

Elena Speranskaya

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**ALIBI FOR  
THE HERO**

DETECTIVE  
NOVEL

# **Elena Borisovna Speranskaya**

## **Alibi for the hero. Detective novel**

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### **Аннотация**

The novel describes the penal investigation of a criminal offense that has its roots in the last century and received vengeance thanks to the efforts of the investigator of the prosecutor's office – Rezhimov, the private detective – Alice Korablevskaya and her husband, lieutenant colonel Seregin. All the characters are taken from life, but the names and surnames are changed. Translated from Russian by the author.

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# Alibi for the hero

## Detective novel

# Elena Borisovna Speranskaya

*Being a hero is the highest destiny.*

*The brave are always recognized in battle.  
In the mountain, the hero is checked.*

*Dying, the hero will not die.*

**M. Jalil**

*...a hero is a person who, at a decisive moment, does  
what should be done in the interests  
of human society.*

**Yu. Fucik**

*If "manners maketh man" as someone said,  
Then he's the hero of the day,  
It takes a man to suffer ignorance and smile.  
Be yourself no matter what they say!  
Sting, "Englishman In New York"*

*Translator* Elena Borisovna Speranskaya

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# 1. Heart Drama

As usual, Nikifor Naumovich slept perfectly and in good spirits went to the service, to which he was used, as to the most normal routine business, perceiving the world in the light of commercials gliding across the screen and bursts of emotions of joyful leaders selling the lowest quality goods with surprising ease and self-oblivion. He never crossed the permissible border in the direction of the path, preferring to go straight, albeit with costs for his own health and a lack of free time. Sitting at the computer at the entrance to the sanatorium all night, tracking every new visitor, he received a call from the administrator in the morning and immediately suspected something was amiss.

“Now I will close the entrance and I will be with my colleague. At this time, no one is expected with a visit.”

“Thanks, Seregin appeared without delay,” thought the investigator on duty, who came to the sanatorium to work and to treat the waist. From the kitchen spread the sweet smell of vanilla cookies, baked for breakfast injured resting athletes and coaches.

“We must ensure the safety of the nearby territory if the corpses are pouring out of nowhere,” he said abruptly, pressing to hang up when this simple thought occurred to him.

“Come, my friend, it was much more complicated than we thought,” his colleague encouraged him.

He was already standing with one foot on the sidewalk, and the other was holding the door from a plastic box with glass windows, a booth set at the exit of a wide, entrance gate of a high, twisted, cast-iron fence separating from the road a stunning plot of land, intended since the Stalin era for the holiday of eminent people.

It was the middle of summer with thunderstorms, showers, occasionally hail, but immediately melted. The coolness of the morning was replaced by the stuffiness. By the evening it was getting a little fresher. From the surrounding mountains a warm, dust-enveloping air blew. The birds, wrapping in their nests, rushed with screaming in whole, large flocks, teaching young chicks the skill, soaring to the very height, but did not reach the high floors of skyscrapers, fell with desperation and hovered somewhere below, rustling plumage and breaking the space at an incredible speed. The dogs, digging out pits in the ground at the roots of the bushes, were stacked, flapping their tails, fell asleep with pleasure. Kiosks with mineral water, vending machines with soda, and barrels with kvass did not have time to change the coordinators-distributors of drinks. By twelve o'clock the sellers were taking off their aprons. They stood in the hope that the daily rate of production of the desired moisture suddenly increases at least a percentage of twenty. But it was easier to engage in percent mania on paper than in reality. The premium of the ice cream women increased and gradually grew to a pyramidal size. Famous men, walking with their grandchildren, and directors of large banks started dating

them. The shadow could be sold, which was done by greedy guides, enticing naive children into their dexterous networks, ignorant youth and zealous tourists, who got rich on speculation and chatter. Guides persuaded to make dizzying routes in the snow Kilimanjaro, Pamir, anywhere, just to get rid of boring investment. The dollar and the euro were rising. Oil fell in its equivalent. Shares and securities were not available. The price per gram of gold, as always, grew. Dealers incredibly profited, barely able to figure their growing capital in the drawer of an old desk.

Work in the sanatorium-dispensary of Transcaucasian started. Only at six o'clock the morning shift of the attendants began. While all the holidaymakers were putting themselves in order, preparing for an easy breakfast, prettying themselves before a meeting with friends in a chic classic, pompous dining room with columns, colored, picked up curtains and a long buffet where delicious snacks were laid out in the center on perfectly clean white porcelain and metal sets produced in Germany.

When one of the new maids went down to the basement, she walked through the foyer to the utility room, where she ironed the dry linen on a comfortable, special, folding stand that served as a table, opened the door to the room where the towels were stored, and then froze in surprise. She saw on the floor; face down, the full length of the basement room, the corpse of a heavy old man, dressed in old, dilapidated, faded gray clothes.

Once on the day of his arrival, she talked with him when he

approached her with a request to change the terry bed cover for caprone and bring him a wool blanket to his room, since he had frozen at night. He's on his way to the resort, as he explained intelligently to the maid: "An old rheumatism and lumbosacral radiculitis has opened."

"Darling, I need a good woman with work skills," the heavy old man said then, leaning on the ironing board with the elbow of his right hand, coming very close to her.

"How can I help?"

The compassionate old man involuntarily took offense in the heart, for she was completely indifferent to his words, not wanting to lift his tired eyes on him, doing the drying of another set of clothes.

He remembered the young years, swiftly swept in constant running around from one library to another, reading classics of Russian literature, traveling along river open spaces with parents. He had an accumulation luggage of knowledge, communication with educated teachers, hard-working journalists, passing exams in a technical college for construction specialties. He met with the intelligent family of the future wife – a surprisingly modest and naive girl, to whom he repaired a room in the communal house. Matchmaking, honeymoon and farewell of the father – captain of the river vessel: "Do not lose each other for a long, full of reefs, obstacles and failures of life."

There was a sudden confluence of mercenary people and

fateful circumstances. Courts and long terms of imprisonment, deferred for a period, after twenty years. Care for the family and the desire to become an example for imitation of the youth. Who had already admired his remarkable abilities? Often he was advised by his wife – a fashion model and a mannequin with slender legs, much younger than him: “To be a leader in the collective of the elite of the developing society”. They discussed among themselves of the basic principles of family life, as was customary in the family of the famous revolutionary democrat N.G. Chernyshevsky.

To be the defender of such a fragile girl was not easy. They did not swear at trifles, but seriously took care of the sore problems in the common kitchen with their parents and neighbors. “Learning the moral principles of farming, serving the motherland, caring for well-being – such a great happiness none of us had ever imagined in our childhood!”

He did not forget to repeat after a hearty dinner. This was the main impetus to show his growing abilities, potential and talents among her friends, who was surprised:

“What he found in a joker and an actress, able to charm with her glamour, attracts and immediately postpones.”

Growth is much higher than average, dressed in the latest fashion, he looked respectable, reliable, as it really was. The main topics of the conversation were: “Space”, “Space of Russia”, “The vast expanse of the ocean and the height of the mountain peaks”, “Sovereignty”, “State security” – all attracted newlyweds

to the all-encompassing knowledge of the universe.

Make a brilliant career, the famous relatives of both lovers in life could only admire such a lucky coincidence and similarity of characters. They zealously advised, each in his own way, to engage in scientific research, to pass immediately the candidate's minimum, to enter the graduate school so that the circle of acquaintances would be expanded by the names of eminent professors and academicians:

“Do not stand still, but move forward in a spiral into the knowledge – the progress of humanity.”

What he did immediately, cherishing the hope of being perceived by her, as the most worthy of the citizens of a developed democratic society.

“Such happiness that you passed all the exams with excellence, I did not expect from you, my beloved,” she admired.

“At the top of me, too, all appreciated, but you're my only...” he was embarrassed by his genius and truthfulness.

“Reality is our cradle,” his wife helped him to find himself after a rapid rise to the highest circles. They loved to travel with profit and much cheaper: he built houses and a school for street children, and she was content to calmly bear the load of cares, not burdening him with her problems, constantly studying, under his father's leadership, life abroad.

“A good home friend would never stop us from being with you, instantly finding everything at once. I will join the Masons and Mormons. You will be my captive of a harem, a servant of a nun,

a modest gray nun, a dancer ‘Moulin Rouge,’ a ballerina in the ‘Swan Lake’.”

She laughed in return, but did not renounce their main principle: to be always on the same side of the barricades. Wars, revolutions did not weaken, but strengthened the earthly attraction of Orpheus and Eurydice, Tristan and Isolde, Peter and Fevronia, Ruslan and Lyudmila. What served them was to take care only of the welfare of the people surrounding such respectable, sedate and prolific parents who managed to bring to the people of all their pupils and inmates. In retirement, they also led an ascetic lifestyle, always figuring in the center of friends and acquaintances. They were equal, they took an example of inimitable firmness, purposefulness. He never hurt, he watched his health. Once a year he went to a balneological or other Russian resort.

In a prestigious sanatorium, located in the resort area, where he had come once again with his twin brother, at a daily rate an ordinary housemaid had to iron out all the linen brought from the laundry and then spread out through the rooms.

“Yesterday came my own twin brother. I was moved to his room. He stopped here because we booked seats in this sanatorium beforehand, but could not buy tickets for one train because of the sciatica that I came here to treat” an elderly man set off into detailed reasoning and descriptions, took out of his pocket two old-fashioned branded boxes of medicines and showed an efficient maid.

“This is what the local head doctor prescribed to me after the examination: nimesulide, meloxicam. A former masseur – daghestanian man, I met him at the polyclinic, studied Tibetan medicine. He recommended vacuum therapy for me. But I prefer to be treated by folk methods. To do this, brought with me cups for massage techniques Ku Nye. Did you heard about such procedures?” the old man asked apologetically.

“No, I did not hear anything,” she answered with fright, looking up at the wise old man who had mastered, along with the ancient oriental methods of treatment, the doctors of Tibet, a complex of medicine using special cups.

“Would you like to get at least one procedure for free?” he asked sarcastically.

“I do not have time,” she answered calmly, turning her beautiful head toward him, and looked directly at the deep-set, expressive, light green eyes, under the thick, dense eyebrows and forehead, cut into even rows of wrinkles. “But I know that in the spa in our city they write down for an advertising campaign for a trial session.”

“Did you have time to recover before you arrived?”

“My back never hurts from work,” a modest, quiet maid with the manner of a nurse admitted kindly and carefully.

“I see that you are so strong and smart,” the old man got excited, grabbed the woman with one hand for the left bare arm, squeezed his muscles as if to measure the pressure, and immediately let go, but she did not pay any sharp attention to his

sharp gesture.

“It’s our duty to take care of the cleanliness of the buildings.”

“I will be cured; we will return to our home, I will teach you the methods of massage. You’ll take care of my house at home and make good money with treatment sessions.”

“Thanks for the offer. I’ll think about it, “she said somehow deafly, to herself, shifting the ironed sheets from place to place.

“While the specialist will massage my back: cervicothoracic, humeral, vertebral-sacral parts using various oils. Burdock, for example. One session costs ten euros or seven hundred rubles. Vacuum therapy will improve my blood circulation at the site of exposure, remove chondroses. After several sessions, the pain syndrome will decrease.”

The maid showed her head in surprise.

“Do you know what I’m talking about?”

“No, I do not understand. We did not go to medicine at school,” turning again into the pose of the ironman, she said ironically.

“What do not you understand, dear, say?” he asked again, hoping for mutual trust.

“I remember that my mother used hot and cold compresses in turn to remove acute pain, especially at the initial stage of the disease, after laying the rails on the railway. I applied them to the site of back pain for twenty minutes every two to three hours. But this helped her a little. Then she enrolled in acupuncture through the brunt of her brother. I paid decent – a thousand

rubles, but my brother did not allow her to visit the polyclinic often, he went to the hospital himself, and then went to Altai, as he said, to study moxa-therapy – heating up with cigars. He wrote in a letter that he cured not only his back, but also his legs. They were taken from him when walking. He worked on a tractor in the village. He caught a cold and almost died. No healer could help relieve tension and soreness. I remember my mother was walking, limping,” the maid told her family history of the disease bitterly.

