

Basa Janikashvili

Shoot 'em up

A one-act play

Characters:

Vera Kekelidze	- the wife
Guram Darchia	- the husband
Giviko	- their son
Anatoly Giogievich Nikiforov	- 1 st pilot
Dmitry Yurievich Asimenko	- 2 nd pilot
Boris (Borya) Ivanovich Surkatov	- 3 rd pilot
Zemut Tumezovich Izmailov	- 4 th pilot
Nikolai Fyodorovich Simak	- 5 th pilot

A small settlement. There are several cottages on the stage, a wooden table and a tree. A little boy is in the tree. He is staring up at the sky. His mother, Vera, is standing under the tree.

VERA: Giviko, get down immediately!

GIVIKO: I won't. I'm petrolling.

VERA: It's getting late, Giviko!

GIVIKO: Yeah, but can't you see the Russians are bombing us?

VERA: And how are your cones going to help? [*Giviko doesn't reply.*] Come on, get down while the toilet's not occupied. [*Giviko doesn't reply.*] It's going to be quite crowded at it very soon.

GIVIKO: It's occupied right now.

VERA: Guram, come here! Can you reason with your son? See where he's climbed to? Tell him to get down. It's too much for me. [*She gets into the cottage.*]

GURAM: [*emerging from the cottage*] What are you up to?

GIVIKO: I'm petrolling.

GURAM: You mean patrolling, right?

GIVIKO: Yeah, petrolling.

GURAM: Giviko, do you remember our favourite song by John Lennon? *All You Need Is Love*. We were listening to it not long ago, remember?

GIVIKO: All we need what?

GURAM: [*humming*] 'All you need is love'... Do you remember, son?

GIVIKO: Yeah, I like it a lot.

GURAM: And don't you remember what the song is about?

GIVIKO: Not really.

GURAM: Didn't I tell you? It's about love, friendship and sympathy. It says if you want peace, you need to love others. Or rather, we need more love in order to have peace around us.

GIVIKO: Fine.

GURAM: What do you mean by 'fine'? Get down immediately!

GIVIKO: I won't. Because the Russians are bombing us, I need to get them down.

[The sound of a plane reaches them. Giviko shoots his catapult upwards.]

GURAM: [*nervously*] Get down, son! They can drop a bomb and destroy everything here!

VERA: *[comes running from the cottage at the sound of the plane]* Giviko, get down, now!

GIVIKO: But why are they dropping bombs on us?

GURAM: Because they don't know what love is.

VERA: Don't make me climb all the way up!

[The sound of the approaching plane is louder.]

GURAM: It's coming back.

GIVIKO: It won't. I'm petrolling.

[Giviko takes an aim and shoots from his catapult. An explosion follows. Vera and Guram throw themselves on the ground. Giviko falls down from the tree. The scared boy joins his parents.]

VERA: *[holding the boy close to herself]* Don't worry, honey. Mummy's here.

GURAM: Are you okay?

GIVIKO: See? I told you I'd bring it down, didn't I?

[The pilot of the destroyed plane falls down from the sky. From now on the characters use a mixture of the Georgian and Russian languages, especially that the pilots speak only Russian.]

1ST PILOT: Ouch!

GIVIKO: *[shoots the pilot once more]* I've brought him down, I have!

1ST PILOT: Oh my, it hurts!

GURAM: What have you done, son?

VERA: *[unexpectedly drawing a Colt from her pocket]* Don't move! Freeze!

GURAM: What are you doing?

VERA: I've taken a prisoner.

GIVIKO: We've taken a prisoner, we've got a prisoner!

1ST PILOT: What's going on?

GURAM: How come you've got that pistol?

VERA: It's a Colt H 1889.

GIVIKO: Mum, don't let him go while I get the second one.

GURAM: No, don't. One is enough. [*Agitated, he runs into the cottage.*]

VERA: Where are you going?

GURAM: [*even more agitated, running out of the cottage*] Whose Colt is it?

[*Vera doesn't reply. She is eyeing the Russian pilot lying on the ground.*]

GIVIKO: Why did you drop bombs on us?

[*Guram rushes into the cottage again.*]

1ST PILOT: It hurts – awfully! Right here. [*He points at his leg.*] Help!

VERA: [*to her son*] I told you to learn Russian, didn't I? See how useful it turned out?

