

ALEKSANDAR NOVAKOVIĆ

**THOSE STRANGE, FUNNY KIWI BIRDS**

Main characters:

IVAN, 18

DRAGAN, 18, 40

STANKO, 18, 40

TIYANA, 18, 40

Other characters:

WAITRESS, 20

SERBIAN ORTHODOX PRIEST, 40

JUNKIE GIRL, 20

LADS 1 AND 2, 20

PROTESTORS 1 AND 2, 40

YOVANOVICH, 30

PANICH, 50

DUNYA, 20

SECURITY GUARD, 30

TANYA, 40

POLICEMAN, 30

JUDGE, 60

LAWYER, 40

WRITER, 30

SCENE 1: INT. CROWDED CAFE 2009. LATE AFTERNOON

STEPS OF OVERWEIGHT MAN WEARING ITALIAN SHOES

b/g merry Mediterranean melody

STANKO: Hey, Dragan!

DRAGAN: Oh, Stanko, where've you been?

HANDSHAKING

STANKO: You know, money never sleeps.

DRAGAN: You mean the devil?

STANKO'S LAUGHTER

STANKO: Hell, yes. So how are you? What're you having?

DRAGAN: Beer.

STANKO: Fancy one too. Such a busy morning. All those miserable losers begging for a loan... A living horror, mate! (Shouting) Oi, love, bring one over here, will ya? While we're still young, okidokie? So, how are things in old New Zealand?

DRAGAN: Nothing new in New Zealand I guess.

STANKO LAUGHING

STANKO: Nicely put. Crisis?

DRAGAN: Same as everywhere.

STANKO: Yup, the whole world is going down the drain. But our Serbia is going down first. Two steps ahead!

FEMALE STEPS ON HIGH HEELS APROACHING

SFX: a glass of beer being put on a table

STANKO: Thanks love! That was quick!

WAITRESS: Ja, mein Fuhrer.

STANKO: Listen, cutie, I know the owner of this place. Do you know what that means?

WAITRESS: Sorry. It won't happen again .

STANKO: Of course it won't. Now go back to the bar and thank God that you still have this Mickey Mouse job.

FEMALE STEPS ON HIGH HEELS, DEPARTING

STANKO: Did you hear that? Unbelievable! Bet these things don't happen in ...

FINGERS SNAPPING

DRAGAN: Christchurch.

STANKO: Man, I don't know how you live with those Aborigines.

DRAGAN: Aborigines live in Australia. It's the Maori people in New Zealand and they are better than most of us.

STANKO: Ok, whatever. Tanya OK?

DRAGAN: Ok.

STANKO: Still doing that Internet trade scheme?

DRAGAN: No, it isn't... Yes she is.

STANKO: So, here's to long life and good health. Cheers!

SFX: Glasses of beer clinking

DRAGAN AND STANKO TAKING LONG SIPS

DRAGAN: Speaking of which, how are you?

STANKO: I'm fine. My health is booming. My wealth as well.

DRAGAN: Your stomach too.

STANKO: It's easy for you to say! You live with the Westerners now. You either look good or you lose your job. What do you do, by the way? You know, for a living...

DRAGAN: I'm a cab driver.

STANKO: Ach. So, you don't have to look so good, Mr. World Literature Graduate. Any kids?

DRAGAN: No.

STANKO: Can't you hear your biological clock ticking? Tick-tock-tick-tock..... Why the face? Just saying! So, what brings you to the fair city of Belgrade?

DRAGAN: I have to sell the old flat.

STANKO: Not coming back?

DRAGAN: No.

STANKO: Why?

DRAGAN: I don't feel like I have anyone here anymore. Lost my parents. Lost my friends.

STANKO: You still have me.

DRAGAN: Yes. But, so many lives lost, so much, I don't know, entropy. Do you recall our grammar school days?

STANKO: What about them?

DRAGAN: Do you remember Ivan?

SCENE 2: INT. GRAMMAR SCHOOL MEN'S ROOM 1991. MORNING

SFX: Hissing of cigarettes being lit up.

IVAN AND DRAGAN COUGHING

IVAN: Any teachers in site?

DRAGAN: We're alone. Don't worry.

IVAN: That's it, mate. I will ask Tiwana out.

DRAGAN: Again?

IVAN: You know what Derek Trotter says in Only Fools and Horses: He who dares- wins.

DRAGAN: Lovely jubbly. Del Boy is a loser, mate.

IVAN: I will ask her out. Again. And I'm not afraid if she says no. What do I have to lose?

DRAGAN: Your self- respect. She won't go out with you, not in a million years.

PUSHING DRAGAN

IVAN: What are you saying? That I'm ugly? Is that what you're saying?

DRAGAN: Stop pushing me. No, that's not what I am saying. Just leave her. Just give it up. She has her nose up in the clouds, dreaming of becoming an artist.

IVAN: You're also dreaming of becoming an artist.

DRAGAN: Yes, but I'm more down to earth. Her parents are stinking rich, you know?

IVAN: So what?

DRAGAN: So nothing.

IVAN COUGHING. STEPPING ON CIGARETTE BUT

IVAN: I will impress her. Doing something great, valiant. Like, joining the volunteers, you know... you fight, you get wounded, you get a medal...

DRAGAN: Don't do that, Ivan.

IVAN: I will enlist for the volunteers today. Tomorrow I will be in Croatia, fighting.

DRAGAN: That's stupid! This is not our war!

IVAN: And whose war it is? Our people are getting killed there.

DRAGAN: So are the Croats. Don't go there! Besides, you are not eighteen yet.

IVAN: Oh, yeah!? Will you tell them that?

SCENE 3: INT. CROWDED CAFE, YEAR 2009. LATE AFTERNOON

STANKO: Why are you mentioning this fool?

DRAGAN: This fool died in the battlefield the moment he arrived.

STANKO LIGHTING AND PUFFING BIG CIGAR

STANKO: Many others died too. Let's switch to more amusing subjects.

