that the bath is...

ASSOC. PROF.: The bath is a dissertation, a degree, a professorship, scholarly publications, conferences – Rome, Geneva, London, Madrid, correspondent membership of two or three Academies, honours, glory, money!... Oh boy, will I milk that bath! But I must act, I must act at once, without delay. That Ivan Antonov is getting in my way. Where the devil did he come from?

MARTHA: It seems to me that you're overdoing it. After all, the house is his, and it isn't he but we who've only just come.

ASSOC. PROF. (*Paying no attention to her*): Without delay, without delay, before anyone gets ahead of me...

MARTHA gently puts her hand on his mouth. Then places her other hand on his shoulder. She looks him in the eye.

MARTHA (*Quietly, in a friendly way*): What's come over you? You seem to have gone blind. Can you see me? Can't you see anything but the bath?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Thinking of something else, doesn't understand*): I can see you, I can see you.

MARTHA (*Intimately*): Look this way. Look at me. Can you see me?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Without grasping the subtext*): I've told you already – I can see you. My eyesight is perfectly good.

MARTHA takes her hands off his shoulders and moves a little away from him. She has

gradually become quite serious.

MARTHA: And now?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Irritated*): Martha!

MARTHA (*Jumps down into the Roman bath*): And now?

ASSOC. PROF.: I can see you perfectly well, my eyesight is excellent. (*It is clear from his tone that he hasn't grasped the importance of the moment and that actually he doesn't see anything.*)

MARTHA (*As if speaking to herself*): He can't see a thing. (*Goes to him.*) You can't see a thing. Since when? Why?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Irritated*): Stop this talk of blindness. Is it a joke?

MARTHA: Yes. A joke.

Just then IVAN ANTONOV enters in his pyjamas and makes for the bed.

IVAN ANTONOV: Well, I'm going to bed. Good night.

MARTHA: But is he going to sleep here?

ASSOC. PROF. (*More irritated than ever*): You see the situation...

MARTHA (*Bitterly*): The situation has been the same for a whole month now. You never have time for me, you don't ring me up. Since you discovered this Roman bath, you never think of me at all – just as if I didn't exist.

IVAN ANTONOV: Excuse me, but your conversation is preventing me from going to sleep. And so is the lamp.

MARTHA: Everyone thinks only of himself.

IVAN ANTONOV: That's one of my funny habits – I sleep with the lights out.

MARTHA: You're always thinking about the bath, and, to be more exact, not about the bath but about the opportunities it's giving you.

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha, it seems to me you're overdoing it. You're overexcited.

IVAN ANTONOV: I'm the one who's overexcited. The lamp's shining straight into my eyes.

ASSOC. PROF.: Let's switch this philistine's lamp off. (*Turns it off.*) Martha, let's talk this over calmly. We can talk in the dark even better.

MARTHA: I don't want to talk. He can hear everything.

IVAN ANTONOV: Quite correct.

MARTHA: Let's go out, let's go somewhere else.

IVAN ANTONOV: My hearing is extraordinarily keen, almost like an animal's – I can hear things half a kilometer away.

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha, it seems to me that you aren't fully aware of the importance of this moment.

MARTHA: You think only about yourself.

ASSOC. PROF.: I think about both of us.

MARTHA: Only about yourself. Tomorrow you'll drop me for a tomb or a broken pot.

IVAN ANTONOV: You can be a hundred percent sure of that.

ASSOC. PROF.: You, there, keep your mouth shut – nobody's asked for your opinion.

IVAN ANTONOV: Nobody ever asks me anything. They didn't ask me when they dug up my room either.

MARTHA: No, this can't go on, it's too much, this isn't the first time. You're always in a hurry, there's always something more important... And I'm not a mummy, I can't only live with antiquities...

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha, try to reason like a modern person.

MARTHA: You mean reason like you – is that it?

IVAN ANTONOV: There's nothing to reason about – thought kills action.

MARTHA (*Looks at IVAN ANTONOV*): Let's go out, at least this evening. He won't destroy the bath. You won't, will you?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Pointing at the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR*): Hear what he has to say.

ASSOC. PROF.: He will.

MARTHA: He won't. He'll give us his word of honour not to. Won't you?

ASSOC. PROF.: Don't be silly – who believes in words of honour today?

MARTHA: Then choose – either the bath or me.

ASSOC. PROF.: You've no right to put it like that, you know...

MARTHA: I know. I know what the bath means to you. I'm not making you give it up entirely. I just want you to come with me this evening. After all, I'm something, too, am I not?

ASSOC. PROF.: It's impossible for me to come tonight.

MARTHA: Then – all the best (*Goes out.*)

IVAN ANTONOV: A pretty girl. I'd go with her. And let the bath go to the devil.

ASSOC. PROF.: You've rattled long enough! (*Lights a cigarette, irritated.*)

IVAN ANTONOV: Sexual life is the foundation of metabolism.

ASSOC. PROF.: Shut your trap!

IVAN ANTONOV: It was in the papers.

ASSOC. PROF.: Damn fool!!!

IVAN ANTONOV: We don't know yet who the fool is. I'm off to catch up with the girl and see her home. (*Runs out before the dazed ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR can say a word.*)

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR smokes his cigarette restlessly, sitting on the camp bed which has been placed in the Roman Bath. The ticking of the clock pierces his consciousness sharply and heavily, like hammers. Time is passing, tick-tock!... The ASSOCIATE

PROFESSOR puts out the light and smokes in the dark. IVAN ANTONOV comes in, walking on tip-toe through the dug-up living room. He goes towards the kitchen.

ASSOC. PROF. (*Lighting the bedside lamp, which is in the Roman Bath*):

Where are you off to?

IVAN ANTONOV: Oh, you're still here, are you? Sitting in your bath.

ASSOC. PROF. (*Suspiciously*): Where are you going?

IVAN ANTONOV: I'm hungry. After these things a man is always hungry. I'll just have a bite. (*Opens the fridge and takes out a piece of salami.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: After what things?

IVAN ANTONOV: What a child you are – always asking questions. Some things are off-limits to schoolkids.

ASSOC. PROF.: You have to tell me.

IVAN ANTONOV: Why do I have to? You're not my confessor by any chance, are you? Or the local warden?

ASSOC. PROF.: You didn't catch up with her at all. (*Says this hopefully.*)

IVAN ANTONOV: What's that to you? You chose the Bath.

ASSOC. PROF.: I'll smash your face. Don't get in my way! Antonov, I've crushed all those who have got in my way.

IVAN ANTONOV: And perhaps your Christian name isn't Professor, but Roller Ananiev.

ASSOC. PROF.: I'll crush you, Antonov!!!

IVAN ANTONOV: You're making my hair stand on end. Do you crush at night? Because I'm going to bed. (*Lies down and draws up the blankets.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: What did you do with Martha?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Ironically*): We talked about art.

ASSOC. PROF.: Tell me what...

IVAN ANTONOV (*Interrupting*): Tomorrow morning I'll explain it to you with a chart and coloured chalks. And now I'm going to sleep – don't bother me with your adolescent questions.

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR puts out the light. The stage is dark.

IVAN ANTONOV's living room. In the same state – dug up, furniture scattered about, in the middle – the pool in which the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR is asleep on the camp bed. Boards have been placed over the hole so that one can cross it. IVAN ANTONOV is also asleep. Enter TSEKOV, a middle-aged man, smartly dressed; his appearance shows that he is an experienced man, who has been about and done business in more than one field of life. He looks around, has a good look at the Roman bath and the two sleeping men, and hesitates a bit.

TSEKOV: Good morning! (*Silence, the men sleep.*)

TSEKOV: Good morning! (*This is said more loudly.*)

IVAN ANTONOV and the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR sleep on. No one hears him.

TSEKOV (*Almost shouts*): Good morning!

IVAN ANTONOV (*Starts and rises a little in his bed*): Eh? What's up?

TSEKOV (*Smiles amiably*): I said "good morning!"

IVAN ANTONOV: Is that all you woke me up for? To say "good morning" to me?!

TSEKOV: No.

IVAN ANTONOV: I thought you were paid to go about saying "good morning" to the working people. More care for the ordinary person.

TSEKOV (*Examining the bath like a connoisseur*): Excuse me – the unique Roman bath, isn't it?

IVAN ANTONOV: Yes. You're not an associate professor by any chance, are you? Because there's one asleep here already.

TSEKOV: Unfortunately I was unable to reach those heights of scholarship. I've only got a secondary school certificate.

IVAN ANTONOV: Now, that inspires more confidence. Dare I ask what brings you here? Your school certificate doesn't provide sufficient grounds for your presence.

TSEKOV: I've come to see Ivan Antonov, the owner of this house. Can I have a word with him?

IVAN ANTONOV: If Ivan Antonov is in question, that's still me. Although, as things are going, I expect changes at any moment. So make full use of your chances.

TSEKOV: Do excuse me, but as there are two of you... you understand, of course... could you certify that in any way by any document?

IVAN ANTONOV: Do you want my birth certificate?

TSEKOV: Oh, please, your identity card is enough. Let me assure you that it's to our mutual interest.

IVAN ANTONOV: What a business. But because of the school certificate I'll show it to you... (*Shows his identity card.*)

TSEKOV: Thank you very much indeed. (*Shows his own.*) Tsekov, art critic. Don't mind that, it's my job. I must check everything. Is the sleeping man your friend?

IVAN ANTONOV: No. He's an associate professor. At least he says so. It wouldn't be a bad thing if you were to ask him for his identity card.

TSEKOV: He's no relation of yours, is he?

