

Bassa Janikashvili

CELEBRITY

A comedy in one act

Translated in English by Salome Asatiani

Adapted by Ella Wildridge

CHARACTERS:
TAMAZI (M)
GULIKO (F)
A THIEF (M)
IRINA (F) AND SANDRO (M) – MARRIED COUPLE
A MILITIAMAN (M)

SCENE 1.

Tamazi's well furnished flat. Tamazi has fallen asleep in front of a TV. A ring at the door. Tamazi stands up, goes over to the door and looks through the spy hole for a long time. Another ring at the door. Tamazi takes his time opening the door, but he seems to have no other choice. A thief appears.

THIEF: Can I come in?

TAMAZI: I beg your pardon?

THIEF: *(elbows Tamazi, forcing him into the room)* I said I'm wanting in!

(Tamazi falls down. The thief shuts the door and puts a knife at Tamazi's throat)

TAMAZI: What's this then? You out to rob me?

THIEF: Give me money.

TAMAZI: I never dreamed it'd be so ordinary

THIEF: *(seizes Tamazi by the collar and hauls him to his feet)* I said money!

TAMAZI: You're standing here, about to rob me, and still nothing seems out the ordinary.

(The thief punches him. Tamazi falls down. The thief lands him several kicks)

THIEF: Money, eediot. *(he seizes Tamazi by the collar and hauls him on to his feet)*
Money or goods, pronto!

TAMAZI: It's not that I'm scared, I'm just surprised, that's all...

THIEF: You deif? Get up and hand it over.

TAMAZI: I'm not scared; I'm just surprised, the way it's all happened.

THIEF: Where's the money? Or maybe you'd understand another type o' language, eh?

TAMAZI: Listen to me, please. There aren't many people about that we'd point out in a crowd. They're a cut different frae the others. It's like there are two kinds of people out there - one lot, well they've had something happen to them and the other lot, they stand by and comment on what's happened to the first lot.

THIEF: *(in a rage)* Tell me or ah'll slit your throat. *(swings Tamazi round, holding him by the collar)*

TAMAZI: Please take it easy. I didn't mean to annoy you. I'll tell you everything, don't worry.

(The thief releases hold of him)

: Why did you let go of me?

THIEF: *(sits down on a chair)* What is it you want?

TAMAZI: Nothing really. It's just that... I'm just trying to explain how I'm feeling.

THIEF: I don't care! You hear me? I don't gie a toss!

TAMAZI: Calm down. I'll give you the money right now. I'll just open out the sofa - but there's just money, nothing else.

THIEF: Get a move on. What is this? You kidding me oan?

TAMAZI: I didn't want you getting the wrong idea. There's just money in there, nothing else.

(The thief searches the sofa, finds an envelope and opens it)

THIEF: What else could there be? This the lot then?

TAMAZI: Why, how much is there? How come there's so little... something's not... oh yes... I forgot... I bought a Tele the other day. You didn't understand me back then. But a crook's a crook, no matter what. And it's not every day you get attacked like this. No, I'm not scared, I'm just surprised.

THIEF: What else you got?

TAMAZI: Just what you see. I never imagined you'd get so upset.

THIEF: What?

TAMAZI: Never imagined it would be so ordinary.

THIEF: Call this ordinary?

TAMAZI: I've a burglar right in front of my nose, he's robbing me and nothing seems out of the ordinary at all. Mind if I smoke?

THIEF: What's that?

TAMAZI: What? Oh, it's a memento from my father. An antique watch. Take it.

THIEF: Thanks.

TAMAZI: You got a cigarette?

(The thief takes out a packet of cigarettes and a lighter from his pocket and puts them on a table)

THIEF: Nice watch. Come on gie's a hand. You can smoke after. *(rifling through the drawers)*

TAMAZI: Take a look in the bottom drawer. The ring that belonged to my mother should be there. *(takes a wallet out of his pocket)* I've some change here too.

THIEF: Gie's it here. You got any left so's you wont starve?

TAMAZI: I don't think so.

THIEF: Here, keep this. *(gives him some money back)*

TAMAZI: No way. You can't go giving it back. I'm not taking it.

THIEF: Did you say the bottom drawer?