“We need to think over your words. Do you love Mom’s brother?” the old man asked with a feeling of anger that the old man asked with a feeling of anger that he had been rejected.

“Grandfather, go, rest,” the maid advised sympathetically.

“I’ll go now. But you better don’t teach me anymore. I myself know that acupuncture is performed with the help of thin needles, which are introduced into the place of localization of pain. This is a long-known, well-proven method. Still there is a method of alternative medicine – apitherapy – treatment by bee stings. They use them for many diseases. For multiple sclerosis, including sciatica, but here in the sanatorium, there are no such procedures. But ‘moxa’ is a bad word.”

“Do not like it, do not say... And you probably have an apiary, if you all know so well about the disease?”

“I had an apiary, but I sold it. There is no one to mess around with the hives. It is necessary to clean them constantly and re-apply the solution for bait.”

“Really. It was easier to go to the bazaar and buy what you need at a reasonable price,” continued the thought of him the maid, who liked to drink tea with honey and gingerbread. She had an unbiased interest in a conversation with an experienced beekeeper and a respectable man.

“I’ll take your advice now. For example, do you know what the technique of neuromuscular relaxation is?”

The old man crouched gratefully at the chair that had been pushed up to her and relaxed.

“I think warming up with a wrap. Masks all sorts: chocolate, fruit,” looking at the sheet with a picture of vases with apples, pears and plums, the maid said uncertainly. “Such creams for use should be bought in a cosmetic shop and applied to the most painful places... My mother did not live to see such a ‘circulation stimulation by correction’, the surgeon told her when he decided to have her surgery in the hospital. She did not agree.”

“Did your brother live in Tibet?”

“Well, what am I to do with you, again sticking with your personal life?” The maid became nervous, put the iron on the board, took the decanter from the pantry and poured water into the iron for better wetting the sheets.

“But remember, when treating sciatica with folk remedies or Tibetan medicine, the effect is achieved by relaxing the muscles,” the sick old man came to his own conclusion.

“Thanks, I’ll know now,” she said politely, helping the old man to get out of the chair.

“And you could become a good nurse,” the old man concluded, delighted that she did not know anything, she was especially unskilled in medicine, notably since she had no relatives or family who would lead the behavior of the maid in personal communication.

“Could, but did not,” she introduced a manly tough.

“Here, come to me someday in the room I’ll tell something about my life in the North. There were a lot of people working with us at the construction site. My brother is lean, eats a little. But he likes full women. We will not talk with him. Bring a plate and a spoon from the dining room. We’ll have tea with crackers and honey.

“What do you propose to me not to talk to him, if I do not come to you or to your lean brother? I have enough work in the building,” said the maid, putting all her thoughts about her activity in the phrase.

“Do not forget to change the bedspreads,” the old man cared.

She noticed a large bald head, a regular large skull, puffy cheeks and a large number of wrinkles on his neck.

“I’ll talk to the administrator. You will be given what you are talking about when there is such a kit in the warehouse. But you can take a blanket now,” the maid added in reply, continuing to move the bright, coarse sheet on the ironing board, almost touching the elbow of the obsessive guest with an iron.

“I’m very grateful,” the old man finished straightening, when she put the camel blanket on the stand and handed it straight

to his hands.

This episode did not then make any impression on her, and the appearance and manners of the old man inspired obvious trust and respect for old age.

“We must immediately inform the police about the dead man. As it will be, I do not know, but someone must remove his body from here,” the thought suddenly flashed across the maid.

She closed the closet with her key. In order not to waste time, she decided to start her working day from a call to the watch in the administrative building of the sanatorium, where high-ranking officials were treated.

“Come here at once,” the maid said calmly her name and location, when she heard the voice of the administrator on duty in the cell-phone. “This says Topilko Sveta. In our basement, in the room with linens, I found the corpse of an elderly man.”

Sveta said about the flabby old man in an excellent degree, because he seemed to be far in seventy – nearly eighty two years old.

Usually she first recounted sets of clean linen, and then went to the free numbers to spread out on the beds in the rooms prepared for settling in with new guests. But in such an extraordinary case she behaved absolutely correctly, extremely properly, with restraint and purposefulness, without a shadow of melancholy or fear.

“Be there. Now our staff will approach you,” the administrator answered, which is located at the reception, where keys were

given out for each separate room: luxury and economy class.

All the floors of the old three-story building were built in Empire style in strict compliance with symmetry, taking into account the perspective and borrowing the principles of classical temple Roman architecture on the basis of the work of the Venetian architect Palladio. With a wide pediment-portico in the form of a loggia and a massive atrium where you could sit at a table, eat and enjoy a magnificent view of the Caucasus Mountains. None of the outsiders could enter the sanatorium, which was guarded day and night by a special detachment of the police of a private enterprise and a horse Cossack brigade.

The entrance to the twisted fence was only for special passes. Green lawns, relict honeysuckle bushes, roses, jasmine formed the central part of the flower beds, and on the edges were planted velvet flowers and petunia of contrasting white, red and yellow color creating a canvas, exuding an amazing aroma in the mornings.

It was noticeable that The Resort Greengrocery Trust did a great job, reminding guests of their merits and honorary awards during their lifetime.

The outdoor pool was located in the heart of the sanatorium between the dining room and the residential building. Occasionally on the territory appeared landscape designers and landscapers accompanied by florists, who with love improved the appearance of rare plantings. Benches for lovers of taking air baths and sunbathing were arranged along the asphalt paths.

The entire vast area was a cultural resting place for people of different professions. Slackened patients came there, but returned as strong and healthy people.

Directly curative springs with medicinal water were in the rotunda and colonnade. And further under the covered arch with columns and in the grotto were beaten the warm waters of Narzan, whose status – the most life-giving moisture went far beyond the edge, which was comparable only with the Karlovy Vary of the Czech Republic. Anyone could come with his glass and drink the prescribed portion of the elixir to restore strength according to the prescription of the attending physician, settling in the shadows near the marble sculpture of the ancient greek gods, which stood all around the arcade, restored after a period of stagnation.

Sveta came out of the dormitory, looked around. There was no one near by. The musty air of the pantry with the corpse was disgusting. She stopped beside a rectangular rosary to inhale the fragrance, surveying again a beautiful view of the plants. She climbed the steps leading to a small playground on the dais. She noticed the administrator and two accompanying people in black uniforms, sweatshirts and cap, heading straight for her.

“Did you call us?”

“Yes. Come with me,” she began, losing herself, “I was horrified when I found the dead man in my working room,” she chided, peering at the simple faces of the members of the State Security Department.

“What time did you start work?” one of the police officers asked, not looking in her direction, going down first to the ground floor.

“She’s only been here for the first week. She is a completely new employee. While she poorly knows our discipline. You should come to the service half an hour earlier at 7.30,” explained the administrator, staring at point blank range stopping at the door leading to the place where Sveta discovered the victim, giving the maid the opportunity to open with her keys a new crypt with blankets and towels on either side a long warehouse with bedding.

“Although I have spare keys. Here they are.”

He took two keys from his pocket and showed them to the policemen.

“I’ve been on duty all night. I did not go anywhere. You saw it yourself on your monitor. I did not give keys to anyone.”

The police looked attentively at the speaker.

“So, somebody has duplicates... But we’ll figure it out,” replied lieutenant-colonel Regimov Nikifor Naumovich, who had undergone further training in St. Petersburg, who had studied the methods of work of investigators of the police and warders of the most famous and large pre-trial detention center “Kresty”, honor the collective of the employees of the sanatorium, taking two keys from Sveta and then returning her back with a serious air.

“Probably, on the keys there is some wax, plasticine or other

soft material that can give a good impression. But I see that both keys are clean, without a touch of dirt.”

The administrator in a blue tunic and black trousers with yellow stripes jumped with joy, the whole range of worries reflected on his face. He exclaimed:

“That’s just how it all happened. I hope you will not investigate this case for a long time, and we will not have complications with the sanatorium management?”

Nikifor Naumovich did not want to answer stupid questions. He dialed a forensic phone number on his mobile phone so that a car-hearse was sent urgently and put the body in a morgue for the required procedures. He called the address of the sanatorium.

“When the body is taken away, it will be necessary to clean the room, since all the towels came from the shelves,” he asked the maid a supplication.

“I’ll try,” she said sadly.

“They say that here such incidents with tsarist people occurred occasionally...”

On the victim were visible traces of the struggle and the hands of the dead old man, tied to the side racks, and caused an unpleasant impression of lost hopes and disappointments in a successful rest at the best sanatorium of the resort city.

“The secret will not be disclosed by any of the personnel, God will give,” the administrator said, assuming the functions of a lawyer.

The frightened maid almost came to herself after the shock,

but it was felt that a middle-aged woman could hardly give rants and long lexical expressions. She trembled noticeably and nervously sorted through a bunch of keys from the hotel building.

“Why did not you call us at the picket, and reported to the administrator?” the investigator asked officially, whose eyes radiated warmth and support

“It seemed better to me,” said the woman, leaning against the wall, calming down the words of the investigator.

“Do you have someone at the reception?” the investigator asked again.

This time he turned to the administrator, whose tall figure, physique, healthy complexion and smile aroused the respect of every newly arrived guest. Almost thirty years of service in the internal affairs agencies forced the lieutenant-colonel to choose those with whom he should work and investigate crimes. In this criminal case, none of those present had any doubts about it, he was assisted by lieutenant colonel Seregin, whom Regimov trusted as to himself.

“My colleague replaced me. He has already started his immediate duties,” the administrator replied, moving away from the pantry door, when the investigator carefully took a rough woolen blanket from the shelf, pushing aside the stick for washing the floors with his elbow, so as not to erase the fingerprints on a possible murder weapon.

The three of them with the administrator made a stretcher out of the blanket. They freed the old man’s hands from the wooden

rack, untangling the twine ropes used in the trade for carrying heavy purchases by buyers. Put the corpse on the resulting stretcher. Above they threw the same sheet, which Sveta so carefully smoothed, throwing to the top of the stack with sets of linen. They raised a hammock. He bent, but the victim did not immediately take the proper form.

“Once or twice, they took it,” said the administrator, when they carried a load of more than a hundred kilograms to the exit and down the stairs (since the old man was large), to be sent for examination.

A covered police car was already standing near the entrance, preventing the pesky vacationers from monitoring the manipulations of the police. Then spread rumors among the staff of the kitchen and doctors of fiction about the criminal incident that occurred during their vacation at the resort, causing panic to the local population, whose care and attention balanced the daily routine and the regime of people who dreamed of getting a charge of cheerfulness for a whole year.

“Come to us tomorrow at lunch. We have to fill out all the necessary documents on this case,” Seregin said, giving Sveta a place near the deceased next to him when she sat down on a bench in the caravan to escort the victim on her last journey.

“You will answer us now with some questions in the department, and we’ll let you go.”

“I’ll try to collect my thoughts.”

Then she was going to return to her workplace, to do her

specific duties on cleaning the deluxe rooms and economy class.

Nikifor Naumovich took a seat next to the driver, and the car moved out of the main gate, passing all the buildings, a dance floor, gardens and flower beds. The administrator went to the main building to calm his colleague, sitting at the computer with a frustrated look, surfacing the Internet page.

The day was just beginning. Holidaymakers resorted to the dining room along the wide paths under the watchful eye of the chief doctor – a tall, fat man in a white coat – Mitrofanov Peter Samsonovich, whose well-being depended on the number of paid procedures taken by his patients. The immense power of the Caucasus Mountains captivated the spirit of the Masters of Sports in mountaineering and foreign tourists who preferred to appear in the dining room on the second shift after the elderly patients had eaten. Athletes after heavy competitions were received with open arms in this sanatorium. Immediately appointed treatment for damaged limbs, spine, internal organs, corrected the posture, and those recovered returned to the system to enter the new Olympic level.