DRAGAN: So, you approve his death?

STANKO: Of course not. His death was futile and Milosevic was a butcher and dictator. If he hadn't provoked the Croats there would be no war. Tell me, did you see any of those strange, funny kiwi birds on New Zealand?

DRAGAN: No. They are almost extinct. Just like honest people.

STANKO: Why are you telling me that?

DRAGAN: Because I have a feeling that you are hiding something from me.

STANKO HUMMING

STANKO: Shall we continue this conversation elsewhere? In my car, for example?

DRAGAN: Why?

STANKO: Have you ever been in my flat? It's beautiful. In the centre of the city, not far from here. You can see all of Belgrade from there.

DRAGAN: Ok. Why not?

SCENE 4: INT. CAR, YEAR 2009. LATE AFTERNOON

SFX: clamour of the street

STANKO (while steering the wheel): Dunno where you got that stupid idea that I had anything to do with Ivan dying.

DRAGAN: Maybe because he told you something.

STANKO: Told me?

DRAGAN: You were his friend.

STANKO: Not as good a friend as you were.

DRAGAN: You know something.

STANKO: If I tell you will you switch to another subject? I have cancelled all those appointments just to see you. Give me some credit, ok?

DRAGAN: I agree.

STANKO: So, here is what I know.



SCENE 5: EXT.STREET,1991. MORNING

SFX: Knocking on the wooden door. Key turning. Door opening.

TIYANA: Ivan, what are you doing here? It's Sunday.

IVAN: I love you.

TIYANA: What?

PAUSE

IVAN: You heard me.

PAUSE

TIYANA: Why on Earth are you wearing this ragged uniform?

IVAN: I have joined the volunteers. We are leaving today.

TIYANA: You? With those bearded idiots? And where are you going?

IVAN: Vukovar.

TIYANA: Vukovar? You're kidding me, right?

TIYANA PUSHING IVAN

IVAN: No. I'm dead serious. And stop pushing me. I hate it when you remind me that you're stronger than me. But that won't matter anymore. I will go there and I will win. You shall see. I will win or die. And if I die you will be sorry. Got it?

IVAN HITTING THE DOOR

TIYANA: Stop hitting the door! I will be sorry? For you shooting your head off? Are you out of your mind?

IVAN: I will fight for my country, for my people.

TIYANA: What country, what people? Ivan, you are not even a Serb.

IVAN: Nonetheless, this is my country, this is my people.

TIYANA: Ok, this joke isn't funny anymore. Go home.

IVAN: Why?

TIYANA: Because... If my brother sees you dressed up like that he will get a heart attack.

IVAN: Why?

TIYANA: Because he's been avoiding the military draft for the last two months.

IVAN: Why?

TIYANA: Because... Just leave!

IVAN KISSING TIYANA

IVAN: So long, Tiyana.

TIYANA: Wait, Ivan.

IVAN LEAVING

SCENE 6: INT.CAR, 2009. LATE AFTERNOON

DRAGAN: So, Tiwana told you that?

STANKO: Yes.

DRAGAN: Ivan died on Saturday.

STANKO: Are you sure?

DRAGAN: I'm sure. I saw him on the "killed in action" list on television.

STANKO: Maybe it was someone with a similar name. Look. Here we are.

SFX: squeaking of car brakes

SCENE 7: INT. STANKO'S APARTMENT, 2009. LATE AFTERNOON

DRAGAN AND STANKO STEPPING IN.

STANKO: Mia casa-sua casa! What do you say?

DRAGAN: Big place. Bigger than our house in Christchurch. Twice as big.

STANKO: Two hundred and fifteen square meters! With a majestic view of the junction of the Sava and Danube! Is that something or what?! A drink? Whiskey?

DRAGAN: Yes. Whatever.

SFX: Turning on the TV. Roaring of Formula 1 cars on the runway. Clinking of glasses, ice cubes and whiskey running from the bottles into the two glasses.

STANKO: There you go! Cheers!

STANKO AND DRAGAN

DRAGAN: So, where is Tiyaana now?

STANKO: What's wrong with you? You think I'm guilty of something? Easy, Sherlock!

DRAGAN: I'm not saying anything. I'm just asking. Where is Tiyaana?

STANKO TAKING HIS PLACE ON THE LEATHER COUCH

STANKO: Aah, that's good for my old bones. Real leather. With heather looking covers. I call this couch Heather Leather!

DRAGAN TAKING HIS PLACE ON THE COUCH

DRAGAN: Comfy! Now, where is she?

STANKO: Dragan, let me show you something.

DRAGAN SIGHING

DRAGAN: Christ! Whenever a guy from Serbia invites you to his home he says that there is something he must show you. The one and only thing he is very proud of. And most often it's a new washing machine or a special brand of roses that only he grows or a sabre belonging to his great-grandfather who fought in WW1 or...

STANKO: No, nothing like that. Come with me.

SFX: Turning off the TV

STANKO: But first, let's change the mood in this room. I love jazz. What about you?

DRAGAN: Yes.

STANKO: Let's make it wait for us and surprise us when we come back. Let's see... radio... there!

SFX: Turning on the radio. Light jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO'S AND DRAGAN'S STEPS LEAVING THE ROOM

SCENE 8: INT. SMALL ROOM IN STANKO'S APPARTMENT, 2009. LATE AFTERNOON

SFX: Turning on TV.

B/g Strange music coming from the TV

SFX: Water dripping from the tap. Female sighs

DRAGAN: That's Tiyana. She's naked. She seems so skinny. And what's that bloody hatchet doing in the TV set?

STANKO: Shhh!

TIYANA'S TELEVISED VOICE (with echo): I was misguided. I was lost. My life is a cheezy soap opera. My life is a bloodbath. My life is a hatchet buried in a TV set. I am guided now. I am found. I am dead.

TIYANA SCREAMS. TV OFF

DRAGAN: What to hell was that?