GURAM: [*comes running from the cottage clutching a bread knife in his hand*] I found only this.

VERA: [*pressing the pistol to the pilot's forehead*] Speak up, thug! Why did you bomb us?

1ST PILOT: Please, don't kill me!

VERA: Start talking or I'll slit your throat!

GIVIKO: Slit your throat!

GURAM: What are you doing? Are you out of your mind? How can you kill a prisoner?

1ST PILOT: No, no, no! No kill!

GIVIKO: Don't speak Georgian. He understands what we're saying. [*He collects pebbles and climbs the tree.*]

VERA: You're a Georgian and you're dropping bombs on your own people? [*She kicks him hard in the belly.*]

1ST PILOT: No! You can't treat prisoners like this! It's against the rules.

VERA: And what you've done is well within rules, ha? See that boy in the tree? He can't go to sleep. And all because you want to kill us! [*She kicks him again.*] To kill my son, my husband, but leave me alive? I know all about the likes of you. You're dropping carriage bombs on us.

GIVIKO: [*from the tree*] Cassette bombs, Mum.

GURAM: Please, think what you're doing. Don't kill him.

1ST PILOT: No kill! I'm your prisoner, not a criminal!

VERA: Then tell me why did you start the war?

1ST PILOT: I didn't. I live in Smolensk. I was conscripted, but I didn't start it.

GIVIKO: [from the tree] Don't trust him, Mum. The slut is lying!

GURAM: What kind of language is that?

VERA: But you had to know there's a peaceful population down here. It's a holiday settlement. We're trying to have a rest here!

GURAM: We're having a rest. Came for a fortnight and the war starts! How can we rest now? No way.

1ST PILOT: I didn't know. We've got dated maps. Mine says its headquarters here.

VERA: Exactly! Take a good look at us. Do we look as if we're working at the headquarters?

1ST PILOT: No. And it's obviously not the headquarters.

GIVIKO: [from the tree] Why did you bomb us then?

1ST PILOT: Who's that talking to me?

VERA: [pressing the pistol to his forehead] A birdie. Answer when a child asks a question!

GURAM: Careful, will you? Don't squeeze the trigger by chance.

VERA: I can do it deliberately!

GURAM: Vera, please! Don't lose your head!

VERA: I won't, but he is going to lose his head for good.

1ST PILOT: No, please, not my head. [The sound of an approaching plane.] It's one of us.

VERA: Aha, so there are others who wish to kill us! [She cocks the safety catch.]

GIVIKO: Don't worry, Mum. I'm going to bring it down. [He aims his catapult.]

1ST PILOT: Please, take me prisoner. You might be rewarded for it.

GURAM: Rewarded? Who's gonna give a penny for a Russian prisoner?

[The plane drops a bomb nearby. The couple sprawls on the ground, while Giviko remains in the tree and the Russian pilot is already on the ground.]

VERA: He deserves to be executed. Publicly, at that.

1ST PILOT: Kill and you'll be killed. Execute and you'll be executed.

GURAM: Hadn't we better take him prisoner and pass him on to the authorities?

VERA: And?

GURAM: Then we can go home and, hopefully, the war will end.

1ST PILOT: Please believe me, I'm a good man. I like art, especially paintings. After serving in the regular army, I resigned. But then this war started and I was summoned. I regularly go to art galleries. I'm particularly keen on the 18th century painting. I've

got a daughter and my mother's sick. Please, don't kill me! They're waiting for me.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* It's coming, coming back! Now look what the Georgian artillery can do!

VERA: *[paying no attention to her son; mockingly]* They're waiting, ha? Then why did you come here? Why did you bomb us?

[The plane is approaching. Giviko shoots at it from his catapult. Immediately the sound of an explosion follows. The couple sprawls on the ground again.]

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* Bingo!

GURAM: *[when the noise subsides]* What have you done, son?

VERA: Have you brought down another plane?

[The second pilot falls to the ground.]

2ND PILOT: *[wriggling with pain]* Ouch!

VERA: *[to the 2nd pilot]* Hands up!

2ND PILOT: Who are you? What do you want?

GURAM: What are we gonna do with him?

VERA: Fucking shoot both of them!

1ST PILOT: Please, have mercy!

2ND PILOT: Please, don't! Don't make my children orphans!

VERA: Shut up!