TAMAZI: Ye know what people say... *(takes a long drag)*... If you're attacked, you become a celebrity. Everyone will point you out. *(takes another long drag)*. See him, he was robbed, see him, his house was burgled, see him, he was kidnapped... But really there's nothing to be proud of. *(makes himself comfortable in an armchair)*

THIEF: Can't find anything. Put that cigarette down and come over here.

TAMAZI: I'm trying to quit. This is my first today. Let me finish it, please. *(takes a long drag)* He-e-ey, I'm almost happy.

THIEF: Eeediot! Your mother's rings, where are they?

TAMAZI: You come in here, demand money, threaten me with a knife and soon you'll be out of here. And that'll be it. To be honest, I'm glad. They'll all be pointing me out and saying, "Tamazi's been robbed, burgled". I'm going to be a celebrity from now on and who knows, I might end up with a really good woman for my life. It's about time, eh. And it's not been that hard.

THIEF: Where are the rings, ah'm asking!

TAMAZI: You're not letting me smoke...

THIEF: I think you're a bit confused. I said where are the rings?

TAMAZI: Take it easy, give me a second. I can't remember, haven't seen them in an age. Let me have a look.

THIEF: Aye, take a look!

TAMAZI: Give me a second, alright? What's up with you, I'm doing everything you tell me. I'll look for them right now. If I wanted tae lie to you, then...

THIEF: You're taking a very long time. Suspiciously long.

TAMAZI: Want me tae stop? Didnae expect that frae you.

THIEF: What? Tell me where the rings are!!!

TAMAZI: Look behind the stove. The stove! That's where they'll be!

THIEF: Stay there, don't move! *(goes to the kitchen, shifts the stove and gets a dusty little box)* So that's where they were! Are they valuable?

TAMAZI: They were my mother's. I sell one off from time to time, whenever I'm skint.

THIEF: You not married? You wouldn't hide them behind the stove if you were, and you'd die of hunger then.

TAMAZI: Why'd you hit me?

THIEF: What'd you expect? Why'd you keep these hidden?

TAMAZI: It was really sore.

THIEF: Now tell me, where do you keep grandma's cutlery?

TAMAZI: So this is what it's like when a thief comes into your house.

THIEF: And what is it like?

TAMAZI: Nothing so special that it'll make you so famous.

THIEF: Is this valuable?

TAMAZI: Bought it myself. It's brand new.

THIEF: Is it valuable?

TAMAZI: I don't think so. But it's completely new...

THIEF: What's this (lamp) up here? Valuable, is it?

TAMAZI: I don't know, but it's new too.

THIEF: What?

TAMAZI: I get it now. You're not as I'd imagined you.

THIEF: Are you all there? This (lamp)'s no good either. I'm off!..

TAMAZI: Just a second. I hope you won't go telling anyone what went on here.

THIEF: What?

TAMAZI: The victim and the attacker, they don't usually talk about things. Neither of them says a word.

THIEF: What is it you want? Do you want me to call the police?

TAMAZI: No, I'll do that myself.

THIEF: I'm off!

TAMAZI: Wait! Please, hit me again. But do it your own way - first in the stomach, then on the jaw. Hit really hard, so I fall down and faint.

THIEF: Why should you faint?

TAMAZI: When I black out I'll lie there with my eyes closed and I'll know that a man that's blacked out can't open his eyes. If I open my eyes, it'll mean I've not fainted. Please hit me, hard, in the stomach, then on the jaw and then go.

THIEF: You really want me to do it?

TAMAZI: Yes.

THIEF: Alright then. Come here.

TAMAZI: First in the stomach, then on the jaw, and if I don't fall down, kick me too. No cheating, mind.

THIEF: I can't!

TAMAZI: Then give me back everything you took.

THIEF: I just cannae do it. No way!

TAMAZI: Then give it back! Hit me, hit me or give it all back!

THIEF: Leave me alone! Let go of me!

(During the physical interaction the thief punches Tamazi in the stomach. Tamazi doubles over. The thief hits him on the jaw and kicks him as well. Tamazi falls down. The thief goes.)

SCENE 2

The same evening. Tamazi's flat. The front door's open. Tamazi is lying on his back, slightly propped up against an armchair. He's smoking

TAMAZI: *(takes a long drag)* He-e-ey, it's great staying like this, lying on my back...I've got to say it... It's great. It's been an age since I've had the chance to stay this way...nothing to worry about...nothing to do. It's all get sorted without any of my doing.