STANKO: That was Tiyana. She was an artist, you know? A conceptual artist. Installations and stuff. Well, this is her last installation. I payed a lot of cash for it. She didn't know that it was me who bought it, of course.

DRAGAN: When was it made?

STANKO: Um, back in 1997. Soon after you left for New Zealand.

DRAGAN: Last installation?

STANKO: Yes.

DRAGAN: Where is she now?

STANKO: Dunno. I guess she is still in nut house. You know, mental institution.

DRAGAN: What happened?

STANKO: First she was with me as you know. We were together for a couple of years, then we split. She got caught up in a bad crowd, started using drugs and... you know how it goes.

DRAGAN: No, I don't. Tell me everything. Starting with Ivan's death.

SCENE 9: EXT. SERBIAN ORTHODOX GRAVEYARD, 1991. HIGH NOON

SFX: Distorted humming of Serbian Orthodox priest. He is singing melody of “opelo”, a song that is sang at Serbian funerals

PRIEST : Upokoyi se rab Bozhji Ivan i syedini s Hristom. (singing)Vyechnaya pamyat, vyechnaya pamyat!<sup>1</sup>

TIYANA CRYING. SOBBING OF THE CROWD GATHERED AROUND THE MOUND

STANKO: I'll be there for you, remember! Always, no matter what!

TIYANA: Thank you, but there is no help. It was me who pushed him into the grave.

STANKO: Hush, don't say that! It was his choice, remember? His choice, not yours!

TIYANA: I should have seen it coming. It was my fault.

STANKO: No, it was not! You are honest, and you're a good person. Listen, I know you don't believe me, but before you try to do anything stupid...

TIYANA: I won't!

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<sup>1</sup> Lord's humble servant Ivan died and reunited with Christ! May he be remembered forever!(ancient Slavic,author's note)



STANKO: Just call me, OK?

PRIEST : (singing)Vyechnaya pamyat, vyechnaya pamyat! Let us pray that God give our Ivan a new home in Heaven, next to his throne! God rest his soul!

CROWD, STANKO, TIYANA: God rest his soul!

SFX: Shoveling of ground. Earth falling on the coffin

SCENE 10: INT. STANKO'S APARTMENT, 2009. EVENING HOURS

b/g:Light jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO (a bit tipsy): Here's to Ivan! He died fighting for the right cause!

DRAGAN: What right cause?

STANKO: OK, let me rephrase: here's to Ivan, who died like a fool fighting for that idiot Milosevic!

STANKO DRINKING

DRAGAN: You are some piece of work, you know that?

STANKO: Maybe. And yet, maybe I'm just one of many, trying to find my place under the Sun.

DRAGAN: Your place under the Sun? You are so rich that you can buy the Sun itself.

STANKO: I'm not that rich. I'm just a poor little C.E.O. (Pause) Hey, "Kiwi", why the sad face?

STANKO IMITATING A CHICKEN

DRAGAN: You can't possibly understand.

STANKO: Speaking of kiwis, have you seen them?

DRAGAN: I told you already - no.

STANKO: How come? You have them in reserves or something?

DRAGAN: How could I possibly see them? They're these almost extinct, shy and nocturnal creatures.

STANKO: Just like you, goody two shoes. Not like in the old days when we used to hang out.

DRAGAN: Yeah, I remember one special occasion, two years after Ivan's death.

SCENE 11: INT. INDIE NIGHT CLUB, BELGRADE 1993. AFTER MIDNIGHT

SFX: Crowd of people smoking, laughing, drinking.

b/g: Loud grunge music echoing in the crowded mansion.

SFX: Pounding on the wooden toilet door. Door knob shaking

Note: everyone is shouting because of the noise.

STANKO: Tiyana, open it, goddamn it! I know you're in there!

TIYANA (off): Yeah, I'm in here! What the hell do you care?

STANKO: I am your boyfriend! I care! Now open the bloody door!

SFX: Door knob shaking

DRAGAN APPROACHING

DRAGAN: Hey, man, what seems to be problem?

STANKO: She's freaked out again. She probably took some weed or something else before entering the club.

DRAGAN: Something else? Like tramadole pills and beer? Or glue? I heard it's coming big time!

STANKO: Are you high? Yeah, she's drugged up and that wouldn't be the first time.

TIYANA: Dragan, is that you?

DRAGAN: Yeah it's me. Are you OK?

TIYANA: Yeah, kinda.

DRAGAN: Listen, there's a huge queue of people forming here so, if you're OK you can walk out, All right?

TIYANA (off): Only if that idiot isn't there.

STANKO: Idiot? Listen you artsy-fartsy self-indulgent bi...

DRAGAN: It's OK man, I'll handle it. Just leave. OK?

STANKO: OK. Just don't let her fool you. She's been out of her mind lately. I don't know why.

STANKO LEAVING

TIYANA: Is the air clear?

DRAGAN: Yeah, you can come out now.

SFX: Squeaky wooden door opening

TIYANA: OK. Let's go outside.

DRAGAN: Stanko is waiting for you at the bar, I believe.

TIYANA: Outside!

SCENE 12: EXT.OUTSIDE INDIE CLUB, 1993. AFTER MIDNIGHT

SFX: distant music from the club, fading out

TIYANA AND DRAGAN WALKING.

SFX: Distant gun shots

TIYANA: Christ, what was that?

DRAGAN: Mobsters, police, who knows? I can't tell the difference between them.

TIYANA: Me neither.

DRAGAN: So, what was all that between Stanko and you.

TIYANA AND DRAGAN STOP WALKING

TIYANA: Gotta smoke?

DRAGAN : Sure?

SFX: Lighting a cigarette. Tiyana inhaling the smoke

TIYANA: You know what that was all about?

DRAGAN: No. Will you tell me?

PAUSE

TIYANA: No. Let's just say that our secret is buried in the ground.

DRAGAN: Whose secret?

TIYANA: Our secret is all I'm gonna say.

DRAGAN: Are you on drugs right now?