GURAM: Aren't you gonna tell me where you got that pistol from?

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* Mum, don't worry, I'll get some more.

VERA: I said hands up! *[The pilots comply.]* To your feet! *[The pilots get to their feet.]* State your ranks!

1ST PILOT: Vice-Colonel A.G. Nikiforov.

2ND PILOT: Vice-Colonel D.Y. Asimenko.

VERA: On your knees! *[The pilots do as they are told.]*

GIVIKO: Mum! Another one's coming. It's quite near...

GURAM: I don't get it. Should I pull him down or climb the tree myself?

VERA: What were you thinking when you dropped bombs on us? Are we people or cattle? Don't we have children or homes?

GIVIKO: [from the tree] You're mixing Georgian and Russian words, Mum. Instead of nagging me, you should've learnt Russian yourself.

VERA: [to her son] Shut up!

1ST PILOT: Have mercy, Vera Yurievna!

2ND PILOT: Please, have mercy! We're no strangers, right?

GURAM: How come he knows your patronymic name?

GIVIKO: [from the tree] It's coming... [The sound of an approaching plane. Giviko takes an aim and shoots.]

GURAM: Don't! Don't do that!

[Another explosion. Everyone falls to the ground except Giviko.]

GIVIKO: [from the tree] Bingo!

[The third pilot falls down from the sky.]

3RD PILOT: [gets to his feet, dusting his clothes; when the noise subsides] My name is B. I. Surkatov. You can call me Borya. Dear Vera Yurievna, you look stunning with that pistol.

VERA: Oh, thanks a lot.

GURAM: Hands up, soldier! Giviko, stop bringing them down or else I'll have to arrest you too!

3RD PILOT: Vera Yurievna, can I ask you to let my friends free?

VERA: Oh really?

3RD PILOT: Or you could pass us on to the militaries. Otherwise it doesn't look nice to perish from the hands of a Georgian woman.

2ND PILOT: True, Vera Yurievna. What would others say?

1ST PILOT: They won't understand us back home.

VERA: Hands up! No more talk! I'll kill you all! What kind of folks are you anyway? No qualms, no morals! We're a peaceful population, having a rest in this holiday spot, but you decided to slaughter us! My husband here will try to explain better.

GURAM: Of course we're having a rest. We've been working all year in order to have a holiday in this wretched place. But you think we're miserly, right? You don't understand why anyone would like to rest here, do you? There even isn't a decent toilet for one to sit and contemplate peacefully.

3RD PILOT: We didn't know that.

GURAM: No toilet in a holiday resort. Can you see it over there? Used by the entire settlement. We've even got a schedule defining who's using it when.

2ND PILOT: Please, don't judge us very harshly. We didn't mean any harm.

GURAM: No harm? We've been working for the whole year to save money for a car. We don't rest at the seaside or in the mountains. We can only afford this kind of place which is full of others like us, the same kind of misers who use the toilet three times a day, not more. On the other hand, we're going to have a car.

VERA: Guram!

GURAM: And when we finally buy that damn car, we'll be obliged to come back here next summer, as we'll need to renovate our flat and then send our boy to an expensive school. My wife will then wish to buy some household appliances or new furniture, which means more saving, which means coming here for a holiday year after year, taking turns in using the toilet. And all the while I need to protect myself from others, as the toilet used by at least a hundred holidaymakers hasn't got a door.

1ST PILOT: As a child I used to spend my holidays in Kechkhobi and the toilet had a door at that resort.

GURAM: Ah, Kechkhobi! But why is this place worse? Fresh air, wonderful cottages, fields and meadows, mountains and lakes nearby. It's quite cool during the day and can be rather fresh at night. And we're talking about summer! Also, everything is cheap here. Eventually we're going to have a car, renovated flat, furniture, a washing machine possibly, and my son will receive excellent education and every summer we'll be going to the toilet together. And you wanted to ruin all our plans? Vera, you can shoot them!

VERA: [*aiming the pistol*] Which one first?

GURAM: Take your pick.

VERA: I'll start with the one who fell down first.

GURAM: Doesn't really matter. [*He goes up and down the stage.*]

VERA: Okay, you godless scum! Start praying!

1ST PILOT: Have mercy...

2ND PILOT: It's not our fault...

1ST PILOT: We had our orders...

2ND PILOT: We didn't know your toilet had no door, cross my heart.