(A militiaman humbly looks into the room from the front door and immediately looks away. Tamazi quickly puts out his cigarette and takes up a position of a man who's fainted. The militiaman enters the room, holding a gun)

MILITIAMAN: Freeze, don't move! I'll shoot anything that does. In the name of the law I order you to surrender. *(he notices Tamazi. Takes his time going up to him)*

IRINA: *(looking into the room from the front door)* See to that man first, make sure he's all right. It's no time to be chasing bandits.

MILITIAMAN: I can smell cigarette smoke! *(goes up to Tamazi and smells him)* Hold on, either he, or the criminal has been smoking.

TAMAZI: I was smoking just now.

MILITIAMAN: How come you're lying like that? Did you pass out?

TAMAZI: I'm still out for the count. I'm lying here thinking I've fainted and that I can't open my eyes.

MILITIAMAN: But you can.

TAMAZI: How can a man that's fainted open his eyes?

MILITIAMAN: So you were unconscious when you were smoking?

TAMAZI: It's hard to tell...

IRINA: Can we come in?

SANDRO: (*comes in holding a drinking vessel, khantsi¹, in his hand*) Let's drink to love, to understanding, to beauty. To happiness, just as to truth. What is truth? I'm holding it in my hand right now. I want to drink a toast to the famous Tamazi, our celebrity neighbour from this moment on.

IRINA: (*Trying to stop Sandro*) Where do you think you're going?

MILITIAMAN: What's going on, what's the matter?

SANDRO: Irina, dish us up some food.

IRINA: Not now. I'm talking to you. Not now. Come back.

SANDRO: Do it! Bring some food!

(Irina rushes out)

MILITIAMAN: Are you a neighbour?

SANDRO: I'm neighbour to this flower of manhood, to friendship, to dignity, loyalty and to truth.

MILITIAMAN: Do you know the victim?

SANDRO: Not very well, but from now on things will change. We'll get to know one another as well as we can. Let's drink to us getting to know one another, to our sudden meeting and to the beginning of friendship with a capital F, otherwise known as love.

MILITIAMAN: I must ask you to leave now, please. I have to question the victim on my own.

SANDRO: It's no time for questions, Mr. Uniform. The table will soon be laid.

(The militiaman is ushering him to the door)

MILITIAMAN: I'll call you. Goodbye for the moment. (*closes the door after Sandro and turns to Tamazi*) So, you were smoking, right?

TAMAZI: Yes, sir

MILITIAMAN: Lying on the floor?

TAMAZI: Yes

MILITIAMAN: You were relaxing? Enjoying yourself?

TAMAZI: I thought I deserved it...

MILITIAMAN: What made you think that?

TAMAZI: It's not often a robber comes into your house and...

MILITIAMAN: A robber? How do you know he was a robber? Maybe he was a friend of yours? Or a neighbour?

TAMAZI: How can someone like me have friends and neighbours?

MILITIAMAN: Right enough.

TAMAZI: The only person I could call my own was my mother; and she passed away a long time ago.

MILITIAMAN: What's the name of the fellow who was drinking?

TAMAZI: Sandro, I think.

MILITIAMAN: Sandro...Rather suspicious.

TAMAZI: He's rich enough on his own account, without worrying about what I have...idea's ridiculous.

MILITIAMAN: Were you on friendly terms?

TAMAZI: I told you - I'm just a weirdo, and there's no one understands me.

MILITIAMAN: You never told me that

TAMAZI: I keep forgetting things... Mind if I smoke?

MILITIAMAN: Are you nervous?

(Tamazi lights a cigarette)

TAMAZI: I was going to quit.

MILITIAMAN: Why?

TAMAZI: Smoked too heavily.

MILITIAMAN: Why are you so weird?

TAMAZI: I forget things and then I go making things up. I'm extremely modest and...also...

MILITIAMAN: And also...also...also...

TAMAZI: Aren't you a militiaman?

MILITIAMAN: No! I'm a policeman! I've been a policeman now for a very long time.

TAMAZI: I'm scared of you.

MILITIAMAN: What about the thief - weren't you scared of him?

TAMAZI: When I imagined a militiaman being in my house, it was totally different.

MILITIAMAN: And when you imagined the thief?

TAMAZI: You're nothing like the thief.

MILITIAMAN: What was the thief like?