TIYANA: You know, I used to cut myself when I was thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, just to get my parent's attention.

DRAGAN: Not cutting yourself anymore?

TIYANA: Nah. Now I have drugs. Same effect though. No one cares.

DRAGAN: I do.

TIYANA KISSES HIM

DRAGAN: Hey, what was that about?

TIYANA: Nevermind.

DRAGAN: I do mind. You and Stanko.

TIYANA: We had one of our fights, OK? Couples do that, you know?

DRAGAN: I know.

TIYANA: No, you don't. You don't have a girlfriend. Yet. Now let's step inside. It's getting chilly out here.

DRAGAN: Yes. Chilly. Quite.

SCENE 13: INT. STANKO'S APPARTMENT, 2009.EVENING HOURS

b/g:Light jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO: So the little tart gave you a smooch. Fascinating!

DRAGAN: What is your secret that's buried in the ground? Or, who is it? Ivan?

STANKO: Don't be so melodramatic! It was just one of those quarrels.

DRAGAN: Yeah, one of those common quarrels couples so often have.

STANKO: Yes, it was. And it concerned you, if you must know.

DRAGAN:Me?

STANKO: She was saying something about me being cold and selfish, unlike you. But she didn't want to go with you. Why should she? She was a spoiled little brat and she wanted someone from a rich and influential family to take her on holidays to Greece, Italy, Spain. I could provide that and you didn't so that wraps it up for tonight.

SFX: Turning on the TV. Squeaking of kiwi bird, off

STANKO: Speaking of the devil! Look, the kiwi bird on Discovery channel!

DRAGAN: It's not my cousin!

SPEAKER (off): At around the size of a domestic [chicken](#), kiwi are by far the smallest living ratites and lay the largest eggs in relation to their body size of any species of bird in the world.

DRAGAN: Turn that off.

STANKO: Why, mate? Every day you learn something new.

SPEAKER (off): The largest species is the Great Spotted Kiwi or Roroa, *Apteryx haastii*, which stands about 45 cm (18 in) high and weighs about 3.3 kg (7.3 lb). (Males about 2.4 kg (5.3 lb)) It has grey-brown plumage with lighter bands. The female lays just one egg, which both parents then incubate. Population is estimated to be over 20,000, distributed through the more mountainous parts of northwest Nelson, the northern West Coast, and the [Southern Alps](#).

DRAGAN: Turn that off!

SFX: Turning the TV off

STANKO: You are really making me mad. As if it weren't enough that you get to enjoy my hospitality.

DRAGAN: Your hospitality?

STANKO: This is enough. Leave! Now!

DRAGAN: Not bloody likely.

PAUSE. STANKO SIGHS

STANKO: So, what do you want from me?

DRAGAN: The truth.

STANKO: And nothing but the truth so help you God?

DRAGAN: I mean, what is this? Why are you avoiding my questions? What happened to Ivan? Who gave him that weird idea to join the paramilitaries? You?



STANKO: God no!

DRAGAN: And what about Tiwana? What about the empty room with her video...

STANKO: Installation.

DRAGAN: Whatever. Is that some kind of shrine? Fetishism, maybe?

STANKO: No, just wanted to have something of hers. And no, I have nothing to do with anyone dying. I may be a materialistic, power-crazed banker but I never harmed a living thing.

DRAGAN: You harmed me.

STANKO: When was that?

DRAGAN: Remember the student protests against Milosevic in 1996?

SCENE 14: .EXT. REPUBLIC SQUARE, BELGRADE, WINTER 1996. AFTERNOON

SFX: Thousands of voices. Drums pounding, whistles whistling, strange moaning from instruments that sound like wuwuzelas echoing in the square. Weakness of voice. Unknown male voice on the loudspeakers. His words and language are unrecognizable

PROTESTORS: Idemo u shetnyu, idemo u shetnyu!<sup>2</sup>

DRAGAN: Where the hell are you?

STANKO APPROACHING

STANKO: I got busy. You know, a little bit of this, a little bit of that.

DRAGAN: The students' march has been going on for more than a month and I haven't seen you once.

STANKO: I had better things to do.

DRAGAN: What things? The time is now, you hear me? Look at these people around you. Another month and Milosevic is gone!

STANKO: Milosevic- Shmilosevic, you won't knock him down. You are a smart guy, you know that. It would be better for you to study than to waste your time at these rallies! While risking your life and health, I might add!

DRAGAN: We are going to crush him. No more tyranny!

PROTESTOR: Yeah, he will pay for betraying our brothers in Bosnia and Croatia!

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<sup>2</sup> We are going for a walk, we are going for a walk! (Serbian)

DRAGAN: What did you say? Are you mental? Milosevic caused all these wars! I am fighting against him because he is a dictator, not because I am a nationalist who was disappointed when he couldn't create Greater Serbia! You are the same scum as he!

PROTESTOR: Traitor!

PROTESTOR HITS DRAGAN

DRAGAN: Ahh! Help me!

STANKO: Sorry, I can't. This guy's too big for me.

STANKO LEAVING. PROTESTOR HITTING DRAGAN

PROTESTOR 2: Cut it out! Isn't it enough that the police is beating us? You, leave the boy!

FIGHTING STOPS. DRAGAN IS HUMMING

SCENE 15: .INT. STANKO'S APPARTMENT, 2009. NIGHT HOURS

SFX: Distorted jangling of ice cubes in whiskey glass. Light jazz tune playing on the radio

DRAGAN: Stanko, you know, they don't have a name for people like you. I'll have to invent it.

STANKO: I told you a thousand times that I'm sorry.

DRAGAN: Yeah, you said it. And I have forgiven you. We were not made to be fighters. But, there was something else that kept haunting me all these years.

STANKO MAKING GHOST-LIKE SOUNDS

STANKO: Boooo hoooo! And what would that be?