3RD PILOT: Will you grant the last wish before execution?

VERA: [to Guram] Now what?

GURAM: No idea.

GIVIKO: [from the tree] I know. I've read in a book that usually they are allowed the last wish and it's fulfilled.

VERA: Which book, sonny?

GURAM: What kind of books do you give him to read?

VERA: I have nothing to do with it. He chooses them himself. What book was it, Giviko?

GIVIKO: [from the tree] 'Crime and Punishment'.

VERA: [to the pilots] What's your last wish?

3RD PILOT: Have you got nikwi by any chance?

VERA: The what?

3RD PILOT: Nikwi. It's a kind of mushroom that grows in Georgia.

1ST PILOT: Yeah, I've also heard about them. I have.

2ND PILOT: Mushrooms? Never heard of them.

3RD PILOT: Once you try them, you can then face your own execution.

VERA: What are you talking about?

GURAM: [asking the pilots] What mushroom is that? Do you mean nikvi?

3RD PILOT: Yes, it's them.

VERA: Oh, I'm so sorry. I haven't got them. What do I do now? What can I offer our visitors?

GURAM: Oh, my! Have we got anything at home?

VERA: [to the pilots] So sorry about those mushrooms. But we've got delicious isri makvali.

2ND PILOT: What's that?

3RD PILOT: It's a very special chicken source.

1ST PILOT: What's the name again? Isri mak – what?

VERA: Isri makvali. I'll get it and lay a proper table. Just give me a second. [*She halts before going into the cottage.*] Guram, what are you waiting for? Offer your wine to the guests. We can't kill them without showing the usual hospitality, can we?

GURAM: I've got excellent wine. I bet you've never tried anything like it.

1ST PILOT: Georgian?

GURAM: Of course! Homemade, from my own grapes. But they don't grow here, only in eastern Georgia. I brought some for special guests as it's unfit to let them go without toasting. I'll get it. [*He rushes into the cottage.*]

[Vera comes back with food-laden plates and some crockery. The pilots are still on their knees, waiting for the hosts to invite them to the table.]

VERA: Don't go anywhere. I'll lay the table in a jiffy. *[She hurries into the cottage.]*

1ST PILOT: Georgian wine...

2ND PILOT: The real one...

3RD PILOT: Such pleasant people, aren't they?

1ST PILOT: *[to Giviko in the tree]* Hey, boy! What's your name?

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* Giviko.

3RD PILOT: Why are you sitting there? *[Giviko doesn't reply.]* Aren't you going to help your dad? *[Giviko ignores him.]*

2ND PILOT: I know – you don't speak Russian, right?

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* I do.

2ND PILOT: If so, why aren't you helping your dad?

1ST PILOT: I guess he can't get down.

[The pilots laugh. In anger, Giviko shoots his catapult at the 1st pilot.]

VERA: *[emerging from the cottage with more food]* Giviko, stop right now! You should be ashamed of yourself.

GURAM: *[carrying an large bottle of wine]* What? Don't tell me he's brought down another one?

VERA: *[laying the table]* No, he shot a cone at the guests.

GURAM: *[putting down the bottle]* What kind of hospitality is this? Shame on you.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* They are no guests.

VERA: I can't deal with him. He's all yours. *[To the pilots.]* Please, help yourselves.

[The pilots don't stir. They remain on their knees with hands up.]

GURAM: Is that how I raised you, son? Have I taught you to fling cones at guests? Is that our traditional hospitality? Such a shame! *[He busies himself with pouring wine into glasses.]*

VERA: He's a good boy, as a rule, but sometimes I don't understand what gets into him.

GURAM: Yeah. You raise them, feed and clothe them and this is what you get in return.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* They aren't our guests!

VERA: Come down immediately!

1ST PILOT: They all are the same at this age.

3RD PILOT: That's what kids are for. They love getting at us.

2ND PILOT: I've got two daughters – 12 and 8 years. I can't find a common language with them.

VERA: They're difficult, aren't they? [*She finishes laying the table.*]

GURAM: What are you waiting for? Please, have a seat at our table and help yourselves.

1ST PILOT: It's kind of embarrassing.

GURAM: Nonsense. Please do come.

VERA: Please, please, help yourselves.

2ND PILOT: What about our execution?

VERA: Not execution. It's going to be shooting.