IVAN ANTONOV: Not on your life. He sleeps here because of the Roman bath. He guards it. He's afraid that I'll break it up. He discovered it, or rather was the first to come after it had been discovered.

TSEKOV tiptoes to the sleeping man, gently moves the blanket and takes a look at his face. He climbs up out of the bath to IVAN ANTONOV.

TSEKOV: That's Ananiev.

IVAN ANTONOV: Ananiev, associate professor

TSEKOV: I should like our talk to be confidential. What do you think, is he really asleep?

IVAN ANTONOV: Who knows? He may just have shut his eyes.

TSEKOV: In any case, we'll talk softly. And not so near him. If he happens to wake up, tell him I'm your cousin from Loukovit.

IVAN ANTONOV: Will it make any difference if I confuse Loukovit with another town?

TSEKOV: I won't mind.

IVAN ANTONOV: Splendid.

TSEKOV: Look here, you seem an intelligent man...

IVAN ANTONOV: Appearances are sometimes deceptive.

TSEKOV: No. You're an intelligent man, and that's why you haven't a chance. You're in a mess. You see for yourself – your home's destroyed, your furniture's ruined, and in the middle of your only room there's a Roman pool.

IVAN ANTONOV: With matrons!

TSEKOV: The matrons don't make a difference. They even make it worse. And this Roman pool of the period of Gaius Lucius and Pompilianus is the only well preserved one in the world so far. It's unique, and in that respect you shouldn't have any illusions whatever.

IVAN ANTONOV: I haven't any.

TSEKOV: That's good. This pool is only just beginning to attract attention. Like the Boyana Church and the Kazanluk Tomb. Scholars from all over the world will buzz about like flies around honey; it belongs to the school of Marcus Antonius Octavianus, that's no joking matter.

IVAN ANTONOV: Look here, have you really graduated from nothing but secondary school?

TSEKOV: Seven average marks, one satisfactory, three resit exams! Bribed my way through them, you know how life was at the time. But that's not the point. The point is that this Roman bath will be proclaimed a cultural artefact of special importance. UNESCO will get involved in the matter, and that will be the end of you.

IVAN ANTONOV: Do you think so?

TSEKOV: I'm sure of it. I know UNESCO. They never do things by halves. I told you from the very beginning – you haven't a ghost of a chance. They'll start excavations in the kitchen, they'll dig up your larder, they'll even go for the loo.

IVAN ANTONOV: No, not the loo. D’you really think they will? The loo, too?

TSEKOV: I’ve been working with UNSECO for years, I know it from A to Z, and I know our guys, too. They’ll dig up your loo and you’ll be obliged to run to the public loos. And you know what a state they’re in nowadays.

IVAN ANTONOV: Yes... horrible.

TSEKOV: There’s no toilet paper. They’re dirty and almost always full. Need I tell you, it’s tragic, simply tragic.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Nods*): Tragic. I rather think he’s stirring.

TSEKOV: So in Loukovit... (*Glances at the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR.*) He’s turned over on his other side. Is he really asleep?

IVAN ANTONOV: Who the devil knows? You can expect anything from him.

TSEKOV (*After careful observation*): I rather think he is. And the most terrible thing about them is that they don’t work regularly.

IVAN ANTONOV: What?

TSEKOV: The public loos. They’re always being inspected. What do they inspect? Or else it’s their day off. Just think – you’re running, driven by noble impulses, and it’s closed. No, that’s truly horrible!

IVAN ANTONOV: I’ll admit you’ve painted a ghastly picture. I’m shaking all over.

TSEKOV: Tremors are nothing. You’ll simply be kicked out.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Not understanding*): How?

TSEKOV (*Pointing*): Like a rag.

IVAN ANTONOV: D’you think they’ll go as far as that?

TSEKOV: I can picture it. I can describe it to you down to the smallest detail.

IVAN ANTONOV: Well, they’ll give me another flat; they’ll indemnify me.

TSEKOV (*Laughing*): Antonov, as an intelligent man you haven’t an idea of the housing question, of course. You can’t even stand the word "bribery", you’re disgusted with toadyism, you wouldn’t fall on your knees and kiss your boss’s hand for anything on earth. Tell me, would you fall on your knees and kiss the hand of the administrator on whom your residence depended?

IVAN ANTONOV: Well, why should I kiss his hand?

TSEKOV: If you had a kebab stall or were a financially responsible person things would be different, I wouldn’t worry about you. You would simply go to your summer residence to live in the fresh air. But you’re an intellectual, you haven’t got even a second home. Admit it that you haven’t got a second home.

IVAN ANTONOV: I haven’t.

TSEKOV: You see. You’re lost. Actually, that’s why I’m here. Tell me, don’t you think that his ear’s bigger than the other one, as though he’s pricked it up and is listening?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Looking*): Which ear?

TSEKOV: The one on your side.

IVAN ANTONOV: But I can't see the other one, so I can't compare them.

TSEKOV: Well anyhow. So, to put it briefly, this is the lowdown: Your house will be condemned and you'll be left in the street.

IVAN ANTONOV: I don't believe that. If the worst comes to the worst, they'll give me another flat.

TSEKOV: At best, they'll promise you one. They have made that promise to thousands, but as for giving one... The housing problem, Antonov, is one which has no answer at all for some people!

IVAN ANTONOV: But I...

TSEKOV: Yes, I know. You'll fight, you'll complain, you'll write complaints, you'll hang about various offices. And meanwhile you'll live in a flat for which you won't pay subsidized rent. And that will make a slave of you – one hundred and twenty leva for a room and a kitchen. And if there's a lift, which, of course, regularly breaks down, you'll pay one hundred and forty.

IVAN ANTONOV: Whatever for?

TSEKOV: That's the law. They charge you a percentage for the thrill as you hang above the abyss. You have to pay for thrilling experiences too – even if you've got a telly. A percentage for the bricks and concrete, a percentage for the lift... In Loukovit everything's O.K. Our aunt sends you her love and wants to know when you'll be coming our way, she wants to see you...

Behind them the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR has stirred and Tsekov's vigilant eye has noticed him. He winks meaningly at IVAN ANTONOV, making secretive signs at him, but IVAN doesn't catch on.

IVAN ANTONOV: Which aunt? Whose aunt?

TSEKOV: Well, cousin, I'd better be going...

IVAN looks at him, quite confused, then turns around, sees the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR and realizes what's up.

TSEKOV: Well, come and see me off a little way because I won't be able to find my way in these streets.

The two go out. They are in the street and stop at the Taxi-call column. TSEKOV leans against it.

TSEKOV: I don't want anything from you. I'm ready to give you something.

IVAN ANTONOV: What are you ready to give me?

TSEKOV: Antonov, you're an intelligent man. And you haven't a chance. This Roman bath will ruin you. They'll take your house, that's a hundred per cent certain. There's only one way out for you – to turn your loss into a profit.

IVAN ANTONOV: What way out?

TSEKOV: To place your trust in me. Today wise people in the West, and there wise means rich, invest their millions in works of art. Pictures, icons, antique vases... Their price never falls, on the contrary, it goes up. A work of art doesn't need food, or water, nor does it join a trade union – it stays put quietly in a corner and its price goes up. And so far the price has always gone up, Antonov, it's gone dazzlingly high. And what does a man need today? Money. Happiness isn't in the money, perhaps, but it isn't in not having any, either.

IVAN ANTONOV: So what? Are you going to talk to me about the meaning of life?

TSEKOV: Precisely about the meaning of life. What sense is there in living in this excavated place, where further digging is expected? Why shouldn't you live on the shores of Lake Como? You're an intelligent man, aren't you?

IVAN ANTONOV: You suppose that that's enough for me, to live on the shores of Lake Como, do you?

TSEKOV: For others it isn't, but for you it's enough. Quite enough. Look here, Antonov, I see you in a villa of your own on the shores of Lake Como. Or in Switzerland with a solid bank account. There are lakes in Switzerland, too. What's more, they're no worse than Lake Como.

IVAN ANTONOV: Why do you keep harping about this Lake Como? It's not the Pancharevo Lake, is it? How am I to go to Lake Como?

TSEKOV (*Looks around*): By transporting the Roman bath.

IVAN ANTONOV: What? Transporting it? Wonderful! Where to?

TSEKOV: Abroad. To Italy. From there, others will take it up, most probably Americans, they're the richest at the moment. Don't worry about that, we shall find a buyer for the only Roman Bath of the period of Gaius Lucius and Pompilianus. With matrons, moreover. We'll fleece them for the matrons, too, we'll take two skins off them. They've got the money.

IVAN ANTONOV: But how are we to transport it? It's in my living room, isn't it?

TSEKOV: Precisely thanks to the fact that it is in your living room. Once it goes to a museum, that's the end of it. It'll be guarded like a state treasure. That's why we have to act quickly, before they've had time to think about it. They move slowly, letters, requests, re your reference, re our reference... In the meantime we'll do the trick. Don't worry, Antonov, I've been dealing with such matters for years. You might say that I've exported half the Neolithic tumuli in Bulgaria. If all the Thracian tombs, and antique ritual gifts I've got across the border were to be gathered together in one place, you wouldn't believe the cemetery they would make! I would have exported the Roman villa they found in the Rhodopes, if they hadn't dynamited it before I got there; there was nothing left of it by then.

IVAN ANTONOV: So you deal in...

TSEKOV: Yes, I deal in works of art. Icons, rare books, iconostases, amulets from Thracian and Roman times... whatever comes to hand. But that's nothing to the Roman bath, Antonov, mere peanuts. The bath's the big deal, we'll get at least a million for it, we won't let them have it for less. And after that, Lake Como.