TAMAZI: Usually understanding and co-operative.

MILITIAMAN: What about me?

TAMAZI: You're mean and angry.

MILITIAMAN: Did he steal a lot from you?

TAMAZI: Everything I had.

MILITIAMAN: And would you like to get it all back?

TAMAZI: Could you do that?

MILITIAMAN: In about half an hour.

TAMAZI: Really? It's just... I don't know...

MILITIAMAN: What don't you know?

TAMAZI: I'm not sure how to put this... I want it back, but at the same time I don't want it back.

MILITIAMAN: What's that supposed to mean?

TAMAZI: Right enough - a thief did attack me and took everything. But, on the other hand, the whole neighbourhood's heard all about it.

MILITIAMAN: So what?

TAMAZI: What...what? Do you not understand?

MILITIAMAN: Honestly I don't get it.

TAMAZI: Everyone's heard about it. Now everybody's talking about me and also...

MILITIAMAN: *(bursts out angrily)* Just stop it! Tell me do you want it back or not - just tell me and I'll have it returned to you.

(The front door opens wide. Sandro comes in, holding the drinking cup in his hand. Irina is behind the door)

IRINA: Where do you think you're going?

SANDRO: A toast to love, to closeness and togetherness. A toast to our Tamazi! To this real man's man, a man of courage and the stuff of legends, man of his generation and man of his epoch!

MILITIAMAN: Would you please go and wait outside for me.

SANDRO: Mr. Uniform, did I do something wrong? We have to celebrate this event - there's no two ways about it as you should know!

MILITIAMAN: *(forcing Sandro out of the room)* I'll call you when it's time! *(closes the door after him)* I don't like this Sandro.

TAMAZI: *(standing up)* Why, why did you kick him out?

MILITIAMAN: Why?

TAMAZI: He's really important for me now. I want everyone to see me and what's happened.

MILITIAMAN: Hold on, you idiot!

(Tamazi is trying to open the door. The militiaman will not let him)

TAMAZI: Let me go! I need to open this door! Let the people in!

MILITIAMAN: Will you simply tell me, do you want the stolen stuff back or not?

(Takes a photo out of his front pocket and shows it to Tamazi. Tamazi wants to get away from the militiaman, but he will not let him go and tries to force Tamazi to look at the photo)

TAMAZI: Let me go! Get you hands off me!

MILITIAMAN: Just cut it out, or I'll arrest you instead of the thief!

TAMAZI: Help! Somebody help me! Hey, neighbours!

(Militiaman punches him in the stomach. Tamazi falls down and cries out in pain)

MILITIAMAN: Don't faint, please, do me a favour. *(sticks the photo up to Tamazi's face)* Do you know this man? Is this man did the break-in?

TAMAZI: Yes! How did you know?

MILITIAMAN: If you want you money back, he'll return half with half to himself - agreed?

TAMAZI: What's that?

MILITIAMAN: He'll bring half to you and keep the other half. What do you say?

TAMAZI: I haven't a clue what to say.

MILITIAMAN: That's not really important for the moment.

TAMAZI: Tell me then...

MILITIAMAN: Do you want you neighbours to find out about your heroic acts?

TAMAZI: What heroic acts - a thief broke in, demanded money.

MILITAMAN: *(interrupting)* Do you want them to know you've been burgled?

TAMAZI: *(humbly)* Yes.

MILITIAMAN: You want your neighbours to respect you, don't you?

(Tamazi lowers his eyes, shyly)

: You've probably some beautiful, decent unmarried woman as your neighbour, eh?

(Tamazi reacts emotionally and stands up. The militiaman gets up too. They look tensely at one another)

TAMAZI: Please, don't hit me again. If you get the money back for me, it won't be like - like a, like a robbery when someone's been robbed and people say that he's been robbed. It won't be like that at all.

MILITIAMAN: So I'm not like you imagined, am I? *(Laughs)*

(The door opens wide and Sandro comes in holding a drinking vessel. Irina follows him, carrying food)

SANDRO: Any subsequent toast must be pronounced with love..! *(fills up the drinking vessel and passes it to the militiaman)* I'm this fellow's neighbour. No need to be afraid, Mr. Uniform. This is my wife, Irina.

MILITIAMAN: What else is there to say than - here's to love! *(drinks)*

TAMAZI: I was lying unconscious, thinking how I'd just become a celebrity. Thank you, neighbours.