The administrator, who was present at the discovery of the corpse by policemen – Vladimir Kormushenko, looked proudly at the colorful flower beds, pulled up the uniform and stepped over the threshold of the main building. He stopped at the counter where his substitute, Ira Chetvergova, was sitting at the computer, a tall blue-eyed blonde in a white silk jacket with a badge on her chest. She took the maid – Topilko Sveta to work

until the end of the year with a probationary period. She also designed and registered on the second floor of Soshin Vladimir Viktorovich two days ago.

They arrived on the same day by the same train from Tarasov, handed over the passports to Ira, which first aroused Kormushenko's perplexity, and then, taking into account that both new vacationers are unfamiliar with the resort, internally calmed down. Cursing her for slowness and vanity, hoping that everything will be settled quickly, none of the hotel guests will ever find out about what happened.

"You need to find in the safe the passport of the deceased and transfer it to the police. Let them understand. It's good that they did not touch me. And where do such brutes come from, capable of attacking quiet old men, one kind of which causes pity and compassion," thought the administrator, sighing and enjoying the freshness of the summer morning.

A light haze spread over the green mountains. In some places, rocks and steep paths were visible. The cable car allowed holidaymakers to enjoy the panorama of the resort area.

"Hello, are you back already?" Ira asked in a low voice, as if she had eaten ice cream yesterday, stressing the specifics of her work, maintaining always good relations with the whole people of staff: doctors and medical nurses." "Something happened? Do I understand your silence correctly?"

"Nothing serious happened. It is necessary to increase vigilance, to invite a representative from the travel agency

for agitation of convalescent holiday-makers to see the best sights of the Stavropol Territory: Kislovodsk, Mineral Waters, Pyatigorsk and Essentuki.”

“Are you concerned about something?”

“Anyone can not hide anything from you,” Kormushenko answered unequivocally, watching how she casually turned the pages on the plasma monitor, looking closely at her visit to the park of a mountain massif among tall coniferous trees and flowering chestnuts. “I’m tired of running around here and there.”

“Make coffee?”

It meant to go to the automatic machine with different kinds of coffee, choose the most expensive drink, having substituted a ceramic mug of the administrator, to pour in one container at once two portions of a smoking elixir of vivacity.

“I will not refuse. Make me like last time with chocolate. What’s the name of your recipe?” Kormushenko translated the conversation with a colleague on another topic, so that he should not worry himself, but gather his thoughts.

“How is it better to ask for a passport so as not to explain the cause and effect? The rich do not like it when tragedy incidents occur next to them...” a freelance police officer and a long-standing friend of lieutenant colonel Regimov began to ponder over the investigation of bloody crimes, corruption and malicious violations of the law.

He looked with melancholy at Ira, giving her a chance

to answer the question posed. Her ideal hairstyle would be envied by any of the announcers on television, where in no way had to penetrate information about the mysterious murder in the pantry dormitory of a prestigious sanatorium.

“Now I’ll find out...”

She took out the utensils from the table. Elegantly stood up, walked to the coffee machine with an elegant gait. Put a simple light brown mug on top. She put the plastic glass in the hole, twice pressed the button, and then, pouring two portions into one cup, she handed Kormushenko, who was sitting helplessly on the edge of a small chair, looking for the key to the safe in the desk. He opened the safe at once, searched through references and passports, but to no avail.

“Moccaccino. Did you satisfied with this name? Probably it was invented by Italians or Mexicans. They have a craving for fantasy, to assign their names to different culinary masterpieces.”

“It’s a wonderful name, and taste is even better.”

Coquettish Ira liked to philosophize on various everyday topics, especially in the presence of her colleague. With him, they got acquainted a long time ago, but met very rarely because of inconsistencies in the schedule and a timetable of duty in the hotel. Kormushenko often had to replace Ira, as she was still working part-time in the neighboring children’s boarding house. By whom? He certainly did not know. However, he heard from vacationers that they saw her surrounded by teenagers in the very center near the fountain.

“Finally, I found a passport for a new guest,” he pointed to the document on the table. “It is necessary to write it out urgently. Rested out to death. Do this now. I’ll wait here,” Kormushenko was pushing out the words as drops regretfully, looking at the glass with a fragrant drink, standing next to him on the table.

“Did something serious happen to him? What about his things? He himself will come for them or there are other options?” Ira had metallic notes in her voice.

She often blinked, straightened her hair, stepped from foot to foot, and relaxed, standing next to her colleague.

“I’ll give the police. Now I’m going to the dormitory, I’ll collect what’s in there and bring it here, and the maid will clean in his room,” Kormushenko assured her embarrassed that he must do everything himself, despite the fact that his duty is over.

“Can you tell me in confidence what happened or is it a political sabotage?” Ira indignantly, making an impenetrable face, consulted exclusively about her quirks. “So what has happened? ... The mystery of the 21st century!” she exclaimed pathetically.

In the foyer, no one from the rest holidaymakers was. Everyone was in the dining room, so she poured out the emotions, which had accumulated, on the colleague, who had fallen ill with “zeal”. She was looking at his uniform, silvered gray hair and a tired gaze of blue eyes.

“Leave the passport on the table. Soon a police officer will arrive, and I hurry up there,” the administrator pointed in the

direction of the hotel complex.

“I’ll wait for your return.”

He was gone for about ten minutes. When he returned with a small suitcase on wheels, pushing it under the counter, the coffee had cooled down a little. Without emotion, Kormushenko drank in one sip what Ira had cooked with such care and love. Peace-loving holidaymakers with calm manners of behavior were sent to the procedures, who on excursions, booked ahead of time with the agent. The second turn of the guests was drawn to the dining room. Among them, the administrator recognized the famous hockey players of the Russian team. Two strong Americans: one bright red with small curls, and another of African origin, talking calmly about something already sitting at a table in the center of the hall. They finished drinking beer, waiting until they brought the trays full of various snacks.

“It’s difficult to agree with her in an amicable way. Always everything will go to nothing in one fell swoop. In vain I did not make her an offer to marry me before, but I hope she would not refuse me if I started courting her more aggressively. When she was alone but was such a nervous person. It’s just amazing how much positive energy there is in her. Nobody tripped her over trifles,” the newly beloved was inspired, suddenly imbued with sympathy for the administrator.

She once told him at work that her family was rooted in the dynasty of the Caucasian princes. After such a statement, Kormushenko had a desire to go to her meetings, give flowers,

sweets to make love to her, marry, start a family, finally. Attend dance parties, meetings of graduates of the university. To compete with Queen Tamara, in his personal opinion, Ira could.

While serving in the Armed Forces and helping refugees in the Chechen and Donetsk territories, he started an army diary, where he marked the events that took place during the day. As a result, it turned out that he brought up his OMON brigade in the right direction. For which he received a medal of a foreign state, which he kept in the far corner of the sideboard next to a photograph of those years on an armored personnel carrier and a helmet in an embrace with his comrades in arms.

“Thank you for your concern,” Kormushenko said disappointedly. “I’ll stay here with you for a while. We need to deal with some of the guests.”

“I think that our employees are beyond suspicion,” suddenly gave her version of Ira, starting to cut her nails, which she did not have time to process and varnish due to lack of time. “I understood everything at once, seeing a covered police car entering the territory of the sanatorium. Someone got into a fight, and they are now looking for the guilty...”

“It’s just that this situation should not interfere with rest.”

“How much it is necessary to invest in work, it’s horrible!” she exclaimed, fanning herself. “Someone has fun, but someone has job...”

“Guests apparently are not so strong enough to go on an

excursion. See what their physically depressed faces are.”

Kormushenko greatly exaggerated, as a cheerful crowd of tourists sat down in the approaching bus and went to inspect the mountain peaks, heading for the funicular.

“They will definitely like the monument to Lermontov,” Ira insisted persistently.

“I hope we’ll have a good time.”

It was Sunday. Therefore, she favorably agreed to go to work, as she was busy on weekdays as a steward in a neighboring children’s boarding house and preferred to take care of teenagers who came to rest from training classes on the foothills of the Caucasus, which she undoubtedly had an attraction for.

“Exactly. Let them see where the demons spend their nights,” he added ironically, wiping off the rest of his sleep from his face with a handkerchief.

For luck Kormushenko ten minutes later on the doorstep of the hotel appeared Nikifor Naumovich, to ask some questions to administrators in the course of the investigation of the death of the old man. He had already managed to return on the Ford from the police department, where he left Seregin to interrogate a new maid, tearfully beseeching not to tell her neighbors, about her whereabouts. The administrator recognized lieutenant-colonel Regimov in the investigator and hurried forward to meet him. He went to the counter at the reception.

“Have you noticed any deviations from the routine in the behavior of holidaymakers? Maybe someone longer than the

others lingered on the playground or appeared drunk in the dining room?” the investigator began a routine interrogation to direct the attendants to pay more attention to their charges after such an extraordinary event.

“They need to clarify the investigation. All staffing leads to them: documents, mass-workers, entertainers, maids,” – the lieutenant-colonel tried to put everyone in their places.

“For my watch, no one got drunk, especially not rowdy. Everyone behaved quietly and decently,” Ira blurted out, straightening the glasses on the bridge of her nose, which she managed to put on, noticing the incoming investigator to give her face the most truthful expression.

“We need to revisit the record from the CCTV cameras installed on each floor. Maybe there will be a hint of truth to it,” Nikifor Naumovich remembered important details of the investigation, whose first task was to track every person on the floor in the dormitory.

“And who was on duty yesterday?” asked the lieutenant colonel, slowly leafing through a colorful booklet, advertising the sights of the richest sources of life-giving region.

Puzzled, Kormushenko automatically scratched the cropped back of his head, clearly betraying his obvious interest in promptly investigating a criminal offense. He could not imagine that someone could do this.

“Yesterday was my watch. Everything went quietly, calmly without screaming and scandals. None of the guests of the

sanatorium asked me questions about the dysfunctional arrangement in the room or discontent of food in the restaurant,” explained the suspect in the murder, the administrator, since the whole gravity of the crime could lie on him because of negligence in the conduct of business.

On the table was a log of entries arriving and departing to a privileged sanatorium with the signatures of those employees who had passed and accepted duty. Excluding cooks, waiters and medical staff, who reported to their chief doctor personally, who had his own laptop, where all the analysis data and the dynamics of treatment of severe patients were made.

Doctors of the sanatorium did their utmost to restore the health of citizens after severe injuries, cardiovascular, chronic, gastrointestinal, musculoskeletal diseases, providing a set of preventive procedures: heat and mud, massage, inhalation, electro and light therapy, bar therapy, paraffin-ozocerite and phyto baths.

Some employees rented the rooms there and paid as for a one-room apartment. Including chief doctor Mitrofanov constantly lived next to the outpatient clinic and the examination room. Together with the chef, he worked out the menu for each day. And the investigator’s suspicion fell on him least of all. Since he worked in the boarding house for a long time and got used to all sorts of circumstances that go beyond the ordinary.

“Everything in the kitchen is in order. Along with the national cuisine of the peoples of Russia,” Ira suddenly said with pride,

trying with all her might to remove suspicions from her colleague.

“There are no complaints against them,” Nikifor Naumovich decided.

“But it seems that two foreign citizens abuse beer too much, but this is permissible according to our rules,” concluded Kormushenko, leaning back in the chic leather chair next to the administrator’s desk, blocking the inspector’s passage into the small staff storage room.

There he did not need to go, because there, in the closet stored dishes, balls and board games.

“In fact, everything went quietly. How close they are to them here, do not turn around,” Nikifor Naumovich thought minutely, taking a photo in the magazine that seemed to be starting to crack and tear in the investigator’s hands as he leafed through the pages, searching for the necessary line with the surname Soshin.