DRAGAN: You could have simply turned the other way and ran. But no. You had to tell me what the odds were, calmly, without compassion or fear. Like I was useless at that point. You know, I am pulling you down and you gotta get rid of me.

STANKO LAUGHING

STANKO: Now you are just making things up. And, besides, if I am such a scum of the Earth, why did you keep hanging out with me? You *skyped* me a million times, right? And vice versa.

DRAGAN: I don't know. Maybe I wasn't thinking about the cause and effect.

STANKO: And maybe that's because I am such an amusing chap.

DRAGAN: Well, I am amused to death at the moment. So, I gotta tell you something interesting.

STANKO PATTING DRAGAN ON SHOULDER

STANKO: Go on, my son. Surprise me.

DRAGAN: I saw her yesterday.

STANKO: What?

SCENE 16: INT. MENTAL INSTITUTION) - VISITING ROOM, PREVIOUS DAY.

MORNING

SFX: Bare feet running down the hall, people shouting in a way that is undescrivable. Cries, moans, unintelligible words being repeated. Metal platters and dishes hitting the floor. Singing a of a woman that sounds like a banshee. NOTE: Tiyana's voice is shaky, and sounds like she is freezing.

DRAGAN: Here, take a sip of this.

SFX: Coffee mug placed on a table

TIYANA: Thanks.

FINGERS SNAPPING

DRAGAN: Don't do that with your fingers. Please! Come on, take it, it's warm.

TIYANA TAKING A SIP

TIYANA: It's good. They don't make it like this here. They just shove a big spoon of old, low-quality coffee in a big pot, boil it until the kingdom come and it tastes like river mud.

DRAGAN: I'm glad you like it.

TIYANA: Sometimes they let us walk outside and they just forget us, taking a cigarette break for an hour or so. Yesterday one of us died. They found her with her stomach full of pebbles.

FINGERS SNAPPING

DRAGAN: Christ!

FINGERS SNAPPING

TIYANA: While I was still kind of good-looking, you know, when I still had my normal looks, I was quite a catch here. Got raped three times.

DRAGAN: What?

TIYANA: Couldn't do anything. He was the C.E.O. of this mighty madness corporation!

TIYANA LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY

DRAGAN: You were kidding, right?

TIYANA: Right. I was kidding. What a joke, huh? Getting OD'd at 24 was joke. All those drugs I took before were a joke. All these treatments and doctor quacks from Russia helping me clean myself up were a joke. Lithium was a joke. And me being here is also a joke.

PAUSE. FINGERS SNAPPING

DRAGAN: I'm sorry.

DRAGAN CRYING. TIYANA CARESSING HIM

TIYANA: You were always a bit slow, weren't you? I mean, you're intelligent but you somehow keep missing the links between things, don't you?

DRAGAN: Maybe.

TIYANA: Maybe? For sure.

DRAGAN: What are you talking about?

TIYANA: I have seen the connection. I could never put my finger on it but I have seen it. Between Stanko and Ivan dying in the war. I could never prove it but I felt it.

FINGERS SNAPPING

DRAGAN: I know Stanko wanted you but I don't understand how he could possibly have any impact.

TIYANA: Have you been dating him? Don't tell me anything. He is cold and heartless and prepared to do whatever it takes. I have said enough. Leave now.

DRAGAN: What is it about him that makes you act like this?

TIYANA: Just leave, okay! Leave or I'll go berserk!

DRAGAN GETTING UP

DRAGAN: Pretty, intelligent, artistic... What is it that made you do this to yourself?

TIYANA: My soul. I couldn't watch those horrors without being stoned. And there is something else... Now go.

SCENE 17. INT. STANKO'S APARTMENT, 2009. NIGHT HOURS

b/g: Light jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO: So what does that prove? Vous avez rhiens, Monsieur Poirot!

DRAGAN: I do have something.

STANKO: Just a hunch, buddy, just a hunch! Let me tell you something about Tiyana!



SCENE 18.INT. STANKO'S OLD APPARTMENT, 1993. NIGHT HOURS

SFX: Bed sheets moving, techno music, sighs of men and women. Sniffing sounds like inhaling cocaine. Doors banging

STANKO: I can't believe it!

TIYANA: Oh, honey, you're home already!

STANKO: You, in bed with a bunch of hoes and junkies!

LAD 1: Oh, come on, chill out, man! Join us!

LAD 2: Right on!

JUNKIE GIRL: C-c-c-mon handsssssome it will be real fun!

TIYANA: Chill out, darling, have a beer.

STANKO GRABS A BOTTLE

STANKO: How about this bottle? Very well!

GLASS BREAKING

STANKO: Get the hell out of my house! I don't care if you run out in the street butt naked, just get out!

LAD 1, JUNKIE GIRL AND TIYANA LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY

STANKO: Ok, you asked for it!

STANKO LEAVING

LAD 2: Right on!

LAD 1: So, girls, how about taking another spin, huh?

JUNKIE GIRL: Why not?

TIYANA: Mhmmmm.

STANKO STEPPING IN.

SFX: Sound of gun being cocked

STANKO: Out, now!

LAD SIGHING

LAD 1: All we did was have a little coke and a gangbang and you're making such a fuss out of it. Okidokie, buster, we are leaving. Pass me the trousers. Those yellow ones, please!

STANKO: I said, out!

EVERYONE IS LAUGHING BUT STANKO

SCENE 19: .INT. STANKO'S APPARTMENT, 2009. NIGHT HOURS

SFX:Light jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO: And this is how we broke up. She is an addictive, promiscuous person.

PAUSE

DRAGAN: And you broke up? Back in 1993?

STANKO: Yup.

DRAGAN: You broke up in 1995 as I recall.

STANKO: So? It was ages ago. I don't remember.

DRAGAN: Huh, right. You gave her a special room and you don't remember when you broke up. And, by the way, she wasn't using drugs when you were together.

STANKO: You agreed she was.

DRAGAN: I played along to see what would happen. Your story is full of holes. And that installation, why do you keep it here?