SANDRO: *(to Irina)* Go ahead now, dish up.

(Sandro and the militiaman sit at the table. Irina serves them)

TAMAZI: Go ahead and enjoy yourselves, neighbours. From now on, whenever I see you, I'll know that my neighbours are thinking of me, that I've become a celebrity. From

now on, you'll have the same thoughts about me, as I had about the neighbour who was burgled last year.

(Guliko comes in)

GULIKO: Irina, what's going on here?

IRINA: Our Tamazi's been robbed, Guliko, and that's why there's food on the table.

GULIKO: Tamazi?

TAMAZI: *(trying to stand up)* Guliko! We've just been talking about you.

GULIKO: Talking with these folks? What's wrong with you, what's up?

TAMAZI: I had nothing to do with the thief's break-in. I wasn't behind it, Guliko.

MILITIAMAN: There's no doubt he made a mistake either about the door or the floor.

GULIKO: What do you mean?

SANDRO: Life has no meaning, if within love there lies no bitterness. Gentlemen, love is essentially just like Truth. *(fills up the drinking vessel)* Let's drink to sublime togetherness, in which fate has united us, me and you. Let's drink to this beautiful table, set out so spontaneously in our Tamazi's flat.

MILITIAMAN: *(holding the drinking vessel)* Cheers, my dear Sandro. Cheers, indeed.

(Both drink)

IRINA: Goodness me, this calls for biscuits - I should go and bake some.

SANDRO: Biscuits! Serve the guests some caviar.

IRINA: Imagine, Sandro will insist that caviar is loaded with vitamins.

SANDRO: Naturally. Eating caviar is one pleasure - and eating vitamins is another... Just imagine - little yellow caviar eggs, so very tender and delicate, collected in a tin. You

use the tip of a knife to cut their delicious bodies and spread them on brown bread and, before you take a bite, you look at them one more time...How could anyone say this is all the product of your imagination? One powerful movement of the jaw, the caviar's placed between the palate and the tongue and - all the 'C' vitamins are awash in your mouth...

MILITIAMAN: I'd like to try those caviar eggs please.

SANDRO: Yesterday we celebrated the fifth anniversary of our parent's death. If you ask me, parents who have passed away are much more interesting, much nicer than parents who are still alive. You miss your dead parents more, you love them more, it's more...like...And when the parent's no longer, you have no idea what reaction she/he would have to different things and so you have a greater sense of freedom, of pride, of bravery. Why are you staring at me like that, did I say something wrong?

TAMAZI: Guliko! I've got to say, it's great staying like this, lying on my back. It's great. It's been an age since I've had the chance to stay this way...nothing to worry about, nothing tae do. It's all get sorted without any of my doing...

GULIKO: You've got every right, Tamaz. Tell me what's been happening, how did everything go?

TAMAZI: It wasn't anything special like. A criminal attacked me. I wasn't scared, I was just a bit surprised.

GULIKO: You weren't scared, Tamaz?

TAMAZI: I don't generally like to tell lies.

GULIKO: That's not what I meant.

TAMAZI: He put the knife to my throat, punched me in the guts, kicked me, robbed me and ran away.

GULIKO: I knew it, Tamaz. He got scared and ran away.

IRINA: Leave the man alone now; let him rest a bit. Come over to our flat Mr Uniform.

SANDRO: Family! What a circus, if it weren't a tragedy!

TAMAZI: He took everything but that's no important. Main thing, neighbours, I've got your sympathy - and what's more you're fascinated by my story.

GULIKO: Please, show me. Oh my God, your whole body is covered in bruises! Here's one from the knife, here's one from the kicking you got...

IRINA: Shall I call an ambulance?

GULIKO: No, no need. I'll see to everything myself.

SANDRO: Let's toast our togetherness, the refined relationship between us all and this beautiful and hospitable family. Look at this cup, I said look at it! What do you see? You see the black sun, white rain and red shoes. They are coming nearer and nearer, nearer and nearer... You see a big black box too, which contains... God, my heart!

IRINA: Calm down, man; relax. Don't drink anymore.

MILITIAMAN: Here's to this family.

SANDRO: Wherein lies wisdom in life? In a career? In money? In social status? Where, I'm asking you! In love, of course.