THE COLUMN (*Speaking up unexpectedly*): That's enough about Lake Como, carry on.

TSEKOV (*Startled, looks around*): Did you say anything? It seems to me that someone spoke...

IVAN ANTONOV: But, Tsekov, in that case the Roman bath will have to be destroyed, and taken out in pieces.

TSEKOV: We'll cut it up in pieces, Antonov, we'll cut it up like a cake.

IVAN ANTONOV: Suppose it falls to dust while we're doing it?

TSEKOV: It won't, I operate with the latest stuff in international science, and I read the periodicals! Men have cut up whole temples, yet you think we won't be able to cope with a bath! We'll cut it up and export it.

THE COLUMN: Suppose they catch you?

TSEKOV (*Stiffens, where he stands, and looks around carefully*): That voice again. Antonov, you haven't changed the timbre of your voice, have you?

IVAN ANTONOV: No, I haven't noticed anything of the kind.

TSEKOV: Somebody asked "Suppose they catch you?"

IVAN ANTONOV: I was thinking about something else.

TSEKOV: It wasn't a thought, it was a voice.

IVAN ANTONOV: Look here, Tsekov, the Roman bath is State property after all.

TSEKOV: Why should it be State property? Did the State make it by any chance?

IVAN ANTONOV: But there's a law.

TSEKOV: I know. And in accordance with which law did they dig up your living room?

IVAN ANTONOV: That happened by accident.

TSEKOV: There's no such thing as an accident. People only marry by accident.

IVAN ANTONOV is silent and thoughtful. TSEKOV looks at him, anxiously.

TSEKOV: There you go now – scruples. You're supposed to be an intelligent fellow, aren't you? Giving so much thought to a bath. Who thinks about you? How many tumuli and Roman settlements have been scattered by bulldozers? How many necropoli have been dynamited, how many beautiful old buildings have been cut up – and now all this fuss about the Roman bath. Why, that would be good for it! At least we'll preserve it for mankind. It won't be destroyed, it'll

be put in a museum, or in a private collection; we'll be saving a work of art. Think of art, Antonov! This is a noble cause in the end. And well paid, too, which makes it all the nobler. We'll get five hundred thousand dollars apiece!

THE COLUMN: Excuse me, I didn't hear the exact figure – did you say five hundred? Dollars?

TSEKOV: This is a fine thing! Even the columns have begun to talk.

IVAN ANTONOV: Oh, this one has been talking for a long time now.

TSEKOV: Let's get away from here, or...

THE COLUMN: Twenty per cent! Twenty per cent for me! And in Swiss francs, if I may! The dollar's too volatile.

TSEKOV: The fish is still in the sea, and there it goes, talking to me about percentages. Here, Antonov, take a lesson from this. It's just a column, but it finds its bearings quicker than you.

IVAN ANTONOV: Machines have fully replaced humans.

TSEKOV (*Looking around anxiously*): Antonov, think, don't refuse out of hand. This is your only chance.

THE COLUMN: We'll leave by taxi.

TSEKOV: Well, I'm off. I'll be coming again. And don't accept any other offers, you'll be cheated. And think quickly – we've no time to lose. (*TSEKOV runs to the left.*)

COLUMN: Hey, where are you off to, eh?

TSEKOV: Fat chance I'll tell you where... (*Goes out.*)

IVAN ANTONOV re-enters his own dug-up living room. The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR is shaving with an electric razor, the radio is on.

IVAN ANTONOV: Before you go away, don't forget to leave me two leva and fifty stotinki. For spending the night here. I'm charging ten per cent for the Roman bath, like they charge for live music.

ASSOC. PROF.: I'm not even thinking of going. My work here is only just beginning.

IVAN ANTONOV: Suppose I throw you out?

ASSOC. PROF.: You can't. I am a judo expert.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Shouting*): But on what grounds are you staying here in my home? The Constitution defends my home!

ASSOC. PROF.: If you please. Here is an order for the commencement of excavation in the larder and the toilet.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Reading*): It's got an official stamp on it, too... But this is a private home... how is this possible?

ASSOC. PROF.: This is a site. And you may have noticed that I am in charge of the excavation.

IVAN ANTONOV: But I'll lodge a complaint.

ASSOC. PROF.: Of course. You'll need two months to go through the proper channels, to arrange a meeting of the Scientific Council, which will set up a commission to study the case. The commission will study it for a month and will ask for another two months to come to a decision...

IVAN ANTONOV: Why two?

ASSOC. PROF.: They're academics, they can't manage this in a day or two, they're busy people, here today, at a conference in Berlin tomorrow, and at a symposium in Italy the day after. After that, I shall enter an objection against the decision if it's in your favour, 60 pages of scientifically based arguments. First, the commission will consider it, then the Scientific Council will have to meet again...

IVAN ANTONOV (*Interrupts him angrily*): And do you happen to know what the sentence is for premeditated murder? In the event of the murderer giving himself up?

ASSOC. PROF.: I wouldn't advise you to do that. I am very fit, and my blood group is among the most widespread. An attempted murder would only delay matters.

IVAN ANTONOV: And haven't you got a conscience?

ASSOC. PROF.: I've got a university degree.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Shouting*): But then give me a new house at least!

ASSOC. PROF.: We only deal with things that are more than a thousand years old.

IVAN ANTONOV: And who deals with a middle-aged man who wants to live a normal life, nothing more? Who deals with humans?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Shrugging his shoulders*): I don't know. That's not my province. Ask Sof-Information.

Just then the LIFE-GUARD enters the living room, a comparatively young man.

LIFE-GUARD: Pardon me, is the pool here?

IVAN ANTONOV: There it is over there.

ASSOC. PROF.: What pool do you mean? (*Sternly.*)

LIFE-GUARD: The one they mentioned on TV. I've been appointed life-guard at the newly-opened pool.

ASSOC. PROF.: Appointed what?

LIFE-GUARD: Life-guard. There has to be a life-guard at all pools, beaches and water reservoirs. We save the bathers.

ASSOC. PROF.: Save the bathers?

LIFE-GUARD: Bathers are our most precious capital. That's what is written in the Regulations of our Life-Guard Service. (*Goes out for a moment.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: No one is going to bathe in this pool. And no one is going to swim in it.

LIFE-GUARD (*Comes in carrying a sunshade and its cover, and a folding canvas stool*): How's that?

IVAN ANTONOV: But can't you see that no one could drown in it?

LIFE-GUARD: People have drowned in basins. (*Throws the cover on the floor and sits down on the stool.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: There's been some mistake. This isn't a swimming pool, but a Roman bath, a centuries-old monument of culture...

LIFE-GUARD: The order for my appointment is in my pocket (*Pats it.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: But, anyway, it isn't going to be filled with water. Research work is going to be carried out here.

LIFE-GUARD: That's none of my business. My business is to save life.

ASSOC. PROF.: There's absolutely no need for a life-guard here.

LIFE-GUARD: But perhaps there is.

ASSOC. PROF.: We shall see!

LIFE-GUARD: Now that the swimming summer is at its height, when the call has gone out to train thousands of new swimmers, you want to close a swimming pool? When we're in such a bad way as regards swimming?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Horried*): You want to train swimmers here, do you?!!

ASSOC. PROF.: In this particular case the question is...

LIFE-GUARD (*Interrupting him*): There's no question of a particular case. It's a question of principle. They won't even listen to you once they realize that it's a question of closing a pool. Never mind whether it's Roman or Hungarian. We're in a very bad way as regards pools.

ASSOC. PROF.: We shall see.

LIFE-GUARD: I'm telling you as a friend – you're wasting your time. We planned to get ten gold medals in swimming at the Olympics. A solemn promise has been given too.

ASSOC. PROF.: We're not friends. And I don't care about the Olympics. And if you pour so much as a drop of water into the pool – I'll take you to court. And no one will save you. My name's Ananiev. Associate Professor Ananiev, and don't you forget it. (*Takes his brief and goes out.*)

LIFE-GUARD (*To IVAN ANTONOV*): Are you an associate professor, too?

IVAN ANTONOV: No, I'm Ivan Antonov.

LIFE-GUARD: Anything to do with the pool?

IVAN ANTONOV: No. I had the misfortune to be born in this house. This is where I live.

LIFE-GUARD (*Walking about and looking for room for something*): Oh, why? It's not a bad house. I like it.

IVAN ANTONOV: We have the same taste; so do I. But they've dug it up a bit.

LIFE-GUARD (*Soothing him*): They're digging everywhere – if they're not digging in the streets, they are digging in the houses. Not to worry.

IVAN ANTONOV: There's nothing to worry about any more.

LIFE-GUARD: Yes, here, perhaps. Can you spare me a moment?

The two go out. A second later IVAN ANTONOV's voice is heard, obviously objecting to something: "No, no, don't, not that please!", etc. A little later the two bring in an iron watchtower, one of those which are to be seen on all the beaches along the Black Sea coast. It has a flagstaff. The two stand in front of the bath.

IVAN ANTONOV: But why a tower?

LIFE-GUARD: Where shall we put it? (*Looks around speculatively.*) The tower is on the inventory. You can't do without a tower. Gives you better visibility. Perhaps here...

IVAN ANTONOV: Look here, are you seriously...

LIFE-GUARD: No, there's no window here, let's put it opposite the window. (*They carry it to another place, opposite the window.*)

LIFE-GUARD: Right here.

IVAN ANTONOV: No, no, that's where I put my bed! D'you hear?

LIFE-GUARD (*Placing it in position in spite of IVAN ANTONOV's protest*): Splendid.

IVAN ANTONOV: Look here, I've nothing against swimming as a sport, but I shouldn't like you to train thousands of new swimmers in my living room.