“We duplicate this information. We put it on the computer, commented Ira’s actions, moving back in the chair with the rollers from the counter at the reception and allowing the investigator to leaf through the long files with the relatives’ tables, which came with whole families.

“You can see for yourself.”

“Well thank you. Now let’s look at the numbers. Do they coincide with the entries in the magazine,” said the policeman, accustomed to looking for a rational grain in every investigation.

He sat down at a table, on a nearby round stool, neatly, so as not to break and began to catch the same information that

was entered in the paper original, leafing through, studying each squiggle and scribbler. To his delight, he noted that there were no corrections here or there.

“Here’s a suitcase and a passport. These things are from the room of Soshin. You can take it,” Kormushenko hesitated, not knowing how to say, so as not to scare the information, inexhaustible on the fiction, Ira.

“Good. I will keep in mind,” Nikifor Naumovich agreed, nodding, to take with him the personal belongings of the murdered elderly man for transfer to the examination, in the hope that there would be at least some clue to investigate the crime. “It turns out that this guest worked for a long time as a doorman in a restaurant, a bricklayer at a construction site in Beloyarsk. He took big bribes while standing at the entrance. We have already made a request to the place of his permanent residence. Soon his relatives will arrive. It will be necessary to place them.”

“Let’s keep in mind,” the administrators agreed.

Nikifor Naumovich for some time considered the documents, and then, giving vent to Irena’s imagination, said anxiously, taking out a small parcel from his package:

“Here, pass this sheet to the laundry or clerk, and you can take the blanket too.”

The policeman pointed to the second bulky sack with the emblem of the sports club, which he found in his office and brought for service purposes.

“I’ll take care of this myself,” reassured his caring Ira – the

manager, the laundress and the administrator in one person, taking from the investigator's hand the things from the pantry used to drag the corpse of the murdered porter from the basement to the police car.

She worked at several rates to earn a cooperative apartment, the prices of which grew year after year.

"You can shake out the blanket, but you do not have to wash it. There's no blood there," Nikifor Naumovich said without irony. "We are grateful to you for participating in the operation to eliminate unworthy elements in the sanatorium," he continued, in order to emphasize the importance of their actions.

The lieutenant colonel placed a police certificate on the table to the hotel administrator for the discharge of the murdered old man from the sanatorium. The whole procedure took Ira a matter of seconds.

Having finished reading and photographing what seemed to him the most suspicious, the investigator from under the counter took a suitcase on the wheels, to which Kormushenko pointed it to him, put the passport of the murdered man in the outer pocket of the carpetbag, discharged from the sanatorium thanks to the efforts of the administrator, at the same time photographed the list of all staff members and business hours. What was not so much, but fifteen people trained to work in the tourism business: two administrators, a gardener, a chef, three waitresses, three doctors, two nurses and three maids.

"One new maid provided a typed abstruse recommendation

on the computer from a previous job, signed illegibly without deciphering. It is good that her personal data is in my notebook. But there is no handwriting. Here, too, is a minus,” Nikifor Naumovich criticized himself, tearing the evil on the road surface as he approached the police Ford, stacking the suitcase in the luggage compartment, and then jerked violently off the resort mainline white off the sun. The strange phrase “a woman with work skills” made the experienced investigator question the veracity of these words, but he was not the head of the resort, so he immediately threw away the reflections on this matter. Since the experienced staff in the summer season is always not enough.

“We will sow all those who have a weighty alibi, and the others will be questioned without pressure. Someone will certainly open, some absurd, accidentally dropped phrase, or gesture will slip through. Then business will take a different turn. All CCTV cameras worked perfectly. The image did not flash. Apparently, someone dragged the corpse into the pantry, pre-inserted the standard image on the computer, which led me astray when I watched from my post behind all the doors of the dormitory. It was my watch. Means, I, too, can be taken under suspicion. Something is not glued to this matter,” he reasoned, ignoring the fact that he had already approached the two-story police building.

He stopped near the swinging doors. He put the car on the brake, went out, slamming the door in irritation. He went to the trunk, took out a suitcase taken at the sanatorium, to study the contents carefully, to make a list of things where the riddle could

be stored, and then returns it to the relatives of the murdered one.

The investigator ascended to his floor, went into a spacious, rectangular cabinet with tables and chairs located in the corners. Two half-empty lockers were filled with cumbersome folders with sliding metal protectors. There were files with the numbers of cases investigated during the year. Affairs themselves rested in the archive.

“I will consult with colleagues. What do they think about this? They always come up with original ideas. By the way, I learn the results of the interrogation of a maid who discovered a corpse,” the investigator’s thoughts were moving in a harmonious sequence in the right direction when he came to his office with a suitcase on wheels, from which a beautiful view of the green front gardens of private buildings hung with ripe fruits of apples, pears, peaches, apricots and beginners to ripen persimmon and tangerines.

Nikifor Naumovich pushed one of the standard, brown, wooden chairs without a soft seat, and with a gabardine upholstery from the wall and on him put a suitcase to try to open the lock without knowing the cipher.

The optimistic view and behavior of the investigator gave him a person of modest, positive, unhurried, punctual, inclined to logical thinking, which was very valuable for criminal investigation officers. He was dressed like all his colleagues, but preferred to put on a clean shirt with a fashionable tie within an oblique stripes in the mornings. Orders, medals and insignia

were kept in a special box at home. He was noticeably different from young operatives with discretion. He has never taken hasty decisions; accumulated a lot of positive potential, applying the latest methods to unwind the case. He himself thoroughly studied all the evidence and versions provided to him in order to draw the correct conclusion. He was engaged at the classical wrestling in leisure. He was officially married to a decent woman who provided him with a comfortable existence. Sometimes on Sundays they went to a restaurant, where he watched a mixed-up diverse public, making notes in pencil in a regular notebook, and then he made out meaningful representations to the head of the police.

## 2. Unexpected finding

When the body of the former doorman was brought to the morgue of the regional police station of Kislovodsk, and the forensic expert expounded his arguments in the epicrisis, it turned out that he was strangled without regaining consciousness. Death came from squeezing the neck and chest with a round object like a stick or a squeegee at about eleven o'clock in the evening. However, despite serious bodily injuries, no blood loss has occurred. He looked as if he had fallen asleep, not counting that his complexion had acquired a bluish tinge. On the wrists of his hands were small scars-stripes from the twine, with which hands were tied to the pantry stanchions. No tattoos on the body were found.

Expert – Taimuraz Granatov – a tall, gray, lean man of Caucasian descent – finished writing his thoughts in a report, and then introduced all the results of the analyzes into his working journal when he covered the corpse of the victim with a sheet.

Opening the window, which was ordered to do the instructions every two hours, began to ventilate the room so that there was no smell of formalin. To the opinion of the examination they listened and often, thanks to his efforts, found evidence for revealing the criminals who were recidivists. Demonstrate knowledge of physics, quality and properties of chemical

elements he had every day, using spectral analysis.

Lieutenant-colonel Seregin in the same form was already sitting beside him on a metal swivel chair; waiting for the expert to give him an oral report of what he had revealed using the latest advances in biochemistry.

A minute ago, he went down to the basement to see a witty specialist in pathological anatomy – Granatov – did not look for an investigator throughout the police corps. All the supervised people were under the supervision of the riot police on duty, so do not worry that the situation will soon get out of control.

“Here you go... Is there something interesting?”

The policeman investigated many cases, but each time he began to investigate, as if this was the first thing in his stormy military biography.

“All is clearer than clear. Without a doubt, that the murdered old man had excellent health. However, a person managed to deal with it quickly, to whom he could trust, as to himself,” the expert suggested, looking through his entries in Latin in the magazine.

“He lived in a room with his twin brother. But that somewhere disappeared from our field of vision. Perhaps he was threatened, an attempt was made on him or he hid himself from fear in order to avoid such a reckoning. He could be taken hostage. But that’s my personal opinion. There are many options. This is what we need to find out urgently. Something else specific was discovered?” the inquirer asked simply so that to find out the expert’s opinion.

“I can add that no stab wounds were found on the body. Definitely killed led an active lifestyle. He watched himself. He could live up to a hundred years, if not for the casual connections and circumstances that led him to mortem,” concluded the expert. “I have already written everything and indicated the time of death. No signs of alcohol in the blood found. You can pick up the bone off,” the expert constantly inserted into his speech English expressions, in order to more clearly prove his scientific knowledge in medicine, as he considered the Latin language to be the lot of pharmacists and weak knowledge of criminalistics.

He was often visited for advice from abroad by his colleagues, medical doctors, when they were intensively searching for evidence of guilt, with whom he practiced on the autopsy of corpses.

“Traces of struggle, bruises or extravasations were on the victim?”

“There is plenty of this kind. One might think that the old man fought with the last of his strength with a devilish nature,” replied the expert in anatomy with a strong southern accent.

“What the hell is that? Is this how it should be understood? Retribution of heaven,” the investigator announced, having collected the will into a fist.

“Nature is omnipresent. It can manifest itself in various forms and matters... Our business is to observe and draw conclusions. Well, you can find a criminal, based on the biography of the victim. Try to look into his past. Often it keeps a guess on all the

questions...” advised the expert.

“No one will allow us to do the exhumation of his parents,” the investigator joked to defuse the situation.

He was used to the profound arguments of the expert, but he decided to find a solution in the personal matter of the murdered man to let his colleague – detective Regimov know that he had been justified for the incident on his watch, or their common acquaintance, the private police officer – Alice Korablevskaya, whom they charged the most complex and intricate ones business. The competition between them flashed constantly, as an incentive, to get another promotion through the ranks. They were completely different in character and style of work. Seregin acted recklessly, and Regimov crept like a fox, sweeping his tracks, digging in the most incomprehensible egregious criminals, studying all the pros and cons of the characters.

“Yes, I’m not talking about this at all. He was not an artifact and not an idol, but a real person with good physical training,” angered an expert who, when nervous, began to practice in foreign languages.

“We are not looking for the Grail, but for a real individual. Guilty in this matter will have to search with a magnet. It is necessary to apply the deductive method of Sherlock Holmes, hire an experienced stylist, make-up and get used to the sanatorium staff. I’m afraid that the answer lies precisely there,” the investigator retorted.

“Your right,” Granatov noted delicately, taking off his rubber gloves, which had a gold ring of the highest standard with a large diamond that he had bought for dollars during the exhibition of the stones of the deposit in Yakutsk, where the International Conference of Forensic Experts was held, on the ring finger of his right hand.

“Well, now is not the time to argue. Thank you.”

Granatov went deep into reading his notes and entering information into the notebook brought from home.

Seregin dialed his colleague’s phone number:

“It is necessary to get acquainted with the case. There is something to think about, to find something for the investigation.”

The investigator took from the table a sheet of paper in the A-4 format with a post mortem stamped diagnosis and went to his office, which he shared with detective Regimov.

At the same time, Nikifor Naumovich was sitting at the table, writing down the variants of the figures that he used to open the code lock of the suitcase. But the lock did not succumb. Now he was waiting for his colleague, Seregin, who could advise him or help him. Suddenly he phoned the morgue on the local telephone and called the forensic expert at the attendant paramedical orderly sitting at the entrance.

“The medical examiner listens,” Granatov said irritably, as he did not like bureaucratic delays. “I just gave the document to Seregin. He is already on his way...”

“I’m there,” Nikifor Naumovich confirmed. “Can you join us to discuss our versions?” asked an operational policeman from a competent specialist.

“Request an excerpt from the patient’s medical history so that all documents can be sent to the police at the place of residence of the victim. So it will be easier for all of us to find the main suspected person. I’ll be right in a few minutes.”

“The sooner, the better,” added the brutal Regimov, rubbed tensely his forehead with his left hand and hung up.

“Maybe it’s revenge. Do I need to find a new victim of violence in the archive of former prisoners?” the question suddenly arose in the brain of the meticulous minded investigator.