STANKO: To remind me of her. I loved her, in a way.

DRAGAN LAUGHING

DRAGAN: You never loved anyone in your entire life! Not even your own mother!

STANKO: How dare you?!

DRAGAN: Remember Yovanovich from your bank? Your assistant? Boy, did he have stories to tell!

STANKO: Such as?

DRAGAN: Two months before we met...

SCENE 20: .INT. STANKO'S BANK, 2009. MORNING

SFX: Shouts of employees, fingers pressing keyboards, computer printers working, filter coffee boiling. Screams of secretary. Finger pressing intercom

STANKO: Dunya, what the hell is that? I can not work in my office with all this noise going on!

DUNYA (off, over intercom): They are coming, I...

STANKO: Who is coming? Dunya, you are my secretary, answer me!

SFX: Door breaking open

YOVANOVICH AND PANICH ENTERING

STANKO: What is this? Yovanovich, who is this man?

YOVANOVICH: His name is Panich and he's got a gun.

PANICH: I can speak for myself, thank you. I am Milorad Panich, owner of small wooden chair manufacturer. One you've never heard of.

YOVANOVICH: *Pan stolice*, sir. That's the name of the company.

PANICH: Your bank is killing my company. I am bankrupt! My workers are not going to get a dime, and why? Because you pushed us in into serious debt!

STANKO: Maybe it was your bad management?

GUN CLICKING

PANICH: You will now give me a hundred thousand euros. You, in person. You made me sign the rotten deal, so you must give me the money! Ok?!

STANKO: Ok, no sweat. Big or small bills?

SECURITY GUARD (Off, behind the door): Mr. Panich, step out of the office with your hands above your head! Leave the weapon on the floor before you exit! No one will get hurt!

PANICH: So, this is it! No matter what you do you always end up with guys like you! Well, who asked me to make a pact with the devil? No one!

SFX: Gun blast. Doors breaking. Security Guard enters.

SECURITY GUARD: Oh, no! Mr. Panich killed himself.

YOVANOVICH: Tell me this is not happening.

STANKO: Oh yes, it is happening. Now I'm going to the cafeteria to get me a cup of coffee. Call me when the police arrives.

SCENE 21: .INT. STANKO'S APPARTMENT, 2009. NIGHT HOURS

b/g: Light jazz theme playing on the radio

STANKO: So, what does that prove? I was under stress! The man just blew his head off, for Christ sake!

DRAGAN: You could say that, but you could also say that you were not shocked but disgusted. I bet you paid people to clean up your office. You didn't change anything in it. You didn't demand a new office. You have done so. You are the boss.

STANKO: You're right! I didn't change a thing. And yes, some guys who had the guts to do it came after the police and did the cleanup.

DRAGAN: You... I don't know how you can live with yourself.

STANKO: I have to show you something.

DRAGAN: Not again!

STANKO LEAVING

STANKO (off) : I won't be long.

DRAGAN: No?

STANKO ENTERING

STANKO: No.

DRAGAN: I hope you're not holding a gun.

STANKO: You hope in vain. This is a gun.

DRAGAN: Can I guess whose gun it is?

STANKO: Sure.

DRAGAN: The story goes that Ivan stole his father's gun before he left. Nah.

DRAGAN: It belonged to Panich?! This is a piece of evidence.

STANKO: Not if you ask a few crooked cops.

STANKO TAKING A SEAT

STANKO: Yeah, father Dragan, the Immaculate One. Now, my fair priest of fairness, it's time for a role reversal. Who sent you?

DRAGAN: I came here on my own. No one sent me.

PAUSE

STANKO: No one?

DRAGAN: I swear.

STANKO: You seem honest enough but there is a problem, you see. I don't believe in honest people. So, first you must prove that you are normal or, in other words, rotten to the core. You harmed people, you hurt them, you even killed them, but you never talked about it. Is that right? You have that guilty expression on your face! Come on, tell me!

DRAGAN CLEARING HIS THROAT

DRAGAN: Ok, I will tell you. Just put that thing away.

STANKO: No can do.

SFX: cocking the gun

STANKO: Now talk!!!



SCENE 22: INT. CAR. NIGHT

SFX: Humming of car motor combined along with indie rock tune on the car radio.

TANYA KISSES STANKO

TANYA: Here is to the best husband in the world!

STANKO: Oh, it was nothing.

TANYA: Don't play modest with me. You deserve it.

TANYA KISSES HIM

TANYA: And so much more...

STANKO: Tanya, I am driving.

TANYA: Ok, I'll let you be. For the time being. Mhmmm, that was a nice little restaurant by the shoreline. It's a pity it's so far from Christchurch. I'd gladly move there and dine every night.

STANKO: Me too.

SFX: Soft hit on the car

TANYA: What's this?

STANKO: Christ, I hit something. Or someone.

TANYA: No!

SFX: Brakes squeaking. Car doors opening.

SCENE 23: EXT. ROAD. NIGHT

SFX: Crickets, screeching of night birds.

DRAGAN AND TANYA APPROACHING

TANYA: What is that?

DRAGAN: So much blood.

TANYA: What is it?

DRAGAN: Wait a second, let me see ... It's a kiwi bird.

TANYA: Poor thing.

DRAGAN: I'm so sorry.

TANYA: There's no way you could have seen it, right? It's way too small and there was no light on the road.

DRAGAN: I should have seen it.

TANYA: Let's bury it by the road.

DRAGAN: I can't believe I did that.

TANYA: It's not your fault. Come on, let's do it.

DRAGAN: Yeah, let's.

SCENE 24: .INT. STANKO'S APARTMENT, 2009. NIGHT HOURS

SFX: Light jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO LAUGHING

STANKO: And that's your sin? Killing the hairy bird? Hilarious! I thought you said you'd never seen it in your life!

DRAGAN: Not until I killed it. And yes, I lied.

PAUSE

STANKO: There must be something else.

DRAGAN: No, there isn't.