GURAM: That'll be later.

3RD PILOT: [*getting to his feet*] Right. I was worried you might forget about it.

[The 1st and the 2nd pilots raise to their feet too. They go to the table. The sound of an approaching plane can be heard. Giviko prepares to shoot.]

GIVIKO: [*from the tree*] Coming! Another one's coming.

VERA: Can you hear it? Brutes! We're having a rest while they want to bomb us.

GURAM: Please, have a seat. [*The pilots sit at the table. Guram offers them the wine.*]
Here's a problem for you: we work hard during the entire year, we save money, we come for our holiday to this blessed place to be away from the noise and bustle of the city, but what do we get? These sluts want to kill us.

VERA: Guram, watch your mouth! The boy can hear you.

GURAM: Now, dear guests, let's drink to our meeting. I gather you've all been to Georgia before?

2ND and 3RD PILOTS: Yes, sure.

1ST PILOT: I used to rest in Kechkhobi.

GURAM: Which means you're familiar with our traditions. Every feast must have a toastmaster. And I appoint myself as one.

PILOTS: [*together*] This is to the toastmaster!

GURAM: No, wait. You can drink to the toastmaster at the start or at the end of the feast. For a start, I'd like to propose a toast to our meeting. I wish you all the best and welcome to Georgia!

PILOTS: *[together]* To our meeting! To Georgia!

[The sound of the approaching plane is getting louder. It seems quite close now.]

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* Artillery, fire!

[He takes a good aim and shoots. An explosion follows in a couple of seconds. Everyone falls to the ground protecting their heads. The 4th pilot falls from the sky.]

VERA: Giviko, what have you done!

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* I told you, Mum, I'm petrolling.

VERA: And how do you think I should find a seat for him? Shouldn't you ask first before inviting people to the house?

GURAM: Good job, sonny. Keep bringing them down. A guest is God-sent.

[Vera and Guram approach the fallen pilot and help him to his feet.]

4TH PILOT: Where am I?

VERA: With us, as a guest.

GURAM: Please, join us at the table.

4TH PILOT: But shouldn't you be executing us?

VERA: What are you talking about? Have I cooked for nothing?

[Vera, Guram and the 4th pilot take their seats at the table.]

GURAM: As you've all been to Georgia before, you should know another tradition of ours.
What do we do with a late comer?

1ST PILOT: Fine him for coming late.

2ND and 3RD PILOTS: A fine! A fine! A fine!

GURAM: *[to his wife]* Get another glass, will you?

VERA: *[running into the cottage]* Don't overdo with drinking, okay?

GURAM: While my wife's looking for another glass, please tell me about yourselves.

4TH PILOT: My name is Zemut Tumezovich Izmailov. I'm from Tatarstan, have served in the Russian Aviation. I'm about to become a granddad again. My whole family's at the maternity house waiting for the baby to arrive, but I'm here...

VERA: [*comes back with an enormous glass and hands it to Guram*] Try not to drink too much, will you?

GURAM: In my family this is called 'another glass' [*He pours wine into it and passes to the 4th pilot.*] All late comers have to drink it as a fine. Dear guests, because Zemut Tumezovich is going to be a granny...

VERA: Grandpa.

GURAM: Yeah, grandpa, we are going to drink to him. We can't drink to the yet unborn baby as it's said to be a bad sign. But we can easily drink to the grandpa! Here's to Zemut!

PILOTS: To Zemut!

4TH PILOT: I feel really flattered. Thank you so much. [*They all drink up.*] It's been years since I last came to Georgia. My wife and I used to come to Telavi every summer.

GURAM: Actually, this wine is from Telavi.

1ST PILOT: And it's superb.

GURAM: [*proudly*] And who made it?

VERA: You're eating surprisingly little. Please, have some more. I've heard you aren't given enough food in the army.

2ND PILOT: Oh, no, we're getting enough.

VERA: I watched on TV that all your soldiers go hungry all the time. I'm so sorry for them. What if their mothers see them?

3RD PILOT: We're fed all right, but not the soldiers at the front.

4TH PILOT: We're officers and there aren't a lot of us, true professionals left. Some are already retired, others have changed the profession.

GURAM: Here's a good toast. [*He refills their glasses.*] I'd like to drink to all of you. You are all professionals! May your missiles always reach the target! May all of us tremble with fear and shit our pants when you're doing your job!