“Atypical murder... A person could be seen respected in a certain environment, lived a difficult life, surrounded himself with the care and attention of doctors. Someone, obviously, had to prove that his existence was harmful to society or the destruction of old accounts... But it’s easy to smear the gate with tar. Maybe the reason is the sharing of inheritance, apartment, and car, any real estate, including a country house, a private company or a large sum of money, brought in a suitcase. Let’s take the working version: robbery for the purpose of profit.”

Nikifor Naumovich slowly removed all the papers from his desk into a cardboard folder. He put the suitcase on top of the fresh local newspaper spread out, bought on the way to the service at the kiosk with advertisements and fresh press. He

would like to close for a month, while there was an investigation, the release of all publications, so as not to panic among tourists.

The investigator always bought one copy of the “Resort”, which printed invitations to work, renting habitation and all rubbish. When Seregin appeared on the threshold with an important document, Nikifor Naumovich in his presence again tried to try different combinations of figures and write down the used variants on the sheet. Finally, in fifteen minutes, he easily opened an intricate lock with a cipher, using the same digital set used by the Soshin in hotel when he locked his property from prying eyes.

Nothing complicated to find the appropriate code, Nikifor Naumovich did not seem, since repeatedly he had to turn to conjurers and fakirs, when he was investigating a case in the circus, where several dozen people were robbed by a visiting burglar. The policeman was familiar with the technique of fooling citizens with thieves, thimble rigger, fortune-tellers, hackers, marriage swindlers – all those who made money from the air. He knew the places where they lived, and the devices they used.

“How was the interrogation of the maid suspected in the murder?” asked Nikifor Naumovich, laying out of the suitcase, on a standing chair, clothes of the victim, mixing Seregin’s cards to spend a day in the cool near the waterfall and to enjoy the mountain air.

“Topilko filled out the questionnaire, she left us passport data,

but she did not say anything concrete. Although accidentally found out that she, oddly enough, from the same city as the dead old man. They arrived on the same day, the same train. According to her, she at first thought that he was just drunk, and someone pushed him into the pantry to sleep. There is no evidence of her guilt. I dismissed the unfortunate woman with a written undertaking not to leave the place, but asked to inform all employees of the sanatorium, to appear with us to give testimony and fingerprints.

“I think she is beyond suspicion, looking at her growth and frail external data. The case is rather confusing. It is necessary to make an inventory of the objects in the suitcase. I’ll get things one by one, and you make a list, and then, as always, put the list of things in the computer in the appropriate quantity and quality columns.”

“In the same form for all the exhibits in our storage room,” the police officer said.

“I hope you have enough patience?” Nikifor Naumovich asked, opening the plastic box for Rolex watches, but not finding what he was looking for.

“What are the problems?” Seregin, concerned with the inventory, glanced fleetingly at the manipulation of his colleague.

“Look, there are no clocks in the box.”

Nikifor Naumovich turned the velvet side toward Seregin’s desk, already writing in the computer on a new page of archival

files.

“There is not much personal property here,” Regimov hastened to stand up for the male half of humanity.

“Let’s not argue, all right,” Seregin responded enthusiastically, considering what the next would be presented to him by the meticulous investigator for particularly important cases of the department for combating organized crime and corruption in the economy.

“The killer did everything to confuse the investigation. There is no evidence. It seems that an invisible force has entered the deadly battle, as Granatov suggested, which you already managed to report to him,” Nikifor Naumovich said pathetically, sighing heavily, realizing all the responsibility, the tasks assigned to them, and taking the necessary preemptive measures. He did not want to understand the strange, old, shabby clothes, but it could not be ignored, so he diligently examined all options for completing the investigation. On the chair began to appear shabby shirts, jeans, trousers, change of linen, socks, a pair of summer shoes, an electric shaver, a set for washing.

“Pay attention,” Regimov said, turning to face Seregin, who was sitting in civilian clothes by the open window, from where the fresh gusts of the summer breeze came.

“The contents of the wallet, the newly arrived guest who has just arrived to the sanatorium, do not... Do you think how much money could there be?”

Seregin, tearing himself away from the screen of the monitor,

saw in the hands of a colleague a folded light brown leather wallet with a dark brown cord, woven into the edge.

“Usually they take some money to buy souvenirs and excursions to memorable places... Sometimes they find a stash hidden from their wife, in the amount of a pension for a month or holidays with a bonus for visiting museums or pubs. Is there something else?”

“Although, here there are two credit cards with different ciphers. It is necessary to check in Savings bank, what deposits there? This I will take care of myself and then write off to you in your Talmud. Have we agreed?”

“As you have said.”

Seregin followed with attention the actions of lieutenant-colonel Regimov, who was examining the personal belongings of the victim. Suddenly, at the very bottom in his side pocket, the lieutenant colonel groped for a paper bundle. He unfolded a yellow, wrapping, rustling paper and saw a black cardboard box from under the expensive iPhone. Easily opened and discovered there the usual glass mercury thermometers in the amount of ten pieces. He was very surprised by the strange find and showed Seregin in perplexity.

“The heaters are intact, without chips. Mercury is a liquid metal that can cause severe illnesses if you inhale its vapors. But here everything is in order. And what if this story takes its toll in a sabotage or subversive organization whose activities were associated with the murdered?” asked Regimov, who graduated

in addition to the law faculty of the university, a school of scouts, hoping that the doctors of the sanatorium come in handy a dangerous find.

“Speculation of medical equipment is not in vogue now. Although everything can be...”

The policeman neatly laid out the thermometers separately on the table.

“We can not yet affirm this. As far as I know, mercury can have toxic effects on the nervous, digestive and immune systems, as well as on the lungs, kidneys, skin and eyes,” Seregin agreed, looking at a medical instrument for measuring temperature.

“It seems that the old man was going to cure us of a cold or take up medical practice in a sanatorium,” Nikifor Naumovich grinned.

“Perhaps it was eliminated by WHO representatives who view mercury as one of the ten major chemical agents or groups of chemicals that pose a significant threat to public health,” Regimov contributed to the study of the heavy metal, finishing the examination of the suitcase and packing things back.

“Here’s the list is ready,” Seregin showed in the computer that he noted how much he liked the wardrobe of the victim, or rather, pointed out every little thing.

“Granatov will be right now. You have to ask him about the properties of mercury. While he is not there, we can not say anything concrete,” Nikifor Naumovich sincerely suggested, rubbing his hands, installing a closed suitcase on the floor,

leaving a box of thermometers on the table open.

A swiftly talented and prudent expert appeared in the police officers' room in his whip-white dressing-gown buttoned up, and on his feet shining Italian shoes, custom-made in the leather goods firm Sergio Rossi.

Granatov has always been very scrupulous in choosing accessories. The genealogical tree of the expert went back to the Tatar dynasty, which moved to the Caucasus. Methods of his diagnosis were liked by all police officers of the State Security Committee, as he never made a mistake in ascertaining the posthumous diagnosis of victims of crimes. He had a good reputation as a connoisseur of medicine. With a Ph. D. thesis, he continued to work in the police. Everyone in his family was a doctor, including his elder brother, a doctor of science, educated in the United States and involved in projects of global importance. He headed a clinic in Miami, Florida, where often visited the younger sibling from this eminent family with numerous medals for inventing implants for hip joints in operations on the femoral neck in elderly women.

All the elite of the show business of this state visited their sponsor when he arranged picnics in his luxurious country villa located on the Atlantic coast. Often the whole company they flew with a return visit to New Orleans, where meetings and parties were held by his friends near the pool with warm water or on the beaches of the Gulf of Mexico. Many popular and Oscar-winning filmmakers and movie actors such as Brad Pitt,

Angelina Jolly with her offspring, Dustin Hoffman, Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Leonardo DiCaprio, Keith Winslet, James Cameron, were present as guests, enthralled by political tycoons, collecting millions of dollars in donations for talented writers, architects and artists from Russia, Germany, Italy, France and Poland.

“I’m away for a minute. What questions for me?” asked Granatov. “I’ve been too busy yesterday but today am just the same have a lot of things to do,” he joked, flaunting his perfect knowledge of the English language, which he acquired, visiting the United States on vacation, studying and working in international youth camps as a paramedic. He usually, ignoring the rules of the police, appeared at work an hour earlier, in order to better prepare for the routine of the working day, and in the remaining assignments was punctual and fulfilling.

“What can you say about such a find in the suitcase of the victim?” Regimov asked the forensic expert, pointing to the thermometers, and Seregin said nothing in a sign of mutual approval of the words of his colleague and comrade-in-arms.

“Mercury in the Middle Ages was treated with a turn of the intestines and syphilis, but later recognized that such methods did not bring the required fruits.”

Granatov, proud of his scientific knowledge and precise statements, waved his head back and smoothed his gray hair with his hand.

“I can say that this is a chemical element of the

Mendeleev system with atomic number 80, which belongs to the zinc subgroup. In general, mercury is extracted from rocks in Transcaucasia, in the Urals from cinnabar. They are used to produce ingots of gold by washing slags. It is a polluter of the environment. Especially dangerous are discharges into the water, and the vapors are extremely poisonous,” Granatov was inspired and quickly rapped out his information, just pulled from the Internet, sitting down on the edge of the chair.

“You invited me for this? What’s the matter?” he asked to make his presence official.

“And for that, too. We need your name here on this document: transfer of thermometers and a list of personal belongings of the victim,” said Seregin, pushing to the expert the sheet A-4 just printed on the office equipment – escorting the suitcase with the contents to the warehouse.

Granatov, who had time to prove his competence, took out the imported handle of the firm “Parker”, scrawled underneath the list of Soshin’s things illegible signature.

“Call when you need to,” said the Granatov, and retired from the room to his basement room for further examination of the corpse of the victim, leaving the policemen to stay in good health and excellent spirits.

“Now we can turn the page in the investigation and move on to more pressing problems,” Seregin laughed, when he also clearly put his initials on the inventory.

“What do you suggest?” asked Regimov and smiled cunningly,

because he knew what was going on.

“The fox will unravel the matter overnight. Do you remember how she famously put in place all the main suspects in the case of the theft of the exhibits from the Louvre, which, perhaps, the whole French police dreamed of?”

Seregin remembered that Interpol refused to conduct an investigation, he had to throw the hanging – undisclosed case – on a private agency headed by an experienced woman who managed to put all the points on “i”.

“That’s for sure. Energies at her though more than ever and you can take away. A real energizer. She likes to dig in history. Here dwarfs and Lilliputians do not even dream of me now. Quickly she exposed them. After all, in fact, there were no dwarfs... And there were only renegades, terrorists, drug addicts, defectors to the enemy camp and robbers, whom we did not allow to go,” Regimov said, stressing his merits and education.

“This is a thing of the past. Our vacation is developing badly. They wanted to combine business with pleasure...” Seregin’s words affected his colleague like a detonator.

“It is necessary to correct the oversight, as if everything should soon settle down in the presence of material evidence and the absence of a normal alibi for the suspects.”

The police never hid from their wards, which they often had to detain together during the search. Once, in crowded dances in the very center of the city, they jointly defused an explosive device that could work, take more than a dozen lives, destroy

a historical Empire-style building when they were called by their super-agent, Alice, who worked under the code, introduced into the most unstable segments of the population.

The detective managed to uncover the plot and the terrorist act. At that time, the Lilliputians, playing the role of underage children, were instructed to hide the bomb. But the super-agent and private police officer Alice, watching them, climbed onto a metal fence surrounding the site adjacent to the park, where a paid dance evening was to take place. She managed to track down, call where to go, call a riot police unit, led by the department for combating organized crime. Terrorists in the face of eight people were detained and placed in places of imprisonment for a long time. Thanks to joint, synchronized actions of the police and their assistant, the bomb, packed with explosives, did not explode.