LIFE-GUARD: Why?

IVAN ANTONOV: Well, how can I put it, I sometimes sleep... I sometimes feel I'd like to be alone... I work... I'll be in the swimmer's way.

LIFE-GUARD: Not to worry. A competitor has to have a sound psyche. Let them get used to it.

IVAN ANTONOV: I'm more worried about my own psyche.

The LIFE-GUARD has climbed up the scaffolding raised over the Roman bath.

He spreads out his arms as if preparing to dive, as from a tower.

LIFE-GUARD: You ought to practise sports!

IVAN ANTONOV: No, no! That man's going to dive!.. (*Dashes into the Roman bath.*) I must act now. Or else tomorrow, in this here Roman Bath, I'll find the Sixth American Fleet!

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

IVAN ANTONOV's living room. In its former state: scaffolding around the Roman bath, the floor dug up, holes in the floor here and there, whiteswashed boards placed on the tube scaffolding, a board over the bath. The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR is digging in one of the holes, continuing excavations. In the middle of the room, behind the bath stands the LIFE-GUARD's tower. There is a white flag on its mast. On its lower part, there is a black plate on which six lines have been drawn in chalk. There is an umbrella over the tower – a coloured beach umbrella. At its foot, a pulley with a nylon rope wound on it; sports balls in nets, red lifebelts and life-buoys are scattered round the room. The LIFE-GUARD is sitting on the tower in a yellow bathrobe, looking through his field glasses. A radio is on below him.

LIFE-GUARD: The Ivanovs are cooking onion stew... D'you like onion stew, Professor Ananiev?

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR digs away without answering.

LIFE-GUARD: The student on the fifth floor has got visitors again. She is drawing the curtains. When do those people study, Professor Ananiev?

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR goes on digging in silence.

LIFE-GUARD (*Continuing his observation with the field glasses*): Deleva has just broken a plate. (*Chalks up another white line on the black plate.*) The seventh this week... A very clumsy woman... On the fourth floor there's nothing special, the old woman is chewing an apple... Do you like apples, Professor Ananiev?

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR digs without answering or paying any attention.

LIFE-GUARD (*Dropping the field glasses and looking at the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR*): You underestimate life-guards, Professor Ananiev. They're human beings, too.

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR goes on with his work in silence.

LIFE-GUARD: Shall I save you, eh? Professor Ananiev? Would you like me to?

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR digs on without saying a word.

LIFE-GUARD: You're an odd man, Professor Ananiev. Don't you want to talk to me? Why not?

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR digs on with his back to the LIFE-GUARD.

LIFE-GUARD (*Watching him for a time*): You dig away like a Hamlet!

ASSOC. PROF. (*Stopping and wiping the sweat from his brow*): What nonsense!

LIFE-GUARD: Why nonsense? I've seen the film and it was the same thing there. But there was a skull.

ASSOC. PROF.: And here there's a life-guard. At a pool without water, only ten square meters.

LIFE-GUARD: There's a life-guard on the pay-roll.

ASSOC. PROF.: You're wolfing the people's cash.

LIFE-GUARD: We wolf it but at least we save life, while you just dig.

ASSOC. PROF.: If you're an honest life-guard, you'll go over to a normal pool, where there's water, at least. You'll say that there's been a mistake, a misunderstanding.

LIFE-GUARD: My appointment is for this place. You want me to go and give it up of my own accord? To resign?

ASSOC. PROF.: That's what a real life-guard would do.

LIFE-GUARD: Resigning is a bourgeois prejudice. No one resigns in this country. Have you ever heard of anyone resigning? You haven't. And you won't, either. Why should I be the first?

His question remains unanswered, because just then DIAMANDIEV, an elderly man, enters. He walks with slow measured steps, looks over the living room in an offhand way, without paying any attention to the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR and the LIFE-GUARD, who watch him in silence. He reaches the Roman bath and bends over the pool.

LIFE-GUARD (*Blows a blast on his whistle*): Don't bend over the pool!

DIAMANDIEV draws back, then tries to go down the steps into the Roman bath.

ASSOC. PROF. (*Sharply*): Excuse me, but what do you want?

DIAMANDIEV: And who may you be?

ASSOC. PROF.: It seems to me that you should be the first to give your name.

DIAMANDIEV: Are you Ivan Antonov?

ASSOC. PROF.: My name is Ananiev. Ananiev, associate professor, in charge of the excavation here. No outside persons are allowed to enter the site.

DIAMANDIEV: Is this pool really Roman?

ASSOC. PROF.: Did you only come here to ask me that?

DIAMANDIEV: I'm looking for Ivan Antonov, the owner of this house.

ASSOC. PROF.: On what business?

DIAMANDIEV: My own.

ASSOC. PROF.: Then why do you ask about the Roman bath.

DIAMANDIEV: And why shouldn't I ask?

LIFE-GUARD: Here comes Antonov.

IVAN ANTONOV comes in looking weary.

LIFE-GUARD (*To IVAN ANTONOV*): This guy is asking for you.

IVAN ANTONOV (*To DIAMANDIEV*): How do you do? And where are the dolphins?

DIAMANDIEV: What dolphins? (*Stares at the pool and the holes.*)

IVAN ANTONOV (*To the LIFE-GUARD*): Has he been sent by the Circus? (*To DIAMANDIEV*) Haven't you been sent by the Circus?

DIAMANDIEV: No.

IVAN ANTONOV: Thank God. Some fellow who trains dolphins has been asking for me. He wants to rent the pool. Dolphins are all I need to make me happy.

DIAMANDIEV: I am Diamandiev, and I want to have a talk with you.

IVAN ANTONOV: Very well.

DIAMANDIEV: A confidential talk.

IVAN ANTONOV: As confidential as you like. (*They move left.*)

TSEKOV (*Unexpectedly sticking his head out of a hole in the floor*): Antonov, don't accept! (*Pops back into his hole.*)

The two look around, ANTONOV is surprised and moves farther to the left. DIAMANDIEV is just about to speak when the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR pops up out of another hole.

IVAN ANTONOV wonders where they should go, he suggests to DIAMANDIEV that they climb up the scaffolding, placed opposite the tubes, on trestles, on the other side of the Roman bath.

IVAN ANTONOV: Come this way!... (*Goes first, with DIAMANDIEV following him. The two stop in the middle, where there appears to be no one.*)

DIAMANDIEV: I am a real estate agent, you may have heard of me.

Diamandiev, I have bought and resold half of Sofia.

IVAN ANTONOV: The other half is left, I take it.

DIAMANDIEV: I have plans for that, too. I'm a wholesale dealer. Four-room luxury flats and upwards. With fireplaces, floor heating. Fountains, marble, and fitness rooms.

IVAN ANTONOV: Sport keeps you fit.

DIAMANDIEV: With me... (*Stops, because he sees IVAN making signs at him – down below the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR has appeared again from one of the holes.*)

IVAN ANTONOV sighs, looks around, and invites DIAMANDIEV with a wave of the hand

to cross the board and get up onto the bed, which has been placed on the tube scaffolding, two metres above the floor.

IVAN ANTONOV: This way!... Please!...

DIAMANDIEV: There? (*Sets out, they pass along the board and he sits down on the bed.*) Thanks. For me there are no chance clients. I charge a fifteen per cent commission, but the client gets what he wants. Through me you can get flats which are to be had nowhere else.

We see the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR appearing from a rectangular hole in the floor just under the bed, listening. IVAN ANTONOV sees him and shakes his head. DIAMANDIEV follows his eyes and sees the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR. He frowns, then he points the way – along the bed, then the ladder and outside, where they can talk in peace. This they do.

DIAMANDIEV (*Coming down the ladder*): Business is getting harder every day.

They make for the door, but the LIFE-GUARD appears and throws a ball tied with a rope into the Roman bath. The two go back and sit down on two chairs beside the desk.

DIAMANDIEV: Antonov.

IVAN ANTONOV: I'm listening.

DIAMANDIEV: There's a client now – he wants something super-special. He's offering a lot. But he wants a lot. He's prepared to pay a large sum.

IVAN ANTONOV: And what does he want?

DIAMANDIEV: Your flat. He has heard about the bath.

IVAN ANTONOV: My flat? You mean – this battlefield around here?

DIAMANDIEV: Yes.

IVAN ANTONOV: Is he mad about dug-up flats?

DIAMANDIEV: No. He could buy both of us. He works in building materials and has so much money that it's even embarrassing for me to tell you how much.

IVAN ANTONOV: If it's so embarrassing, don't tell me.

DIAMANDIEV: His wife wants a flat with a Roman bath. She has heard that it's the only one in the world.

IVAN ANTONOV: Aha! But I'll have to disappoint you – this flat can't be bought. I mean – with the bath.

DIAMANDIEV: There's nothing that can't be bought. How much – that's the question.

IVAN ANTONOV: The thing is that this bath is the only one in the world. A cultural artefact of global significance. The Institute has begun excavations, now they're excavating the loo.

DIAMANDIEV: That doesn't matter. We'll sue the Institute. That's quite possible from a legal standpoint – this is a private home, not everything is clear.

We'll hire three lawyers. You leave that to me.

IVAN ANTONOV: Besides, there's a life-guard, from the Physical Culture Institute.

DIAMANDIEV: We'll sue them, too. With three lawyers.

IVAN ANTONOV: It seems to me that this Roman bath belongs to the State. And to mankind, as the associate professor was saying.

DIAMANDIEV: We'll sue the State, we'll sue mankind, too, if need be.

IVAN ANTONOV: With three lawyers.