VERA: Watch your mouth, Guram!

PILOTS: Thank you, thank you so much, Guram.

GURAM: My son's growing into a real professional too. There he is, in the tree, shooting his catapult, but he's managed to bring you down, all of you! Tell me, if a boy his age can hit destroyers like yours and bring you down, what he's going to do when he's grown up? [*He laughs.*]

4TH PILOT: *[laughing, to Giviko]* So, it was you who brought me down, ha?

2ND PILOT: Yes, it was him. He brought all of us down.

4TH PILOT: Naughty you! By the way, my first grandson is your age.

1ST PILOT: Here's to us, the professionals! *[To Giviko.]* And to you, boy!

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* I've got a name.

[They all drink up. The sound of an approaching plane can be heard.]

GURAM: See that? Now he's going to demonstrate how he's bringing them down.

[They leave the table and gather around the tree, watching Giviko. The boy spots the plane and takes an aim. The plane is getting nearer.]

GURAM: Go on, son, don't embarrass me.

1ST PILOT: It's one of us. 15 89, Nikolai Fyodorovich.

2ND PILOT: So it is. Nikolai Fyodorovich Simak. A wonderful man.

4TH PILOT: We used to drop bombs on Sukhumi.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* Artillery, fire!

[He shoots. A complete silence follows. They all wait for an explosion.]

3RD PILOT: He's hit it.

GURAM: Of course he has!

[This time the explosion doesn't scare anyone. The 5th pilot falls to the ground.]

VERA: Good job, Giviko!

4TH PILOT: *[running to the 5th pilot]* Kolya, buddy, are you okay?

5TH PILOT: *[getting to his feet and dusting his clothes]* Yeah, as you can see.

1ST PILOT: Hello, Nikolai Fyodorovich.

2ND PILOT: *[pointing at Giviko in the tree]* It was that boy up there who shot you.

GURAM: With an ordinary catapult.

VERA: Nice to meet you. Please, join us at the table.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* The name of this boy is Giviko.

5TH PILOT: *[shaking his head at Giviko's words]* Oh, so frightfully fierce!

[They all sit at the table. Guram fills the large glass with wine and passes it to the 5th pilot.]

- GURAM: This is how it happened, dear Nikolai Fyodorovich: first it was Vice-Colonel A. G. Nikiforov who was shot down, then Vice-Colonel D. Y. Asimenko, followed by Vice-Colonel Boris Surkatov or just Borya. We wanted to execute them as they are war criminals.
- 5TH PILOT: Why criminals?
- VERA: Because we're having a rest in this holiday resort and we're peaceful population.
- GURAM: It sounds like lynching of course.
- 5TH PILOT: Yes, I see.

[Guram refills their glasses with wine.]

- VERA: Please, help yourself. I've cooked all of this. It's delicious.
- 5TH PILOT: Lynching or not, why didn't you shoot them?
- 3RD PILOT: Because I had the last wish.
- 4TH PILOT: And they fulfilled it? These Georgians are absolutely marvelous people.
- VERA: No, not completely fulfilled.
- 4TH PILOT: And what was it?
- 3RD PILOT: I asked to have some nikvi, but it's scarce in this part of the country.
- GURAM: We could find some, but we're short of time.
- VERA: There's plenty of them, but they need a good soaking.
- 5TH PILOT: What's this nikvi?
- GURAM: Let's drink first, then I'll explain. Dear friends, another tradition prescribes drinking to our ladies. In our case it's my wife, Vera Yurievna. Here's to her and all those women who love and cherish us and take care of us. We can't really live without them.
- 1ST PILOT: Very true, we can't.
- GURAM: Here's to you, dear Vera! *[He drinks up.]*
- 2ND PILOT: Thank you for this hospitality. My knowledge of the Georgian women is first-hand and I've always admired them. Here's to you! *[He drinks up.]*
- 5TH PILOT: *[holding the large glass]* Yes, I absolutely have to drink to this. *[He drinks up.]*

[Other pilots drain their glasses too.]

GURAM: *[to his wife]* Please, please get me my guitar, will you?

VERA: Do you think it's appropriate? You're about to kill them, right?

GURAM: Yeah, I know. I'll sing just one song and then kill them.

[With a displeased expression, Vera goes into the cottage.]

3RD PILOT: Excellent wine.