### **3. The exploits of Hercules**

The Department for Combating Organized Crime, which included Seregin and Regimov periodically, turned to a private detective agency, headed by an experienced detective – Korablevskaya Alice, who received the title of lawyer after graduating from the Academy of Law and defended her thesis there. She had an attractive appearance, preferred sports clothes: jeans, sneakers, she could drive her Volkswagen Touareg perfectly, fired a Kalashnikov assault rifle, always carried a Makarov pistol, bugs, knew several foreign languages, had rank Master of Sports mountaineering and biathlon, has uncovered not one criminal offense.

The private detective agency expanded its activities, traveling to one country and then to another to conduct search operations and eliminate criminal centers. For example, in Iraq, several operations were carried out to dismantle warehouses with weapons. Using the services of homeless people and informants, Alice received significant bonuses for a comfortable life. In this way policemen and investigators attracted their colleagues to investigate criminal offenses in order to rid themselves of bothersome troubles, but to deal with their immediate affairs: protecting citizens from outside interference and robbery.

“We need to call the police of the city of Tarasov, where Soshin came from, strangled in a pantry, to report what

happened. At the same time call a private investigator – Alice. She will find us even a needle in a haystack for two hundred dollars an hour,” remarked Seregin, since he was already tired of this red tape with many unknown people.

He preferred to sit by the TV with a jar of beer, or watch football between *Manchester United* and *Real Madrid*, or the NHL, but did not renounce *NBA G League*, preferring *Raptors'* matches with the *Rio Grande Valley Vipers*.

“By the way, let her search the dossier for this old man in the local archive. I do not remember. It seems that this name was found in the criminal chronicle. If we find out that he was guilty of some kind of criminal offense, it will be easy to calculate the attacker, starting from the victim or her relatives. People are able to remember the evildoers through generations. Even in fairy tales, there are positive and negative heroes: Duremar, Koschey the Immortal, the devil, the Count Dracula, Baba Yaga, for example,” Nikifor Naumovich ventured into reasoning, dreaming of closing the oncoming hanging.

“We did not have enough foxes. I remember well that Alice agreed to respond to this nickname, despite the fact that she has dozens of terrible, in its criminal nature, investigations after the end of our university and graduate school,” Seregin suddenly recalled, who sometimes treated Alice as a detective sometimes hostile, but more often with respect and love.

He had a fruitful long-standing romance with her, which culminated in legal marriage and mutual reconciliation in the

dispute over the right of Russian citizens to private ownership on the Cote d'Azur. There they spent the summer together on vacation to enjoy active rest among the most respectable part of the population, and in winter – to the Swiss Alps, to train in mountain skiing.

“Probably not in vain she received diploma with honors. She opened the office under the name: ‘Private investigation’, ” the investigator stated with pride and some inner relief, remembering all that he was to do today and how much paperwork was taking away every new and intricate criminal offense.

Nikifor Naumovich earned many special awards for detaining dangerous criminals and recidivists. He was a man of business, intelligent, delicate to the extreme, prudent, but not a coward. He was engaged in periodically professional boxing, winning in several rounds without defeatist blows. He could predict the outcome of each complex investigation and considered it was his duty to warn the employees in advance about any planned operation to eliminate brothels, gambling houses, suspicious gatherings of homeless people, drug addicts. He never missed a dash. He liked to joke about his virtues, read many classics of Russian literature. Particular preference was given to Tvardovsky's poetry, Dostoevsky's prose, but more often he had to read criminal cases risen from the archive. He wore a strict suit out of work as an old habit, and preferred to put on his new uniform for work. His extraordinary thinking and logic puzzled the wolves of criminal business. Journalists and

photo correspondents often held a press conference with him, but he evaded frank confessions, knowing what such confessions threaten the investigation. In a word, he could be called a titan who supported the code of law.

“We all depend on each other, so we’ll have to endure the terrible nature of Alice. The case requires it,” the investigator reflected on the difficulties of mutual understanding, coughed into a fist.

“They want to get results immediately, so that they do not panic from corruption and rampant banditry. Now we are not in the mood for laughter, when all policemen and soldiers who came to rest in a sanatorium calmly take electroplating procedures. Seregin and I have to spin. It is necessary to establish a lie detector for interrogation of suspicious witnesses. It seems I hid it in the safe, after the last time I checked on the polygraph, how many people participated in a fight near a hotel near Rome. Alas, such a primitive technique, and the results are phenomenal,” he was burned by his cynical idea.

The local phone rang. They asked permission from the electricians to go to their office and replace the table lamps. There were also a couple of calls from the administrator of the sanatorium – Kormushenko, who wanted to be present at the time when the suspects were arrested for the perpetrators of the death of an elderly man; in addition, Regimov’s wife called, she was worried about whether her husband had dined. He, as the Commissioner Megre, the protagonist of the series

of popular novels of Georges Simenon, who had worked for many years in the police, essentially, according to many bloggers, “differed from his colleagues in an unconventional approach to investigating crimes”, followed a strict daily routine. He wore a gray coat of jersey fabric in winter, a warm scarf in speckles and a hat, as his colleague, Seregin, drove to work, which generally preferred wearing only fur jackets without a hat.

“It was only as a detective to spread out the cards, how the prose of life turned into poetry,” highly erudite Seregin retorted allegorically, hiding the mercury thermometers found in the suitcase of victim, into his desk standing at the left side of the window, and opposite it there was the same desk of his colleague.

“In hot pursuit, she will immediately provide us with all the suspects and proof of the guilt of some of them. What do you say to that?”

“You can have no doubt about her abilities,” Seregin answered with knowledge of Alice’s extreme methods of work.

“Here you have to meet her, so she immediately understands what is required of her,” said Nikifor Naumovich, examining a new lamp with a fluorescent light installed on his desk. “She, I think, will bring the right relative of the victim to bury the body. That would be very useful...”

“Of course. She can not cope with us, and the investigation will be flawlessly if there are necessary clues and material evidence that will fall on our table along with evidence of the murderer’s guilt,” Seregin suggested, proportioning each next

step, sympathizing with those who would be in Alice's field of vision.

"She does not take any strings and courage," Nikifor Naumovich agreed, who planned to monitor the investigation of the private detective.

After a little reflection, the investigator, who is well versed in current affairs, telephoned the head doctor in the health resort "Glory to Sport" with healing springs to make an excerpt from Soshin's medical history and immediately sent to them. The handset was taken by Mitrofanov himself, who received a charge of energy after a morning walk in the fresh air in the shade of southern relic plants and a cup of coffee. He wiped sweat from his face with a moist, fragrant napkin and threw it into the urn.

"I'm listening."

"You are disturbed from the city police station. Now we have the body of your former patient. Send us his medical card. We will send to his former residence. I hope he did not have any chronic illnesses?" asked the operative policeman, trying to soften the tragic news.

"He died without regaining consciousness?" Mitrofanov's voice faltered, so he sat down in a chair behind a massive, black, carved, writing desk and took his head.

"While the criminalists are trying to find out the cause of death," Regimov replied calmly, feeling all responsibility for every word, bringing all of their actions closer to revealing the criminal offense.

"I'll do it myself now," Mitrofanov became nervous, accustomed to discipline and positive emotions from his patients.

He hung his handset in a daze, found a card with the proper name, and entered the information into the computer. Then he folded two gray sheets, glued an ordinary envelope, wrote clearly the address of the police, who was under his glass. He put a medical card with prescribed procedures Soshin, called the nurse on duty, and instructively ordered, looking around at her slender figure:

"Go to the post office. It is necessary to send this envelope. You will report."

The girl respectfully took an urgent dispatch and in half an hour returned, looking into Mitrofanov's office without knocking.

"I sent it with a notification. Here's the receipt," she said uneasily, submitting a receipt with a seal.

"It is done. They will now bother us with this letter. I'll go to them tomorrow. They say that the new maid has already visited the police. And now I have no time. It is necessary to all, probably, there to appear, to prove the alibi. Let them watch our vacationers better. They themselves can find everything very quickly if they use video cameras.

Mitrofanov was proud of his responsible personnel and could not afford a single gram that the slightest shade of suspicion fell on the well-functioning medical staff of the sanatorium.

"Do I have to show up to them, too?" she asked, soberly

assessing the situation, since she had been prescribed treatment procedures for vacationers who would have to cancel.

“Good. We’ll go to the police together with our old employees on my jeep. I order this separately.”

“Peter Solomonovich, athletes need radon baths and massage.”

“We have the masseurs. I’ll call my friends – the administrator – Vladimir Kormushenko and the animator – Sasha Mahmudov. They have taken courses and will continue to massage in a sanatorium near the pool.”

The nurse, having received instructions, left, reflecting on the essence of being and the complex professional relationship between the chief physician and his subordinates. With care, Mitrofanov took out of the closet the personal files of the recently admitted employees, except those who were supervised by the administrator – Chetvertov Ira: waitresses, cooks, maids, gardener and security guards. He trusted Kormushenko completely, as he studied with his father in high school, was familiar with his family. The guy was respected for his sporting achievements. He received, like Hercules, for his exploits and achievements in circus arenas, twelve awards and cups that stood under the glass in the foyer of the sanatorium, proving his prestige in the sphere of tourism and sports at the world level.

Once during the service as a contractor in the fire department Kormushenko was on duty as an uniformist and trainee in the circus-cape Kazbek. When there was a performance with

wild animals, there was a fire. Someone threw a cigarette butt to the floor and the whole tent caught fire. The people themselves were taken to the air by artists: voltigeur gymnasts, equilibrists, jugglers, clowns, musical eccentrics, a magician and Shprehshtalmeister – an inspector of an arena leading a circus show.

The tamer of wild beasts ordered Kormushenko, who was standing at the entrance, to help him escort the lion from the cage to the approaching wagon. But the lion resisted and did not want to obey. Then they had to shoot a gun with a sleeping pill and wait for the animal to fall asleep, and afterwards, together with the tamer, he loaded a carcass weighing half a ton into the carriage and pushed a lion into the barred car. Anaconda was carried over the shoulders by Kormushenko. More precisely, Hercules strangled the “Nemean” lion and killed the “Lernaean” hydra, in this particular case everything happened the other way around. But, like the true hero of greek myths, he caught alive the so-called “Eriimantsk” wild boar, devastating supplies of fruit for the whole troupe, and the “Kerinean” doe standing side by side. They hardly breathed from the caustic, gray, all-pervasive smoke. He caught them himself, huddled in the cupboard, between the counters.

In the turmoil of randomly forgotten “Stymphalian” birds, as mentioned in the legend, Vladimir did not kill eagles with strong claws, beaks, variegated feathers and pedigreed trained pigeons. He headed all the artists of the circus team, handing them the

poles to kick the birds in the hung up wet cradles. Pigeons amicably, cooing, noisily sat on sticks, which the strongman had to endure, and the eagle, clutching his head, showed a wide scope of flight. Expensive shiny suits, hidden in suitcases and hung in the dressing room, and so could not be saved from dampness. They all got soaked and dirty, losing an external shiny appearance.

However, he obtained not one belt of the queen of the amazons of Ippolita, made by special order, but as many as ten. With such an exclusive miracle, his friend Alexandra, the daughter of the director himself – Jew – Isaac Petrovich Moiseyev – acted as a fairy. The guy himself took out wet suitcases, boxes with props and toilets in the adjoining park. Then the impudent uniformist, noticing that the fire began to make its way to the arena and stables, covered the flame with the plume of a suit flying under the dome, pop stars, and two-times world champion.

The fire ceased to spread around the perimeter of the arena. He drove out three white, two brown and two black Orlov tribal trotters into the circus enclosure, where rehearsals of performances took place. The tamer – Diomed Dionisovich Phillipov was so touched that he promised Kormushenko to give a small stallion when one of the mares would calve. Employee Eugene began to panic, losing his composure; he poured fresh manure, prepared for export, to bring down the flame in the zoo. Kormushenko, covering his nose with a rag, got under the

arm, grabbed all the remains of the turf in a big pile, dumped everything into sacks. It turned out six potato fertilizer stocks for the next year.