DIAMANDIEV: With three lawyers. There isn't a case I haven't won. You just give me your written consent for the sale, the rest is my business.

The LIFE-GUARD's whistle is heard outside and he shouts: "Look out! Can't you see the buoys!" A moment later he comes in, holding three buoys and a letter.

LIFE-GUARD (*To IVAN ANTONOV*): We've got a letter.

IVAN reads the letter. The LIFE-GUARD places the buoys around the bath and on the scaffolding. DIAMANDIEV draws aside discreetly.

IVAN ANTONOV: This is impossible.

LIFE-GUARD: It's from the Borough Council.

IVAN ANTONOV: No, this is quite impossible. I spent an hour explaining the situation to them in the greatest detail. Word by word. Slowly, distinctly – that a Roman bath had been discovered in my house; that I had no place to live; that it was high time they intervened to have this bath removed from my house... And here's what they write to me: "Comrade Antonov. In answer to your request to open a Roman bath in your house, we inform you that your request has been rejected in accordance with Paragraph 3, Subparagraph 57 of the Order for Restricting Private Initiative on the Part of Citizens. Greetings..."

DIAMANDIEV: Signature, official seal...

IVAN ANTONOV: Signature, official seal...

LIFE-GUARD: It ought to have been a written request.

IVAN ANTONOV: I left a written request, too. How is this possible...

DIAMANDIEV: Self-help is better than going to the Borough Council!

IVAN ANTONOV: No, this is really unbelievable! I spent an hour explaining to them!

DIAMANDIEV: You'll get a lot of money. A lump sum. Not greetings.

TSEKOV (*Popping up for a moment from a hole*): Antonov, don't underestimate the Swiss franc! (*Pops down again.*)

LIFE-GUARD (*Jumping up*): It looked like a dolphin to me!

IVAN ANTONOV (*Absent-mindedly*): What dolphin? Where?

LIFE-GUARD: Over there. He said something.

IVAN ANTONOV: Now that's enough nonsense, dolphins don't talk. I'm going round the bend...

DIAMANDIEV: Will you give me a power of attorney now or... shall I come tomorrow?

IVAN ANTONOV: Tomorrow, tomorrow. What power of attorney are you talking about, by the way?

DIAMANDIEV: Empowering me to sell your flat for you.

TSEKOV (*Popping up out of another hole this time*): Antonov, don't forget Lake Como!... (*Hides.*)

DIAMANDIEV: I know that voice!

IVAN ANTONOV: Do you?

LIFE-GUARD: It was a dolphin:..! (*Shouts excitedly.*) A pure dolphin!

DIAMANDIEV: No, I know that voice! Antonov, when?

IVAN ANTONOV: When what? Oh, yes! Not now, not now, I can't think about it now, you see what a muddle it all is.

DIAMANDIEV: Don't hesitate! Prices are dropping every day, and will be increasingly regulated by the State. Worst of all – the situation is changing.

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR comes in through the door, pickaxe in hand, and looks suspiciously at DIAMANDIEV, who becomes confused and moves to leave in a hurry.

DIAMANDIEV: Well, I'll be back. Tomorrow. (*Whispers these last words and goes out.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: Antonov, it seems to me that you are being visited by the most suspicious characters.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Pointing to him*): With pickaxes!

ASSOC. PROF.: I want to warn you that you are making a big mistake if you imagine that you can touch my Roman bath and go unpunished. The State has dealt with many philistines, who think of nothing but their own interests – and it will deal with you, too.

IVAN ANTONOV: And whose interests may you be thinking of? You consider yourself a victim of scholarship, don't you? A life devoted to the service of mankind! No advantages, no designs – you're a selfless bee!

ASSOC. PROF.: The man of today acts, Antonov!

IVAN ANTONOV: Regardless of what the action is?

ASSOC. PROF.: The end justifies the means. There will always be someone to justify them. As long as the end is reached. I know your sort – you sit there, waiting for someone to notice your spirituality and to perceive its tremendous richness. Its countless treasures. Its rare qualities. Your loving heart. You sit there, waiting... And you're surprised because you are neglected, because

women prefer others.

IVAN ANTONOV: Why neglected? I shouldn't say so.

ASSOC. PROF.: You should take exercise, Antonov!...

IVAN ANTONOV: For you, the ideal man needs only petrol, eh? To be able to crush and move.

ASSOC. PROF.: You have a very high opinion of yourself, Antonov.

IVAN ANTONOV: Not of myself – of the human being. I simply value humans higher than a bath.

ASSOC. PROF.: Very well then, remain a human. I'm off to dig in the loo. (*Sets off.*) How do you value the loo – higher or lower?

IVAN ANTONOV: It depends on the man who's going to dig there. In this case – higher. And mind the pan during the excavations or I'll sue you! With three lawyers! That's what the man of today does, isn't it, when someone breaks his lavatory pan?

Drops wearily onto the bed, which has been placed on the scaffolding, two meters above the ground. The LIFE-GUARD sits in his tower staring indifferently before him.

IVAN ANTONOV: What on earth made me go to the seaside during the season? They used to give me a card for January, how fine that was – it was cold and there weren't any people there. And most important of all nothing ever happened. At worst, a mere pneumonia. Now I went there in August and see what happened. My house is filled with professors, buoys. And the worst thing is there's no way of saving me.

The LIFE-GUARD hoists the red flag on the tower, writes 12 degrees on the black plate and sits calmly down again.

LIFE-GUARD (*Jumping up*): Shall I save you?

IVAN ANTONOV: Aren't you tired of saving me? Save the associate professor for a change.

LIFE-GUARD (*Excited*): He won't have it. You know, he's an educated guy... (*Says this slightly.*)

IVAN ANTONOV: I'm educated too.

LIFE-GUARD: No! You're different! You like people! I have to save somebody, that's my job. Otherwise, what do we get? A pool, a life-guard, and nobody saved. I have to be active, too, or else I'll get the sack.

IVAN ANTONOV: I don't feel like being saved just now.

LIFE-GUARD: Why not? It's a good time – the red flag's up on the tower.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Irritated*): No, not this time!

LIFE-GUARD: And the water's ice cold, just right for getting a cramp.

IVAN ANTONOV: I don't like drowning in cold water. You can catch a cold in it.

LIFE-GUARD: You're a good guy, you've always understood me. Come on, let me save you, eh? For five minutes! Please do! Come on. I do beg you!

IVAN ANTONOV (*Crossly*): All right, come on, save me. Where am I to drown this time?

LIFE-GUARD: Over there, behind the cliffs. (*Quickly throws off his bathrobe.*)

IVAN ANTONOV: But no artificial respiration this time! Last time you nearly broke my arm!

LIFE-GUARD: Yes.

IVAN ANTONOV: Shall I jump?

LIFE-GUARD: Yes, jump.

IVAN ANTONOV: Here goes. (*Goes down into the bath and sits on the floor.*)

LIFE-GUARD: Better with a broken arm, but alive, that's what I think.

IVAN ANTONOV: Can't you manage without all this fuss?

LIFE-GUARD: It's my job. I have to do it, or I'd forget it. And I grow stiff all over from just sitting here.

IVAN ANTONOV: Shall I shout?

LIFE-GUARD: Yes.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Yelling*): Help! He-e-elp!

The LIFE-GUARD is on the tower, seizes the field glasses and looks through them, but not at the place where IVAN ANTONOV is.

IVAN ANTONOV: He-e-elp!

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR runs in from the kitchen, pickaxe in hand.

ASSOC. PROF.: What's up?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Explaining the matter in passing*): I'm drowning. He-e-e-elp!

ASSOC. PROF.: Complete idiots! (*Goes away.*)

LIFE-GUARD: I've seen you! I'm coming! Hold on! I'm swimming to you!... I'm coming!

He jumps from the tower, takes a life belt and throws it at IVAN ANTONOV. Then he hurls himself into the pool and imitates the movements of a swimmer, waving his legs as he lies on the board which has been placed across the pool. Then he seizes IVAN ANTONOV and drags him out, up the steps of the pool.

IVAN ANTONOV: Easy now, you'll break my back.

LIFE-GUARD: Every minute counts. I'm fighting for your life. (*He*

energetically gives him artificial respiration. IVAN shouts from below.)

IVAN ANTONOV: That's enough! ... That's enough!... Ow! stop it, will you? That's enough! D'you hear?

LIFE-GUARD: That's it. (*Gets him on his feet. IVAN is dizzy and staggers.*)

Another minute and you'd have sunk.

IVAN ANTONOV: The water was very cold. I got a cramp.

The LIFE-GUARD runs around shivering, wraps himself up in a bathrobe and puts another on IVAN ANTONOV. IVAN takes it off.

LIFE-GUARD (*Goes to a drawer and gets a special register*): Sign, please.

Here. That's right. Thanks.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Signing*): And why do we have to go through all this every time?

LIFE-GUARD: Regulations, you know, if there aren't any regulations and order in the aquatic life-saving service... Plus, it's important for the accounting.

(*Notices a man at the door.*) Look, there's someone at the door.

While they were busy with the artificial respiration, a man entered the room and is now standing silently at the door.

IVAN ANTONOV: He's not the one with the dolphins, is he?

LIFE-GUARD: Shut up. He's a V.I.P.