STANKO: Let me tell you something- you gotta ruin someone if you wanna make progress in life, you know. And you... you did nothing. I guess this is what makes you a loser!

DRAGAN: Unlike you.

STANKO: Unlike me. And now, are you ready to hear a major success story?

DRAGAN: Can't wait.

STANKO IMITATING DRUMS ROLL

STANKO: And so it is. My road to success is paved with the bones of other people. In order to prove to myself that I could make it, I had to do the one thing that is the most difficult to do when you're a teenager - to win over someone's heart. It was simpler than I thought.

SCENE 25: INT. STANKO'S OLD APPARTMENT, 1991. NIGHT

SFX: Monotonous techno song on the stereo. Phone ringing. Phone being picked up.

STANKO: Yes?

IVAN ( over the phone, off): Stanko, it's me, Ivan. How are you?

STANKO: Fine, just fine. And you?

IVAN ( over the phone,off): Not so good, man. I think Tiyana's rejected me again.

STANKO: Pity! Now go and talk to your precious buddy Dragan.

IVAN(over the phone,off): Wait, pal, you are my friend too!

STANKO: But you called Dragan first?

PAUSE

IVAN (over the phone,off): Yeah. He wasn't home.

SFX: Pressing the computer button. Melody of computer game. Fingers pressing the keyboard. Fake lasers hissing. Notice: Stanko is playing a computer game while talking to Ivan

STANKO: Okidokie. Now, how can I help you?

IVAN ( over the phone,off): I asked Tiyana out last Friday and she rejected me. Then I came to see her, knocking on her door. I told her that I would go and fight in the war and she was mad at me.

STANKO: You will fight in the war?

IVAN ( over the phone,off): Yeah, I picked up my father's rags from when he served in the Yugoslav People's Army, put them on and knocked on her door.

STANKO: Boy, do you have a talent for masquerade , I tell ya!

IVAN (over the phone,off): No, man, I really meant it!

PAUSE

STANKO: Well, boyo, there is no coming back. She is playing tough thinking that you wouldn't go to war but you will. You will go there and prove her wrong.

IVAN(over the phone,off): But... I'm scared, man. The things that people do to each other there.

STANKO: No buts, buddy. No time to be scared. You go there and you fight. I wouldn't be surprised if she comes to look for you in a few days.

IVAN(on the phone,off): You think so?

STANKO: I'm a hundred percent positive !

IVAN(over the phone,off): Oh, thank you, buddy. I will do so. I will go there.

STANKO: Win the battle and you will win her heart!

IVAN(over the phone,off): He who dares wins, right mate?

STANKO: You said it, mate.

IVAN( over the phone,off): Bye, mate.

STANKO: Bye, mate.

SFX: Phone off.

SCENE 26: INT. STANKO'S APARTMENT, 2009. NIGHT HOURS

SFX: Light jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO TAKING A LONG SIP

STANKO (tipsy): And that was, as they say, the end of that. But, what's a heart when you have it in your hands? Nothing! Just a slimy, ugly piece of flesh! So, I had to throw it away and find something appropriate. Like winning over people's minds and making money. But first I had to have some fun with it. You know, tossing someone's heart takes a small particle of a second but watching it rot and dissolve, that's the real beauty. Do you know I did coke a long time ago?

PAUSE

DRAGAN: No.

STANKO: I did, I did. No biggy, you know, just something for the weekend to help me ease my weary mind. It was back in the early nineties, you know. A very expensive drug. Easy to find and buy, though.

DRAGAN: You enjoy telling me this?

STANKO: Immensely. Like being forced to wear shoes in a size 8 for two days, even though I wear a size 10, and now I finally get to take them off. What a relief! Do you want me to continue? Oh yes, you have no choice, you have a gun pointed at your head.

Anywho, Tiyaana and I were dating for quite a long time. She was beautiful, young, talented, waiting for her first big exhibition. Everything was hunky dory! Until, back in “snowy” 1994...

SCENE 27: INT. STANKO'S APARTMENT, 1994. MORNING

SFX: Chalk moving across paper. Wide, swift strokes.

TIYANA: I hate it!

SFX: Tearing the paper apart

STANKO ENTERING THE ROOM

STANKO: So, is this an artistic crisis or what?

TIYANA: Yes, it is. I am trying to make a self portrait and I can't make it work. A self-portrait! Staring at the goddamn mirror.

STANKO: Maybe you are trying too hard. You need to relax.

STANKO HOLDING AND KISSING TIYANA

TIYANA: Ah, no, we were "relaxing" the whole night!

STANKO: And you're still tense?

TIYANA: You will never understand.

STANKO: Maybe I do.



SFX: Clicking of a small box opening

TIYANA: What's that?

STANKO: Can you guess?

STANKO INHALING

STANKO: See? Piece of cake. Now it's your turn.

TIYANA: I couldn't possibly ... You are doing drugs?

STANKO: Recreational stuff. Come on, all artists do it. It will make you see things clearly.  
Come on, you won't get hooked. I'll take care of you.

TIYANA: You always did.

STANKO: And I always will.

SCENE 28: .INT. STANKO'S APARTMENT, 2009. NIGHT HOURS

SFX: Soft jazz tune playing on the radio

STANKO: So, at first I was her lover, then her lover and dealer, then, in the end, just her dealer. I mean, I paid for these drugs, I didn't take any money for her excesses. I was a real gentleman. Of course you can't keep buying coke forever. So, I put her on bad heroin instead, then acid, then pills, saying: "Oh honey, we don't have enough money for that but I can find you something cheaper!" She wanted us to do drugs together but I said: Oh, no, honey, there's not enough drugs for both of us!" And she fell for it. I was such a dear! And then one day, when I got sick of watching her fade away she decided to to clean up her act. Just like that. And it worked. Then I told her the real story about Ivan and broke up with her. And, the next thing you know, she was back in the gutter.

DRAGAN: You are despicable!