Being in a special cage, a bull brought from Greece, from the island of Crete, he poured water with foam from the fire-pump. Everything went without sacrifice. The new Hercules put a fire barrier in the form of sandbags in the entrance and emergency doors, from where the audience came. High “Hercules pillars” were obtained to the very top of the auditorium, where Gibraltar, Seoul, geographical points and cities that honored artists with applause and flowers were indicated on a huge colorful billboard.

The director of the circus in gratitude awarded the active firefighter-uniformist with several medals and a high cup, inviting him to participate in the next performance in a month as a strong man.

With the director, they came up with a risky trick: a sword battle with two dangerous opponents. As a reward, Atlant, in the role of which his bosom escort friend in the fire department acted – Seregin, handed him the same gold and silver prizes in the form of “Hesperides apples”, which flaunted in the foyer of the sanatorium. The number was called: “Fight of Hercules with Antey and Hades”. For this, Kormushenko-Hercules was to decree for him for a day at the entrance to the sanatorium.

The battle caused an unrestrained delight in the auditorium. Seregin was the judge. He hid behind the back of one enemy, then another, when they half-naked fought with polished to shine

honed swords. Beforehand they smeared with lavender oil, exuding an amazing aroma, brandished with cold weapons as in the Coliseum. To which women reacted with enthusiasm, and the men, having diligently spread out their chairs, tore into the battle, encouraging opponents not to fall, to keep their balance at the sight of blood. Kormushenko, defending himself after a long attack by Hades – Regimov, who specifically volunteered to participate in the performance to earn a trip home, wounded a policeman. He did not fall, scattering blood clots on the slippery floor, but rushed to the doctor, standing at the sliding edge, with frenzy, that he bandaged the wound. After a moment's pause, the battle continued. They changed the lighting, occasionally sounded a drumbeat to give the mystery to the view. From the crowd teenagers began to jump in the arena with similar swords, found in attics or bought for a lot of money in the bazaar from visiting Italians trading from under the floor. No one dared to distract and separate them. They interfered, preventing opponents from converging in an unequal battle.

Finally, the judge's whistle announced the end of the battle, but the angry public did not want to disperse. They demanded the continuation of the battle, hooting and whistling into horns and pipes, taken with them, to turn the show into an ordinary bravado. Then the real show began, creating the impression of a natural actuality. Someone noticed, frightened, lying on the curb block, obstructing the entrance to the arena, unconscious, the guy. It turned out that he portrayed that he had lost consciousness

from a blow inflicted on his side by an unknown rival. When he stepped over the curb, clinging his foot, fell straight onto the ramp in an unconventional position. Getting up and coming to his senses, the guy began scratching his own sides, causing even more laughter of the fans dressed up and down. They ran up apparently-invisibly. The girls did not like to stay at home on such a crucial day when the question of sending conscripts to the army was being decided. They threw off their fashionable jeans and tunics, found them in a bikini, gracefully danced with their girlfriends in columns with bouquets in their hands, depicting a street performance. No applause and friendly cries of "Hurray!" were ignored by the ardent hunters of martial arts.

They pushed the guys to the background. Using his charm and air kisses, jumping, tumbling on the floor, covered with red velvet, swinging on ropes, as strong and well trained athlete, demonstrating the splendor, charm and glamour. Holding hands, they sang to the music famous melodies in plumes and chanted popular screams. Citizens themselves, who came quietly to see the show, unfolded from the bewitching spectacle. They admired the new models with flags and banners, rented, calling for the unification of the sexes in one category of the upper class. Can not imagine themselves without a holiday, beauty, fetish extravaganza initiated fireworks, fight clowns in colorful costumes and masks, bravura sounds orchestral pipe and cultural program with the singers and the corps de ballet, hunting bullfighters involved in the representation on the galloping light

horses, fighting with light bulls and wild animals. Guests joyfully admired the artistic combination of circus art, plastic, the world of magic and the perfection of tricks.

Spectators standing applauded the dances of gymnasts on balls. There was no limit to the surprise, when all the actors of the mimans began to shower with serpentine, shining hearts, prepared for such a case, with champagne spray. The most courageous and desperate participants of the circus “Du Soleil” were awarded prizes and cups, as at the Olympics. They were put in cars accompanied by fans with flowers and transported to five-star hotels. Cars, whistling away, were enthralling those wishing to take a walk in the fresh air.

Such color and smoothness caused a positive response in the press. But there were specific laudatory articles. Where journalists praised the days of chivalry, when concubines were taken away, seated on the throne, crowned, and then ranked as a saint, praising the inconceivable feats performed by them. Like a national heroine of France – nineteen of age Jeanne d’Arc, burned in bonfire at the stake in Rouen in 1431, turned into ashes by the wind around the world.

To terminate the contract for next season with the management of the circus in the person of Moiseyev, animal lover, Kormushenko stumbled upon walking unattended St. Bernard puppy. He called the dog Kerber. He tied a leash around his neck and presented it to Isaac Petrovich, having repaid his help in the work done in the circus arena. It turned out that the

animal was brought from Canada. Overheating in the sun, the puppy broke the rope and ran away at night. The owners were fined by Regimov, whose care for citizens was carried out daily. After that, they met closely with Kormushenko, when the court took place and the protocol of the court session was signed.

After serving in the company athlete circus, they have patrolled the cities of the Black Sea coast, the Stavropol Territory, Black Earth, Far East Kormushenko who has made a lot of amazing feats, had quarreled with his flighty girlfriend – actress of mimans that caused the approval of all holidaymakers prudish men visiting snobs, her classic figure, singing and pleasant manners.

However, for no reason, the girl turned into a real “meager”, ignoring the feelings of Kormushenko, she escaped from the circus with a foreign visitor to Turkey. Vladimir returned to Kislovodsk, settled the administrator in a sanatorium with healing springs, met with deputy director – Ira Chetvergova, who managed to win the heart of a good-natured strongman.

## 4. Private detective

Worried about the latest events in the resort, Seregin called by mobile phone the most influential private detective in their circles – Alice Korablevskaya, whose doggy nose and knowledge of the Criminal Code helped survive the crisis. A snub nose and a gay look disarmed ignorant men.

“Do not you miss your friends in Kislovodsk?” the inquisitor asked sternly.

“I miss you. How did you get into such high-mountain massifs?” for a long time the woman-detective wanted to escape from routine everyday life.

“We decided to raise our ideological and political level on vacation.”

Charming Alice, with an iPhone in her hand, beaming with triumph and fragrant aroma of roses, emerged from the empty apartment of her friend who had left for another city. Here she settled the important witnesses needed by the investigation to guard against the attacks of suspects.

“Is there something for me luxury class? For less,” she made a meaningful pause, “I do not agree.”

“We need to study the materials of the closed case. We have no suspicions. However, many witnesses are without evidence.”

“Do you know my tariff?” the detective-woman asked, wishing to make sure of the price political situation of the police

department.

“We can increase the rate when you reveal all your secrets to us. Our address: health resort ‘Glory to Sport’.”

“I have no secrets from anyone. But agree with the terms. You can see your combination of rest and work influenced the mercantile interests of the rich public.”

“Take off today. But first, go to the police. In the archive, look for materials on possibly our former supervised – Soshin. Use your authority and pass the employee of the prosecutor’s office. I sent the ticket. You do not have to worry about journey, class and flight schedule. Agree?”

“Excellent, no questions asked.”

Alice saw in the iPhone a flight ticket and insurance policy sent to her, in case of unforeseen circumstances, paying a maximum of three hundred and fifty thousand rubles to relatives who had lost a breadwinner or a victim, in order to provide reasonable treatment for the injuries.

“I hope I can pay the return flight for the prize I’m counting on?” she asked, wondering why there is no return ticket with insurance.

“You’ve already booked a return ticket. We will give back the document immediately on the spot. Consider that it’s in your pocket,” the policeman promised, realizing that investing in a good business would pay off a hundredfold.

“We agreed,” she pushed the door, heading for her car with the easy walk of a society lioness.

“When they need something, they try to get out of their skin, but achieve their individual plan for my existence. Only I remembered our vacation with Seregin on the sea coast. At once there was a call with a report and an offer to take part in an urgent special project. It is necessary to throw in there your super-agent of the graduate student – Oleg Tkachik. Where did this rogue go?” with such thoughts she jumped into the hatchback, intending to find her informant from under the ground or in the nearest space where he lived constantly, on duty in the courtyards of sleeping districts, when, where it would be “fateful destiny”.

The detective-woman moved, wagging at the corners and narrow turns of the streets, examining counter objects.

“It seems I was going to get a job as a lawyer in one of the offices on the islands in Indonesia or Polynesia. Is someone out there working for our former colleagues? But I did not have enough. I’ll have to postpone my intentions. It’s better to have a bird in your hand than a crane in the sky,” argued the private detective, listening to her inner impulses, heading for the building of the main police department, where the archive was located in the basement, where lieutenant-colonel Seregin suggested that she drop by to search for a private matter with the name of the murdered old man.

On the way, she managed to visit the hairdresser, find out all the latest gossip and bring herself to the proper look. She came out of the Beauty salon with a wide range of services for rejuvenation, face and body care, hair removal, SPA procedures

where she had an appointment, not with a braid over her shoulder, like a girl in a professional dance ensemble “Birch” and not with black mane naughty-Carmen, and with a beautiful haircut “coquette”.

Charming Alice braked in front of a traffic police officer who was talking to his colleague next to the required building, in the heart of the city, near the pompous waterfront with a new hotel complex. The detective has typed on the mobile number of her super-agent under the code: Tkachik. But the owner of the new, one-time cell phone was silent. Then she wrote him a short message:

“I’m waiting for you in the old place. A fox”.

“Genealogy and genetics will not forgive me if the graduate student is in a difficult situation. It will become the pride of any institute for the development of the brain with glued receptors, axons and nervous zones of influence on the motor organism and support apparatus. A family of five will force him to choose what to do at such a difficult time when my summer plans flew into tartars – going nowhere, to the gulf of hell,” the experienced detective inspired herself, hoping that this paradoxical type would emerge from the boundless cosmos.

“Well, let him rest on his laurels. Apparently, he does not care about the fate of my wallet,” the girl reasoned to herself with sarcasm on the verge of skepticism and irony, burying herself in the iPhone. She received a sudden response from a man in a sport suit leaning on the open window of the car:

“I’m here, a beautiful one.”

“I see. Listen to my instructions for a responsible job,” she immediately went to a business, checking it for moderation and patience.

The graduate student smiled knowingly.

“The lazy is always a prude and a hypocrite,” he quoted the famous akyn Kunanbayev, moving away from the window, but turning to the passing employees of the departmental institution. “So consider the great teachers and philosophers.”

“Hi. I see that your track in the history of criminalistics will not do without my participation, so I hasten to help,” she said skeptically, noticing his tired face and rumpled appearance.

“I can add more, Voltaire said: “Work (job) eliminates boredom, vice and poverty.”

“Glad to see you. Well prepared for the meeting with me,” she was distracted, smoothing her tactlessness towards her employee. “How are the scientific personnel in your area?”

“Some of them want to get the degrees of masters of all natural sciences, including astrology, cartography, cabbalistic rituals, phantasmagoria, mysticism, white and black magic, without me,” he listed the names that had nothing to do with him.

“Do they really dream of becoming members of the Royal Society of London?”

“Learning is light, and the ungifted people seems will steal diplomas,” the graduate student insistently inspired respect for himself, not departing from the window of the car, so that

the woman-detective looked at him with condescension and oppressive fatigue.

“Are you talking about yourself?”

“I have a propensity for a dynamo, a perpetuum mobile, various navigational aids, and I’m negatively affected by the lack of money on the way to the university,” the graduate student explained, the habit of writing off homework without understanding the essence of the problem.

“Well, do not push such a trivial end to the students’ seat in lectures and practical classes at the tables in the classrooms... Tell me straight, poor fellow, tired of messing around?”