IVAN ANTONOV: Wait a bit! He's probably from the Borough Council where I handed in a request. They said they'd send a man to investigate. And here we are, getting saved. Come in, come in, well, at last; come in. Pleased to meet you, I'm Ivan Antonov. There, you see how things are – holes, pits, a pool, in a word, a battlefield. I left on my holiday and when I came home – a Roman bath had been discovered in my living room. Dating from the reign of the Emperor Pompilianus, with matrons. There, those are the matrons over there. (*Shows them.*) I had left workmen to change the floor boards, they dug up a little, and there was the Roman bath. The only one in the world, a unique monument of art. Dissertations are being written about it, UNESCO is taking it under its wing, we've also got a life-guard. (*Points at the LIFE-GUARD, who clears his throat.*) That's all very wonderful, but I have no place to live. That's the final result. My home has been filled with professors, life-guards, and buoys, and they may be training swimmers here... My loo is being dug up, they've got their eye on my kitchen now, they've broken up my furniture, and all this in the name of science. Science demands sacrifices – and Ivan Antonov makes them. They want ten gold medals at the Olympics, at Ivan Antonov's expense.

The man listens to IVAN ANTONOV carefully, taking in every word, takes out his notebook

and writes something down.

IVAN ANTONOV: It's true that I'm not a Roman bath but haven't I a right to live, too? To residential floor space? To attention?

The man nods silently, he agrees with IVAN ANTONOV.

IVAN ANTONOV: Can you imagine what will happen? At the moment they're digging in the toilet. If they discover anything there, my house will simply become a museum. They'll put red cords around everything, they'll put notices written in foreign languages... And where am I to go? Foreigners won't want to see me; I'm of no interest to them.

LIFE-GUARD: That's so, they don't look at any old thing.

IVAN ANTONOV: Right. I'm pressed on all sides. One guy digs, another saves lives, a third talks to me about Lake Como... Those who dig don't provide flats, they only dig. Those who distribute flats have nothing to do with those who dig. And all of them together declare that they have nothing to do with me. That's how it is. And if you fail to act too, I'll go and settle on the shores of that damned Lake Como. I'm so fed up with the whole business. You'll agree with me, after all, that I can't go and lie down under the trees in the square. I've written requests, I've been to see people, I've explained it all, but nothing is being done about my case. Please take steps.

IVAN ANTONOV stops speaking and looks at the man, who, for his part, looks at IVAN ANTONOV, to make sure he has stopped talking. Seeing that he is not saying anything, he takes out a notebook and jots something down in it. He hands it to IVAN ANTONOV, who takes it and reads it. He looks at the man in a daze. Then he looks at the LIFE-GUARD, in utter surprise.

LIFE-GUARD: Are they giving you a new flat?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Looking at the man again and reading aloud*): "I am a deaf-mute from birth. If you please, assist me by giving me two leva. Thank you in advance!"

LIFE-GUARD (*Gazing at the man in amazement*): What?!

IVAN ANTONOV (*To the DEAF-MUTE*): Why didn't you say so at once, man?

LIFE-GUARD: How could he? He's a deaf-mute, isn't he?

IVAN ANTONOV: Why didn't he show me the note at once? Instead of letting me waste my breath.

LIFE-GUARD: Well, he saw that you began talking to him about something and decided to let you finish what you had to say. So as not to offend you. He was waiting for you to give him two leva, wasn't he?

IVAN ANTONOV: You may be right. But I haven't a bank note, only small

change. (*To the DEAF-MUTE*) Excuse me, will you accept coins?

The DEAF-MUTE hands him a piece of paper.

LIFE-GUARD: What does he say?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Reading*): He will.

CURTAIN

IVAN ANTONOV's room in the same state, except that the LIFE-GUARD's tower has been raised and put in the place of the bed, on the tube scaffolding next to the bath. The bed has been placed beneath the tower. The LIFEGUARD is sitting on top of the tower, under the sunshade, blowing his whistle.

LIFE-GUARD: Come back! Come back! Not there, you're beyond the buoy! That's an unguarded zone (*Looks at someone at the door who has not come in yet.*)

GECHEV, activist of the local organization, comes in, guided by the LIFE-GUARD's orders, and confused.

LIFE-GUARD: Where are you going? That's the dirtiest part, the unguarded zone, there, there are underground rocks... Turn left!... Look at me, at me! What have I been put here for? Look at me! Walk straight, stop! (*The ACTIVIST is just in front of a hole.*) You see! Keep your eyes on me, on me, walk on, on, on... Jump from there. You're on the rocks, the rocks, that's right... Now, two steps to the right, two more, keep your eyes on me!...

Guided by these orders, GECHEV sinks into one of the rectangular holes in the floor and disappears. That's what the LIFE-GUARD has been waiting for; he throws off his bathrobe, puts on his snorkel and mask and makes for the hole

LIFE-GUARD: There! I told you so!... Hold on now! I'm coming! I'm swimming towards you! (*Jumps into the hole, too.*)

At the same time GECHEV emerges from another hole, and listens to the LIFE-GUARD's shouts in extreme surprise.

LIFE-GUARD: I'm coming! I see you!... Gently does it!...

GECHEV: Where did you see me?

The LIFE-GUARD appears from the hole, draws a deep breath and dives in again. GECHEV goes and leans over the other hole into which he had fallen. The LIFEGUARD appears from it,

and their heads crack sharply together.

GECHEV: Oh, I got a concussion! (*Clutches his head.*)

LIFE-GUARD: Of course. Because you didn't obey me. Hold on now. (*Trips him up and GECHEV falls to the ground. The LIFE-GUARD hurls himself onto GECHEV and begins to give him artificial respiration.*)

GECHEV: Oh... Oh!... But you're... my arm... oh, help, oh!...

LIFE-GUARD: You're not to talk.

GECHEV: Oh... my back... Why?

LIFE-GUARD: First, you must calm down. After things like this, people often suffer from shock.. (*Energetically continues giving him artificial respiration, according to the rules.*)

GECHEV: Mercy!...

LIFE-GUARD (*Leaves him on the floor, half-choked and crushed*): You're saved. (*Then runs to the tower, jumps to shake water out of his ear, and wraps himself up in the bathrobe.*)

GECHEV (*Slowly recovering his wits, hurting all over*): Is this the Roman bath?

LIFE-GUARD: That's it.

GECHEV: It's supposed to be the only one in the world, isn't it?

LIFE-GUARD: So they say.

GECHEV: Are you a member of our organization?

LIFE-GUARD: What organization?

GECHEV: Our local organization. I'm the activist for all events, but I haven't seen you.

LIFE-GUARD: I'm a life-guard. Attached to the pool.

GECHEV: Is that so? And what do you do?

LIFE-GUARD: I save people. Besides, we're going to train thousands of young swimmers here, that's the call today. Mass sport is the basis of our high results.

GECHEV: And the mass organizations, don't forget the mass organizations.

LIFE-GUARD (*Takes out the register*): Now sign here.

GECHEV: What's this?

LIFE-GUARD: A document, proving that I've saved you.

GECHEV: Does one have to pay?

LIFE-GUARD: No. In our country life-saving is free of charge.

GECHEV: Then I'll sign. (*Signs.*) So this is the swimming pool of our local organization. (*Enters the pool and examines it with devotion.*) It's beautiful. And, you say, the only one in the world?

LIFE-GUARD: There's no other like it.

GECHEV: So, no other local organization can have such a bath?

LIFE-GUARD: It can't.

GECHEV: Are you sure?

LIFE-GUARD: That's what the associate professor says.

GECHEV: So we're sure to win the competition. Now we really will win it. Let them collect bottles – we have discovered the only Roman bath in the world. What other local organization can boast of such a success?

LIFE-GUARD: None.

GECHEV: None. Neither the forty-third, nor the hundred and seventh... nor... (*about the matrons*) but these nudes here... they're not quite...

LIFE-GUARD: That's the epoch. They used to bathe naked.

GECHEV: Yes, yes, the epoch, that's just what I'll tell the committee – the epoch was different. It's the epoch's fault. About the swimmers, too – our local organization will train thousands of new swimmers here. That's the call today!

LIFE-GUARD: Why, how is your local organization going to train them?

GECHEV: Well, you did say that thousands of new swimmers were going to be trained here. It's not so important who's going to train them. The important thing now is for us to win the competition. To have the committee see that we are not lagging behind, that we are heeding the call. Yes, thousands of new swimmers in the former pool of Pomp... Pomp... what was the name exactly?

LIFE-GUARD: Pompilianus. From "pomp" but you make it "Pompili-anus".

GECHEV: Yes, from "pomp". That's symbolical, that's what I'll tell the committee. Now we can't possibly fail to win the competition. And then we'll get the prize. And do you know what the prize is?

LIFE-GUARD: How should I know?

GECHEV: An excursion to the German Democratic Republic.

LIFE-GUARD: Not bad.

GECHEV: Mixers are twice as cheap there.

LIFE-GUARD: Well, how'll you get them through the customs?

GECHEV: Activists don't pay duty. We do public work. That's my view of the matter.

LIFE-GUARD: Well, when you've fallen into the hands of the German customs men, I'll ask you about it again...

GECHEV: It's not right. You have to have more confidence in the mass organizations. The mass organizations...

He doesn't finish his sentence, because IVAN ANTONOV, and MARTHA, the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR's fiancée, enter just then. The ACTIVIST takes a good look at MARTHA.

MARTHA: Hullo!

GECHEV (*Gazing at her almost licking his lips*): Hullo! Hullo!

IVAN ANTONOV (*Ironically*): Excuse me, the place is a little untidy.

MARTHA: It isn't untidy, it's plain ploughed up.

IVAN ANTONOV: The associate professor's style.