STANKO HITTING DRAGAN MANICALLY

STANKO: What do you know? What do you know? You think this is a game?

DRAGAN ACHING

STANKO: You think I can open up that easily? I can. And you know why? Because everyone in this God forsaken country is scared to press charges. Yeah, you heard me! And

if they were to try, what would the charges be? That I, while being a teenager, made my friend go to war and get killed? The law will not hold me responsible for my words. Ethics may be a problem but the law isn't so to hell with ethics! I made Tiyana a junkie? Who can say that? She is insane and the dealers that provided the drugs for us are either dead or in prison!

DRAGAN: What are you saying? That you're invincible?

DRAGAN LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY AND ACHING AT THE SAME TIME

STANKO: Yes! And I enjoy telling you my dark stories! Guess what? I'm gonna tell you some more!

DRAGAN: Kill me! I don't wanna hear them!

STANKO: Oh, I will tell you! I will tell you every single horrible detail and then I'll send you back home! Imagine the burden that you will carry on your shoulders! You know the truth but you can't do nothing with it! Remember that room with Tiyana's artsy fartsy work? I stare at it every day! Y' know why!? Because I enjoy watching pompous artists die. And this position that I have, guess how I got it?

DRAGAN: I... I don't know.

STANKO: At first I was a member of the United Left of Yugoslavia, led by Milosevic's wife. You didn't know that? No? And did you know I joined the secret service? You don't know that either? I spied on you and a few other people who were near to the HQ of the student protests. And do you know that I know the big shot who, on hearing the news that the democratic Prime Minister was assassinated, had said: "Oh, I expected him to be dead ten minutes ago". And do you know that my bank is milking this country and sending people to the street? You don't? Dragan, you poor, uninformed fool!

DRAGAN GETTING UP. EXHALING WHILE SOBBING

STANKO: So, what are you going to do?

SFX: Gun falling on the floor

STANKO: Come on, kill me if you can! But remember, some people will come to get you and submerge your body in sulphuric acid!

PAUSE

STANKO: Of course you can't! Now get the hell out of here, back to New Zealand, to your sheep and kiwi birds!

DRAGAN GRABBING THE GUN

DRAGAN: I'm not going nowhere!

SFX: Three gunshots. Heavy body falling to the floor. Nervous fingers tapping on the keyboard of mobile phone

DRAGAN (with trembling voice): Hi, darling. Yeah, I know what time it is. Sorry. I just want you to know that I am OK and that everything I did was what any honest... I am OK. Don't worry. Yeah, I am a bit tired. Reunion party. Sort of. I'll tell you about it tomorrow. I love you honey. Bye.

DRAGAN SIGHS

DRAGAN: So, now we have to wait. Who will get me first? The secret service or the police?

DRAGAN TAKING A LONG SIP OF WHISKEY

DRAGAN: Fine brand of whiskey. Here is to you, Stanko-mate. To your good and booming health!

DRAGAN TAKING A LONG SIP OF WHISKEY

SFX: Doors breaking open. Heavy footsteps on the floor. Guns being cocked

POLICEMAN: This is the police! Put your weapon down! Now! Hands up where I can see them! Lay down on the floor and spread'em!

SCENE 29: INT. COURT OF JUSTICE. MORNING

SFX: Hundreds of people talking and whispering, shuffling of papers , flashes from photos being taken, buzzing of TV cameras

JUDGE: Silence! The court of justice is now in session! Defendant Dragan Dinic, how do you plead?

DRAGAN GETTING UP

DRAGAN: Guilty.

LAWYER: He is insane, sir. Please, consider that.

DRAGAN: I am not and every psychiatrist in Serbia and abroad can prove it. All of my actions were based on sense and reason.

JUDGE: Sense and reason? You killed a man for nothing!

LAWYER: Yes, that's what I'm saying. A normal person wouldn't do something like that!

JUDGE: Silence! What do you have to say?

DRAGAN: I killed him, and yes, I am guilty of it. He did beat me and threaten me with a gun but I cannot prove it. There are a few bruises, very pale now, and a small cut on the upper lip. Yes, I know, I could have inflicted them myself and yes, the late Stanko Jacimovic was one of the pillars of society while I am a lousy cab driver from Christchurch. Envy, robbery, uneven scores from the past, an attempt of rape even, you can hang on to any of these motives but the truth is- I couldn't turn away and let him cause more damage. Would I do it again, given a second chance? Probably not.

PAUSE

JUDGE: Is that all?

DRAGAN: Yes.

JUDGE: You are a foul and vain man, Mr. Dinic. You think you are above the law by taking the law in your own hands. Pity that such a clever and intelligent person does what you have done. It's sad to see such a clever and intelligent person do what you have done. I hereby sentence you to forty years in prison.

SCENE 30: INT. PRISON- VISITING ROOM. MORNING

SFX: Heavy doors slamming. The guard enters.

GUARD: Dinic, you have a visitor ili your visitor is here.

WRITER ENTERING. SHAKING HANDS

DRAGAN: Have a seat.

WRITER: When I heard about your case, I was shocked. But, when I heard that the media had nothing to write about... No words from you, no words from the judge. How come?

DRAGAN: First things first. No one wants to know about this. Why would they? Per secondo: you're a young and striving writer, you don't need this and, I might add, by the signs I've been given these days I won't be able to tell this story to the end.

WRITER: How come?

DRAGAN: Stanko had lots of connections. Some of them are in these cells. Proof of that is that yesterday morning I woke up to see a bloody cross painted on the wall of my cell. Over my head.

WRITER: Oh, no. Did you report this?

DRAGAN: To whom? One of the guards did it. Now go. I don't want to relive this all over again.

WRITER GETTING UP

WRITER: Ok, if you say so. Just one question- why did you do it?

DRAGAN: For the first time in my life I was facing absolute evil and, scared as I was, I tried to annihilate it. But, it didn't go away. It made me pull the trigger and caused me to suffer. What was I to do? I really don't know.

/THE END/