Alice happily noticed the first wrinkle on his forehead and remarked his outstanding abilities to herself.

“Money is needed to pay for the study of my eldest daughter at the university abroad beyond my understanding of reality,” the arrogant workaholic complained, advancing for himself always the largest tip, coming dry out of the water.

“How much you earn, so much and you will receive. No more no less. In the meantime, take on travel expenses,” Alice became agitated, explaining to her assistant the rules of the game, when she took out two hundred dollars from the “glove compartment” and put the currency into the outstretched hand to Oleg Tkachik without traces of manicure, as payment for parking in the proper place.

“Now tell me what must be done?”

Proud postgraduate Oleg produced the impression

of a medieval noble knight of the Freemason's Order with his free behavior and strong physique.

"I want to find out how you found out about my whereabouts?"

"It's much easier than you think. I waited here for your appearance since yesterday. The last time we broke up at this corner. Have you forgotten?"

"You have not forgotten how to lie. I hardly believe your words."

"And thank you for that," said with a trembling sense of gratitude, according to the detective, a free mason.

"I gave money for a flight to the resort zone, or rather to Kislovodsk. There I already ordered two tickets. We leave at seven in the evening, so you'll manage to get ready. Business does not require urgent. I will explain the reasons on the way. Prepare for the heavy losses of close relatives. This is very serious..." she said the last words with a mourning expression.

"Can you cover at least the outline of what is at stake?"

"You will be allowed to attend the sanatorium with healing springs 'Glory to Sport'. You'll take a room there or somewhere nearby," Alice said, not paying attention to his idle questions. "Take with you the most necessary for mountaineering."

"So I would say right away that you decided to teach me the basics of mine-rescue work," the excitement that appeared on the face of a loyal employee was replaced by disappointment.

He squeezed inwardly, imagining himself swaying in the cradle of a funicular amidst mountain cracks with a depth

of more than a thousand meters.

“Do not worry. On the way to the plane, I’ll bring you up to date, but for now I need to look for important information in the archive.”

“Alice, I agree. We’ll be in touch. It is not necessary to canonize the heroes without me and put a monument to the broken hopes on the grave.”

“You will learn how to behave yourself; you will participate even in the Intercontinental race for survival. Now, be content that you have children which you need to take care of. That is, educate, train and protect against bad influence.

“Clear. Do I have to step back and go into the shadows?”

“You’d better be a self-sufficient person, not a celluloid boy in errands.”

“And you still have to understand when you’ll call me to give false testimony; I will not come to see you.”

“Have agreed.”

Oleg resigned without a murmur, having received long-awaited dollars, for which he was ready to fly even to the end of the world. His previous business trip to Crimea fell through the poor orientation in the cellars of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, where he wanted to spend the night. But he was led out by obstinate monks, warning that if he once again encroached on the relics of the holy of holies, he would not even be able to exist in hell after death, but would immediately fall into purgatory. From such seditious words the unfortunate graduate student almost stopped

his heart. But the nostalgia for their native places and the craving for daylight prevailed. After this incident, the Crimea became closed to him at the direction of the detective.

A year ago, when the detective-woman arrived in Kiev to a distant family, he and operatives Regimov and Seregin were asked to investigate the case of complex, even fatal events that occurred in the monastery. When the tourists, following the guide in the underground catacombs, found the corpse of the murdered monk, they were terribly frightened. They summoned experienced operatives to find the culprit in such a terrible tragedy. Alice remembered that then they parted ways with Tkachik in the strangest way. He wandered around without looking at souvenirs, on the territory of the Lavra – a unique Orthodox shrine, founded in 1051 by monks Anthony and Theodosius, located in the center of the Ukrainian capital, on the right bank of the Dnieper river.

The tour took almost an hour and a half. The guide collected everyone in the center at the main gate, reasonably for the detailed story, inflating the price of entrance tickets. Very fussing about her future excursionists, she, unconcerned by passing excursions, in front of the detective, wore one – a purple translucent, with short sleeves – a sweater, then another – brightly green, with long sleeves resembling a Harlequin suit. Periodically consulting with those who followed her elegant manipulations, surreptitiously watching how the ill-fated post-graduate student Oleg reacted to these actions, since the responsibility for his

behavior would have to be borne by her

“Well, how do I look at that collar? Not very funny?” she chirped with a purely Russian accent, creating around herself a circle of tourists.

“It’s funny,” said Alice from time to time, always turning away so as not to inhale the amber, coming from the heated body of the “priestess of travel and dangerous transitions,” as she called herself, carefully concealing her passport data.

“I want to warn you all, do not inhale the astringent aroma of my perfume,” she ordered in a stern voice, giving food for thought to the men and finally clouding Alice’s head.

“Why is she so fussing about?” the detective thought suddenly. “I guess she has her own specific plans. I do not even have a piece of sugar in my pocket to offer it as a prize, as in the circus arena, when encouraging obedient trained animals to chew something delicious before the next performance.”

“I have no sweets with me,” Alice said aloud, attracting the attention of an unknown bum who adhered to their group, so that he could coordinate in his manners of behavior and not fall into depression if someone had negative thoughts about his appearance.

He wore ugly light gray trousers, an excessively shiny shirt and something like a beret with knots and holes on his large head. He found a piece of cloth on the way to the Lavra, roaming between the alleys of houses and dumps, reporting to the detective:

“Of course, the excursion is interesting, but I’m more attracted

by the ancient wall paintings and icons on those buildings that I surveyed when I served here as a novice about twenty years ago. Then I was arrested for three days for stealing a piece of bread in the store. So now I'll try to get into the very essence of the foundations of the state system. After all, Kievan Rus came from here," he explained edifyingly, and the white-haired vortexes of the thief and the bastard peeped out into the holes in the scarf on his head. "And my headdress from the secret storerooms of the universe resembles the usual ritual scarf of the Israelites during the Easter service."

Alice, in tight blue jeans and a yellow tunic, graciously putting forward the elbow, on which the handbag hung, putting the chin on the sun, sunbathing, was merging with the flag of Ukraine, even admiring self-sufficiency. For Nikifor Naumovich, this trip at his own expense was a part of the normal course of increasing the professional literacy of the population in the fight against brutal traitors and plunderers of property.

"What lovely creations around. Just crumbs from my dreams!" the bums sang in a lazy voice.

"Well, I will be your personal guide. It's not worth to start early," the guide urged him with the habits of the hetaera.

On which Alice, internally positively reacted, was silent, so that standing next to lieutenant-colonel Regimov, there was a correct idea of such unbearable types, in whose possession his own charisma felt falsity, excessive admiration for himself and boyish posturing. In general, he fully met the requirements of the

average homeless with a bias in Hinduism, Mohammedanism, Christianity, Catholicism, drug addiction and all the natural disasters that he created, knocking rhythm out of the heartbeat of guides, stewardesses, waitresses, popcorn saleswomen and those bored with a calm, life with an annoyed second half.

“Look, what I found out,” he said, shifting his cap to one side, loudly pronounced the suddenly appeared graduate student Tkachik, so that all nearby tourists could hear. “The whole area of the monastery stretches on two picturesque hills, occupying 30 hectares of land,” he read the information from the booklet, reminding the world-famous Ostap Bender in the search for ancient treasures, as he learned to read, smoke incense of his own glory, enjoy the presence of women, at the end of the school course, which he did not immediately have to overcome.

“The pilgrims are most attracted here by caves, from which the construction of this temple complex began, which currently includes forty-one buildings: an amazing cathedral, harmonious bell towers, many churches, buildings for everyday and secular purposes,” explained the guide when Alice and Oleg heard in microphone her pleasant voice.

“How much useful information,” the irrepressible super-agent admired, hoping to penetrate all the dungeons and find a pyramid with a golden triangular top, the same as that depicted on the American dollar or at least its rock drawing, or printed on paper with watermarks.

“Today the complex is divided into the Upper – historical and

cultural reserve and the Lower part – the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Lavra,” the tourists again heard the detailed story in the microphone.

“Are they open to the public?” Alice asked, hoping to search both park areas and find a murderer with material evidence of guilt in the crime, hoping for the help of their colleagues and their own experience in the detection of criminal offenses.

“Of course, but on tickets,” the guide said, persistently agitating everyone who wanted to leave the last cash saved for pocket expenses, within the walls of the monastery, which since 1990 was included in the list of the UNESCO world cultural and historical heritage. “The monastery is distinguished by an amazing nature – there is no sternness and equanimity, as a rule, inherent in religious sketes.”

After listening to the colorful description of the place where the bloody drama occurred, Alice, having risen to the highest place, surveyed the bright green landscapes illuminated by the sun, the shining domes, monks strolling along of the paths, the rosaries, the brilliant blue river at the foot of the monastery and the majestic monument “Homeland-mother”, reminiscent of the Russian analogue of Volgograd.

“Let’s go on,” the guide insisted, yawning, producing a stunning impression on the representatives of stronger sex.

“Oleg, look, here’s a picture that will be remembered for my entire life,” Alice turned into emptiness, as her assistant, soapy, had already returned under the fortress walls, jumped into the

stall with pies and fled inspired back without souvenirs.

“All at your disposal,” smiling with happiness that he had so successfully displayed his skill, he exclaimed inappropriately, trusting completely to his boss.

“We must search all the cells of the ancient monks. I think that there are also relics that can undergo barbaric interference,” the detective said aloud, trying to find a thread to unleash a tangle of terrible crime.

“This rogue-bum, stuck to us, will find out the ways and exits himself without the help of the police. It can be seen in the supervised bodies he is followed by a whole chain of crimes, which he must serve during the twenty years mentioned by him. He just needs to wait for this happy hour. In the meantime, we must consider him under the condition of good behavior and the fulfillment of the regime of the day,” Alice decided, to immediately dispel sincerity from bombast and ambition.

“That’s right, do not even doubt, we’re heading there now,” the guide supported the initiative, rushing to the entrance to the catacombs.

They all a small group of seven people, arisen spontaneously, walked along the bridges in the dungeon, alternately stopping in the cells in front of the ancient relics, where on the tables hollowed out in the ground stood lamps. Carefully examined the burial places of the martyrs themselves, niches hollowed out in the wall, where you could put only the very thin, withered figure of the old man. Underground churches resembled ordinary

rooms with dilapidated furniture, but without utensils. None of the tourists photographed, because the dungeon was dark enough even for a flash camera. It was not possible to find an icon hidden there by some renegade.

“There are no signs of life, but a lot of spirituality and great audibility,” inspired the guide, smiling. “You can not worry; we will not go down into the lower parts of the dungeon.”

“And what is a ladder that leads to the center of the earth?” Oleg asked on behalf of Alice.

“They say that the ancient monks believed in their eternal great God, honoring old age, and obediently followed the teachings of the elders. They went to monasteries for ever, but they lived to a very old age. Eighty years of age, none of them died. And those who are over ninety were considered saints. Unquestioningly, all the young – seventy, sixty, fifty-years-old elders, who received the title of Hieromonk within the limits of church dogma, submitted to them unquestioningly. Is it clear what I’m talking about?” asked the guide strictly, waving his hand to the looking forward tourist, so that he moved further along the narrow aisle, whose vaults were knocked out of clay, but firmly packed.

It seemed to Alice that a knowledgeable and highly educated guide did not say anything, or was afraid to move first on wooden bridges, because the pitch darkness thickened each time after switching from one cell to another. Therefore, she had to give Oleg her search equipment: a video camera, an iPhone,

a Makarov pistol, eavesdropping bugs, a rope ladder, “cats” and a glass cutter to make it easier to move around in narrow junctions. He put everything in his bosom without losing his slender figure. She left the bag with the dungeon plan with her, hanging it over her shoulder, but there was no way to distinguish the main transitions without the flashlight. Switching on cell phones, not one of the group could decide; since the guide hypocritically warned everyone about a thermonuclear reactor, “its influence on the tectonic layers and sediments is undeniable.”

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