GURAM: It is, isn't it?

1ST PILOT: Superb.

4TH PILOT: Yeah, it's really special.

5TH PILOT: *[having drunk up]* Indeed. It calls for another one.

GURAM: I've got an idea. Let's all drink the last toast from our extra-large glass.

5TH PILOT: What does that mean?

1ST PILOT: It's that glass used for fining late-comers. The one you've just drained. *[He points at the large glass.]*

5TH PILOT: I resign into the hands of justice and fate.

[Vera comes back with a guitar.]

2ND PILOT: Oh, there it comes!

1ST PILOT: Please, Guram, please.

GURAM: This song is about you, about the times when you first came to Georgia in 1921.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* It's not correct. The Russians first came in 1778.

GURAM: Come on, it's not so important. *[He takes the guitar and begins to sing.]*

The train doors to hide me,

The train doors to escape Mum,

Open the windows to let feelings fly.

Wish I'd never seen you, wish I'd never met you,

My sweet girl, my little birdie.

'Tis love that lights the world around.

Had no thanks for being born,

My young days fly and need to hurry.

The Red Army came and havoc reigned,

Who and why and which party's best.

[The pilots clap in appreciation.]

Thank you. *[He fills the extra-large glass with wine.]*

3RD PILOT: Is our execution off?

VERA: No, Borya, it's not.

GURAM: We'll drink this one and then set to the work. Dear friends... guests... pilots. I'd like to drink to you. Here's to your death. We were sitting here, utterly bored, then you appear and life's become much more interesting. I'm glad we met so briefly and are about to part forever. We're going to shoot you as fit war criminals. Please, no tears. I'd hate to see them as we're all true men here. What I'm about to do hurts, but it has to be done.

VERA: I'm kind of sorry for them.

GURAM: You must all remember the old Russian film where a toast is raised to a little proud bird which wanted to reach the sun, but burned its wings and fell into the deepest ravine. You do remember it, don't you?

PILOTS: Sure, we do.

GURAM: This is what I want to say... *[He looks at the glasses on the table and addresses Vera.]* Get some more of the large glasses, will you? I can't drink alone.

VERA: I kind of pity them. *[She goes to get the glasses.]*

GURAM: I want to say that you're like that little bird, because you're going to die soon and this is your last meal. So, I drink to you as I'd do to remember the deceased. Rest in peace. May your souls find peace!

[Vera brings five extra-large glasses, which are passed to the pilots. The 1st pilot grabs the wine bottle and pours the wine into the glasses.]

GURAM: *[having followed Vera's movements and waited for the pilot to fill the glasses]*
You are those birds that fell all the way to the bottom of the deepest ravine, which in our case is the feeling of friendship. Here's to my friends – to you! *[He drinks up.]*

1ST PILOT: Thanks for the kind words. *[He drinks up.]*

2ND PILOT: Here's to you, your beautiful family and the toastmaster!

GURAM: Just another couple of feasts like this and you could be an excellent toastmaster yourself.

3RD PILOT: May we rest in peace! *[They all drink the toast.]*

4TH PILOT: And now, Vera Yurievna and Guram Davidovich, time's up.

VERA: What's the rush?

[All get to their feet and begin to hug each other. The sound of an approaching plane can be heard, but no one pays attention.]

5TH PILOT: *[choosing a suitable place for the execution]* Guram Davidovich, do you think it'd be convenient for you here?

VERA: Yes, yes, it's fine.

GURAM: My dear guests, wherever you feel comfortable. We'll shoot you in any place of your choice.

[The pilots discuss various options. The sound of the approaching plane is getting louder.]

VERA: I think it's another plane.

GURAM: Yeah, it is.

VERA: Giviko, get down immediately!

GURAM: Don't bring it down, sonny. Our guests are leaving.

[Giviko doesn't reply.]

VERA: Giviko, we don't need more prisoners.

GURAM: Enough is enough. Where can we keep such a number of Russians?

[Giviko doesn't reply.]

VERA: Giviko, we haven't got the food left for more visitors. It'll be really embarrassing to let new people leave without a proper meal. Get down!

GURAM: Get down and I'll allow you to kill one.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* You're lying.

GURAM: Have I ever lied to you? Come down and I'll let you kill one.

GIVIKO: *[from the tree]* Honest? Can you swear?