MARTHA (*Reproachfully*): We settled that, didn't we?
IVAN ANTONOV: Forgive me. (*To the LIFE-GUARD*) And who's that?
LIFE-GUARD: I've just saved him. He's from the local organization.
IVAN ANTONOV: Pleased to meet you.
GECHEV: And the woman? Does she belong to our local organization, too?
IVAN ANTONOV: No. She belongs to another local organization.
GECHEV: A pity. One could work with her, you can see that at a glance. (*Looks eagerly at MARTHA.*) Well, I'd better be going. You're busy. (*Looks at MARTHA, pauses, looks at the pool, then at MARTHA again, then at IVAN ANTONOV.*) Goodbye.
IVAN ANTONOV: Goodbye. (*To the LIFE-GUARD*) Friend of yours?
LIFE-GUARD: I barely got him out of the whirlpool. He was talking about some kind of competition.
IVAN ANTONOV: Aha! And didn't he ask for anything?
LIFE-GUARD: No.
IVAN ANTONOV: Very odd. That really alarms me – he comes here and doesn't ask for anything.
MARTHA (*In a low voice*): Who's that man on the tower?
IVAN ANTONOV: A Life-Guard. Appointed to the pool. By the Physical Culture Institute.
MARTHA: And whom does he save?
IVAN ANTONOV: Me. He's saved me about fifty times.
MARTHA: But are you serious?
IVAN ANTONOV: He's got an order for his appointment. And he can't find any other victims.
MARTHA: Good God – a life-guard!
IVAN ANTONOV: He's not a bad guy.
MARTHA: I'm going to have a look for the book. (*Sets out between the furniture towards the scattered books.*)
LIFE-GUARD: Antonov!
IVAN ANTONOV: I'm coming in a minute. Just let me find the key to the bookcase. (*Goes towards the wardrobe.*)
LIFE-GUARD: Can you give me a moment?
IVAN ANTONOV: Yes?
LIFE-GUARD: You must give me a gold watch. A pocket one if you prefer it.
IVAN ANTONOV (*Thinking this is a joke*): Why? Is it your birthday?
LIFE-GUARD (*Seriously and firmly*): You have to give me one, I saved your life.
IVAN ANTONOV: Are you joking? When?
LIFE-GUARD: Lots of times. That's what I told my chiefs – that you were so grateful that you gave me a gold watch. And now they want to see it very much.

IVAN ANTONOV: Look here, I've had enough of jokes, I'm busy.

MARTHA (*Calls from among the furniture*): It's complete chaos, I can't find a thing.

IVAN ANTONOV: It's there, I'm coming... (*Sets off.*)

LIFE-GUARD (*Seizes him by the arm*): You've signed document. (*Waves the register.*)

IVAN ANTONOV (*Staggered*): But I did that for your sake, for your pleasure, didn't I?

LIFE-GUARD: Fine pleasure – saving drowning people.

IVAN ANTONOV: I'll go to your bosses...

LIFE-GUARD: Is this your signature here? (*Showing the register.*) It is. Is it on an official document? It is. Do you know the penalty for forging an official document? It's prison. You've been misleading the State with this signature, and more than once, you've forged data.

IVAN ANTONOV: But it was just a game.

LIFE-GUARD: A fine game. Which can well send you behind bars.

IVAN ANTONOV: But I haven't got a gold watch.

LIFE-GUARD: Yes, you have – there it is in your pocket.

IVAN ANTONOV: But that's my father's watch!

LIFE-GUARD: You can go to prison if you'd rather.

IVAN ANTONOV: I rather think that would be best – I've nowhere to live in any case.

LIFE-GUARD: And what'll "she" say?

IVAN ANTONOV: "She"?

LIFE-GUARD (*Pointing at MARTHA*): The associate professor's fiancée. While you're in prison, the associate professor will drag her off again – he doesn't let the grass grow under his feet.

IVAN ANTONOV: Yes, that's true.

LIFE-GUARD: Women are very touchy about "reputation". And you care a lot for her. For Martha.

The LIFE-GUARD stretches out his hand. IVAN ANTONOV stands there, deep in thought, and quite staggered. After all, MARTHA is the only thing he has which is dear to him. He takes out his gold watch and hands it silently to the LIFE-GUARD, who puts it to his ear.

LIFE-GUARD: It's working. (*Goes off, putting the hood of his bath robe over his head.*)

IVAN ANTONOV, staggered and crushed by what has happened, sets off slowly along the rim of the Roman bath with bent head. He looks at the LIFE-GUARD again. The LIFE-GUARD goes out. IVAN ANTONOV walks on thoughtfully and has already reached the end of the room where MARTHA is, who almost hits him with the book she has thrown to him.

He catches it skilfully. MARTHA throws a second book, a third, a fourth...

MARTHA (*Cheetfully*): Is it this one?... This one? ...This one?...

IVAN ANTONOV: No, it isn't. And not that one, or that one. Hey, wait a bit, you'll knock me over! (*He smiles too.*)

There are already a dozen books or so in IVAN ANTONOV's hands, books that MARTHA has thrown to him. MARTHA herself takes as many again from the pile, goes to IVAN ANTONOV, puts them in his arms and... and hugs him. The two kiss. IVAN's hands are full of books. Just then the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR appears at the door of the kitchen. He is most unpleasantly surprised.

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha!

The two part, confused, then IVAN ANTONOV throws the books on the floor and again hugs MARTHA.

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha! Before my very eyes!...

IVAN ANTONOV: Well, don't look!

ASSOC. PROF.: Don't speak to me like that. I'll deal with you another time. I warned you at the time not to stand in my way.

IVAN ANTONOV: I remember. You said you would crush me. Since then I've had the feeling that your capacity as a steam roller is not being sufficiently utilized in the national economy.

MARTHA: What do you want?

ASSOC. PROF.: How can you... before my very eyes... with that...

MARTHA: How would you like to have our answer – in writing or orally?

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha!!!...

IVAN ANTONOV: I'm going to look for that book. (*Moves away.*)

Just when the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR has come in, maybe a second earlier, the LIFE-GUARD has entered the room again, wrapped in his bathrobe, with the hood over his head, he has climbed up the tower and has started observing the situation through his field glasses. At that point the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR has come in. The LIFE-GUARD is now observing the scene between the two. IVAN ANTONOV lies down among the furniture, looking for the book for which he and MARTHA have come.

MARTHA: Have you any other questions? Does anything else interest you, is there anything you can't understand?

ASSOC. PROF. (*Dully*): I thought you loved me, at least a little.

MARTHA: Did you?

ASSOC. PROF.: You are here, within me...

MARTHA: The bath is within you.

ASSOC. PROF.: You are!

MARTHA: There's no room for both of us.

ASSOC. PROF. (*After thinking for a time*): Do you want me to give everything up?!!!

MARTHA (*Looking at him*): Yes.

ASSOC. PROF.: To give up the bath, my dissertation, everything?!!!

MARTHA: Yes. Then I'll believe you.

IVAN ANTONOV has turned and is watching them tensely. The moment is decisive. The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR thinks feverishly and calculates, all in a matter of seconds.

ASSOC. PROF.: But would that be wise.

MARTHA: Of course not. To give everything up because of a woman – you only get that in films.

ASSOC. PROF.: Martha, be reasonable... The bath is the key not only to my future, but to yours too... The dissertation on the Roman bath will bring you more happiness than an ordinary man can give you, a man who is now crawling about among the furniture. Why should I give up the bath? Can't we, like modern people keep things separate...

MARTHA: Don't give it up. Go and dig. I haven't come here to ruin your career, I came with Ivan Antonov.

ASSOC. PROF.: With Ivan Antonov! Only listen to the sound of his name – Ivan Antonov. (*Says this with scorn.*) A man who has curled himself up in his philistine shell, who only knows one thing – give me my house, give me my house. No thought about art, science, anything lofty, immaterial – he just wants his house, he wants to live – live modestly, that's the exact term.

IVAN ANTONOV: You were told to go and dig, weren't you?

ASSOC. PROF.: And you'll live modestly with him.

MARTHA: Don't you bother about me. You've thought of all this too late.

ASSOC. PROF.: Do you think that he can give you anything in general? Why, he will reason, hesitate and decide – but he'll never do anything. Never. You won't even have a place to live. He'll never get this house back, that's out of the question, I'll dig it up completely... He hasn't even got any money, I'm sure of that...

MARTHA: He hasn't.

IVAN ANTONOV: I haven't.

ASSOC. PROF.: You'll be done for, Martha. You won't have any position at all in society. In contrast to being the wife of an associate professor.

In the meanwhile IVAN ANTONOV has found the book they were looking for.

IVAN ANTONOV: Here it is. I've found it.

MARTHA (*Runs to him*): Spendind! (*Kisses him.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: So you've been meeting all the time – all the time...

The two pay no attention to him, they turn the pages of the book, discussing it... Just then the LIFE-GUARD, who has until then remained there with the hood over his head and the field glasses at his eyes, speaks up.

TSEKOV (*It is he, in the same coloured bathrobe as the LIFE-GUARD*):

Antonov! Antonov!

MARTHA: Eh? Who's that?

TSEKOV (*Having revealed his face, removes the hood*): Can you give me a moment? (*Jumps down from the tower and goes to IVAN ANTONOV and MARTHA.*)

IVAN ANTONOV: No, I can't. I'm busy.

TSEKOV: Antonov, you're missing the greatest chance of your life.

IVAN ANTONOV: So from now on there's nothing I need worry about.

TSEKOV: It's half a million, man, come to your senses. You'll have as many women as you want... and cars, and everything... Don't give it up because of a woman...

IVAN ANTONOV: Let's not discuss this matter. (*Starts off, along the Roman bath.*)

TSEKOV (*Jumps into the bath and seizes ANTONOV by his trouser leg*): Antonov!

IVAN ANTONOV: You can see that I'm busy. Why do you bother me?