VERA: Has your dad ever lied to you before?

[After a minute of deliberation, Giviko starts to climb down.]

3RD PILOT: This place is suitable.

GURAM: Excellent. Vera Yurievna, pull your pistol.

VERA: Will you go first?

GURAM: No, you start.

1ST PILOT: Just one last hug. *[He hugs Guram and Vera.]*

2ND PILOT: It was a wonderful evening. *[He hugs Guram and Vera.]*

3RD PILOT: I'll never forget you. I'll remember you all my death.

4TH PILOT: What's the name of the sauce we've had?

VERA: Isri makvali.

4TH PILOT: I'm going to remember it. *[He hugs Guram and Vera.]*

5TH PILOT: The wine was superb. Bringing me down was worth it, boy. *[He says good-bye by shaking Guram and Vera's hands.]*

[With their hands clasped at their napes, the pilots kneel with their backs to the executioners.]

VERA: Thanks for coming. *[She shoots the 2nd pilot in the head. Dimitri Yurievich Asimenko drops dead.]*

5TH PILOT: That was fucking cool!

VERA: Thanks. *[She shoots the 5th pilot, Nikolai Fyodorovich Simar in the head.]*

GIVIKO: Let me shoot! You promised!

VERA: Why did you promise? Weapons aren't for children to play with.

GURAM: He's a real man and likes weapons. *[He takes the pistol from Vera and gives it to Giviko.]*

GIVIKO: *[quickly taking the pistol and going to the 1st pilot; aiming at the back of his head]*
Did you say I couldn't climb down? *[He shoots and Anatoly Giorgievich Nikiforov falls dead.]*

GURAM: Good job, son!

VERA: Okay, enough of it.

GIVIKO: *[goes to the 4th pilot and presses the pistol to the back of his head]* I'm not any boy! I've got a name! *[He shoots and Zemut Tumezovich Izmailov drops dead.]*

GURAM: Are you out of your mind? *[He grabs the pistol from the boy's hand.]*

GIVIKO: They're all mine.

VERA: Come to me. [*She pulls her son to her chest.*]

GURAM: [*goes to the last, 3rd pilot and presses the pistol to the back of his head*] Farewell, my friend Borya. [*He shoots and Boris Ivanovich Surkatov drops dead.*]

[*Silence. The sound of a distant plane can be heard. The family is looking down at the dead pilots.*]

VERA: What if I tidy up tomorrow?

GURAM: You can do that.

VERA: I believe they enjoyed the meal, didn't they?

GURAM: I think they did.

VERA: I offered them everything we had.

GURAM: Don't worry, the meal was excellent.

VERA: You really think so? [*To Giviko.*] You haven't eaten anything, son.

GIVIKO: I was petrolling.

VERA: You need to teach him correct language.

GURAM: Okay, go now, have a rest.

VERA: I'll tidy up tomorrow. I'm dead beat. And come to bed on time, both of you! [*She goes into the cottage.*]

GURAM: Now, what was that?

GIVIKO: What do you mean?

GURAM: I've had too much to drink.

GIVIKO: I don't like it when you're drunk.

GURAM: Neither do I, but the rules of hospitality...

GIVIKO: How did I bring them down, ha?

GURAM: Come, let's sit down for a minute. It's so cool and peaceful...

GIVIKO: Yeah, I'm not sleepy at all.

GURAM: Must be scorching hot in Tbilisi.

GIVIKO: Do they bomb it too?

GURAM: I guess so.

GIVIKO: I don't want to sleep.

GURAM: Take it easy. I don't insist.

[*Father and son sit for a while without uttering a word.*]

GURAM: Now, what was that if I may ask?
GIVIKO: You've had too much to drink.
GURAM: When I was your age we also had slings – just two twigs and an elastic band.
GIVIKO: I know.
GURAM: Where did you get yours?
GIVIKO: Frogger shoots these.
GURAM: Who's Frogger?
GIVIKO: A friend of mine.
GURAM: Frogger? Is he German?
GIVIKO: [*laughing*] No, he's a computer friend.
GURAM: I see... In my time there were no such friends.
VERA: [*peeps out of the cottage*] Hey, boys! Time to go to bed! It's getting very late. [*She disappears into the cottage again.*]
GURAM: [*calling out at the closing door of the cottage*] Is the toilet free?

Fade out.