TSEKOV (*Looks around*): Because there's no time. Now's the moment. If you don't make up your mind now – everything will fall through. My man is being moved to Intercommerce next week. And there'll be no way of exporting it.

IVAN ANTONOV (*Goes further, escaping from TSEKOV*): You won't let a man kiss his fiancée. (*TSEKOV wriggles through a hole and comes out from the hole in front of which IVAN ANTONOV and MARTHA are standing.*)

ASSOC. PROF.: You'll pay through the nose for this fiancée.

TSEKOV (*Showing up to the waist from his hole*): We'll take her along. Only don't delay any more.

MARTHA: But who is this man?

TSEKOV: Antonov, time is money.

LIFE-GUARD (*Comes in just then and sees TSEKOV in the hole*): Is he drowning? (*TSEKOV hides.*) He's sinking!... (*Hurls himself at the hole.*) He wants to take the bread out of my mouth! (*Says this as he passes the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR.*)

He dashes after TSEKOV. A chase begins with the two appearing first at one hole, then at another.

ASSOC. PROF.: So you make off with other people's fiancées, do you?

IVAN ANTONOV: We can – we do.

MARTHA: Don't fight with him, we've come to an understanding, haven't we?
(*To the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR*) Don't forget that the loo is waiting for you – go and dig.

ASSOC. PROF.: You're a low woman...

IVAN ANTONOV (*Beginning to take off his jacket*): Are we still not to fight it out?

The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR also unbuttons his jacket, but then realizes how senseless it all is and passes on. IVAN ANTONOV and MARTHA set off, but DIAMANDIEV, the real estate agent, unexpectedly jumps out of a nearby hole.

DIAMANDIEV: Good afternoon! I've come for my power of attorney.

IVAN ANTONOV: What power of attorney? Aha, yes, for the house.

DIAMANDIEV: The client is pressing for it. He has increased the sum. I don't want to talk in front of all these people, but the sum is tremendous. Who is this young woman?

IVAN ANTONOV: My fiancée.

DIAMANDIEV (*Aside*): A lovely woman. So I can talk in front of her.

IVAN ANTONOV: As you would in front of me.

At the end of this sentence TSEKOV appears from a nearby hole and listens. The LIFE-GUARD, who has been chasing him, blows his whistle and TSEKOV runs off and hides in another hole. The LIFE-GUARD jumps after him and vanishes too.

DIAMANDIEV: And what are those guys dodging about for?

IVAN ANTONOV: Children of Nature. They're playing tag.

DIAMANDIEV: I've found lawyers. Old wolves, all of them. We've got to plan a little scheme – you'll have to adopt my client.

IVAN ANTONOV: Who am I to adopt?

DIAMANDIEV: My client.

IVAN ANTONOV: Why, how old is he?

DIAMANDIEV: He's fifty-nine, but that doesn't matter.

MARTHA: Now that's what I call a son.

IVAN ANTONOV: But I thought you could only adopt up to the age of...

DIAMANDIEV: That's up to me. I've even arranged adoptions of old men of eighty.

IVAN ANTONOV: Oh, no.

DIAMANDIEV: Don't let that trouble you, it's just a little legal trick. One of the most innocent ones. Otherwise, we can't sell the house to him. Here are these forms, you must fill them in and then we can get the business going.

IVAN ANTONOV: Oh, no. That won't do at all!

He sets off with MARTHA. DIAMANDIEV follows them, taking the power of attorney out of his briefcase. TSEKOV and the LIFE-GUARD, who are still chasing each other, go dashing past before and behind them. There is complete confusion in the room. IVAN ANTONOV doesn't know which way to turn and moves along with MARTHA, they wander about... The LIFE-GUARD is gaining on TSEKOV, who climbs up the steps to the tower... At that moment GECHEV's voice is heard.

GECHEV: Come in, come right in. This way...

GECHEV, activist of the local organization, enters the room accompanied by three men in new suits, holding brief cases. They are the Committee.

GECHEV: This way, please. Careful now, there are holes.

The Committee look around and take their stand in front of the Roman pool.

GECHEV: And here is the greatest success of our local organization. (*Just then the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR comes in from the kitchen and stops in surprise.*) Owing to the systematic work and the total involvement of our members we have discovered the only Roman bath from the reign of the Emperor Pom-pilianus. A Roman Emperor. This unique monument was even shown on television. And it is to be found only on the territory of our local organization, nowhere else, not on the territory of any other organization. Here at this place, the only one of this kind, we shall hold meetings and conferences. We shall talk with outstanding personalities in labour. Here, once a week, the people's court will hold its sessions. We can also put in a table for bagatelle. Here in this pool we shall train thousands of young swimmers – such is the call today. Ten gold medals are to be won by swimmers at the Olympics – at our last session we decided that eight of them should be won by our local organization.

IVAN and MARTHA are standing beside the Roman bath. Behind them is the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR. Opposite them, DIAMANDIEV, brief case in hand. The LIFE-GUARD is standing on the steps. And right at the top of the tower TSEKOV is standing, looking straight ahead with a gloomy face.

GECHEV: And this is Ivan Antonov. He lives here in the immediate vicinity of the Roman bath. One of our good members, one of the most regular in the payment of his dues, one who helps the executive on all occasions. (*The*

Committee looks over IVAN ANTONOV in the same way as it has looked over the Roman bath a moment earlier.) First champion collector of paper for recycling in our cellulose industry.

GECHEV (*Continuing with MARTHA*): His wife has recently transferred into our local organization.

GECHEV (*Introducing the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR*): The plumber of the Roman bath! An honorary worker!... (*The ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR is so indignant that he sits down.*)

GECHEV (*Introducing DIAMANDIEV*): His assistant. Paid.

GECHEV (*Introducing the LIFEGUARD*): This is a public-spirited person, in charge of mass sporting activities in our district. He coaches thousands of young swimmers – the next generation is in his hands.

GECHEV (*Introducing TSEKOV*): The life and soul of the local organization! He is very conscientious in doing his duties within the organization, he prepares slogans and propaganda posters. And other decorations. (*TSEKOV grins sheepishly.*)

The Committee leaves, headed by GECHEV. For a moment after their departure there is silence. And suddenly the storm breaks - they all cast themselves at IVAN ANTONOV.

ASSOC. PROF.: Bagatelle in the Roman bath! Antonov, you'll answer for this!

TSEKOV: Why a people's court? What people's court? What's a court doing here? Antonov, you promised!

At their shouts ANTONOV retreats into the Roman pool.

IVAN ANTONOV: I haven't promised a thing.

DIAMANDIEV: Why the hell conferences? What recycling is he talking about? On what legal grounds? On what legal grounds, I ask?!!

IVAN ANTONOV: I don't know.

LIFE-GUARD: What young generation is he talking about?!! That's idiotic. A thousand young swimmers. There isn't a drop of water here!

TSEKOV: I've spent money. I've suffered moral damage. Either we go, or... Let us go!

DIAMANDIEV (*Follows IVAN ANTONOV into the bath*): No one is going anywhere. The client is waiting. Three lawyers are waiting. He is the father – he must adopt him.

TSEKOV: I've suffered moral damage too, I was called the life and soul of the local organization, I shan't leave it at that!

ASSOC. PROF.: This sheer barbarity!!! This collector of paper for recycling must be put in his proper place!

They all surround IVAN ANTONOV, who is in the pool, and lean over his head, shouting.

DIAMANDIEV: Give me the power of attorney! The child is waiting!

ASSOC. PROF.: I discovered the Roman bath!

LIFE-GUARD: My appointment is in my pocket!!! (*Pats his pocket.*)

TSEKOV: They're moving my man to Intercommerce! It's now or never.

DIAMANDIEV: He is a father! He must adopt!

LIFE-GUARD: Why do you underestimate the life-guards?

ASSOC. PROF.: Let him give me back my fiancée.

TSEKOV: Let's export it!

IVAN looks at them, then shouts "Enough!" He seizes the pickaxe, which is in the Roman bath and brandishes it over his head. They all fall silent. The living room is quiet. Then shouts are heard.

ALL TOGETHER: No-o-o-o!

TSEKOV: Think of culture!

ASSOC. PROF.: Of Mankind!

LIFE-GUARD: Of physical culture!

DIAMANDIEV: About your son!

GECHEV (*Just coming into the hall*): About the local organization!

THE DEAF-MUTE (*Who has come in with GECHEV*): About the deaf-mutes!

IVAN looks at them again, looks at MARTHA and raises the pickaxe above his head. Then all jump into the pool and cover it with their bodies. IVAN stands there with the pickaxe raised above his head. A moment. Then he lowers the pickaxe and hands it to the ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR with an ironic gesture, goes up the steps, removes the clock from the wall. He takes it and returns. He crosses the board placed over the pool. All the others are in it except MARTHA. She is up above. ANTONOV smiles at DIAMANDIEV, gesturing with his hand: "I'm to sign, eh?" and passes on, imitates a swimmer, but lightly, only hinting at it, repeats GECHEV's gesture, offers his arm to MARTHA and they both set off. They go out, leaving all the others in the pool. They cross the stage. Suddenly the column speaks.

THE COLUMN: Antonov! Antonov!

IVAN ANTONOV: Gently, Martha. Yes?

THE COLUMN: Why on foot? Just see how many free taxis there are!

IVAN ANTONOV: Are there? But we're already quite near.

THE COLUMN: Near where?

IVAN ANTONOV (*Looking at the people in the audience*): Near the people.

THE COLUMN: Where, where?

IVAN ANTONOV: Here with the people.

HE and MARTHA go down the steps of the stage to the audience and bow from there.

THE END