MILITIAMAN: Here's to love!

(Both drink)

SANDRO: On the other hand we are happy as a married couple. We loved each other before we got married and we still do. They say happiness never lasts for long, but that's not quite right. You see how many years our happiness has endured.

IRINA: I love you, because you're so kind and considerate. You have a great heart. There's a young man's grave in Ikalto² that reads 'A kind-hearted boy'. That's what I should put on your gravestone too. A kind-hearted boy. Blessed is every minute that was spent together with you.

SANDRO: I don't think those are your own words, Irina.

IRINA: No, they're not...they're some poet's, but what does it matter. The poet told me and I'm telling you.

SANDRO: So I'm obliged to be jealous now, Irina. Who told you those words?

IRINA: Don't be jealous, kind-hearted boy. I read it in a book.

SANDRO: But is the author of the book still alive?

IRINA: No, silly. Poets don't write verses like that nowadays.

SANDRO: Did you like seeing me jealous?

IRINA: Sandro has started writing poetry. Can you read us one of your poems?

SANDRO:

“As this very line is written,

Midnight's candle flares and gutters,

The breeze brings though my open window

Stories that the meadow utters.

The moonlit world attempts in vain

To shed it's covering of silver,

The breeze before my window makes the lilac gently sway and shiver³

IRINA: I just must say one thing. I have neither mother nor father. When I was born, my mother wrapped me in a cloth that cost twenty tetri⁴ and threw me into the river.

SANDRO: Tetris didn't exist back then.

IRINA: But it so happened I didn't drown, for God didn't want me to die. God told me I was the chosen one and that he wouldn't kill me. Since then I believe in God and...so, there I was floating down the river, and the waves washed me on to the bank right in front of an orphanage's fence. I know, it's hard to believe, but God told me. I was raised in the orphanage. Lots of famous people came to see us there... Mahatma Gandhi, Isadora Duncan, Najinski, Diagelev... (*Or keep original* Nani Bregvadze was there, Vakhtang Kikabidze, Amiran Buadze, Rezo Lagidze too)

SANDRO: (turns on record-player) Really? Rezo Lagidze too?

IRINA: Yes, Rezo Lagidze and Nodar Ahalkatsi as well, Eduard Shevardnadze and Razumovski. They were crying and we were laughing - we were happy but still they were crying.

(Sounds of music coming. everyone is dancing)

TAMAZI: I never knew you properly, neighbours, until now. But Guliko, you've been in my mind ever since you were robbed last year.

GULIKO: You handled that criminal in a dignified way. Imagined him daring to threaten you with a knife, you - an unarmed man. Who'd ever thought it possible.

TAMAZI: You wouldn't even say hello to me, Sandro and Irina.

SANDRO: I'm asking you, Mr. Uniform - how come our Tamazi survived today? How come?

MILITIAMAN: You don't often come across people like him. Believe me, I'm experienced in such matters.

TAMAZI: And now there you all are, standing in front of me, listening to my every word. I'd never have been able to assemble you like this, however hard I tried.

MILITIAMAN: One moment, please. I'd like to propose a toast!

(Music is being turned off. The guests get back to the table)

: Let's drop our formal way of speech with one another. Let's drink together to the great Stalin. He developed the slogan, and not without reason, "Language, Homeland and Loyalty to the idea". Here's to love which brought me to this family, and to the respect that I have for your feminine dignity, to your loyal and honest service to Georgian woman's decency, mad woman's dignity. Let's all stand and drink to Kakabadze's.

IRINA: Who are kakabadze's?

MILITIAMAN: How would I know? I'm not a kind of man who's up with the gossip. ..it's just love and feelings and understanding...manliness and selfhood, they're what matter most to me. I'll tell you things straight to your face. Yet I... I was never

allowed an opportunity to meet my minister face to face and to toast his witty, efficacious mind. I want to drink this to my Kakha⁵, my Kakha... *(starts to sing some kind of folk song)*

(Guliko and Tamazi are whispering something to each other)

SANDRO: A man of my experience has seen it so many times before - a man and a woman in love with one another. I've seen so many happy couples, and always I've this desire to take them into my house, lay them down in my ancestral couch and teach them to...

IRINA: What are you talking about!

SANDRO: Oh I'm sorry. Then let's drink to the old saying - 'no pain, no gain'. When a matsoni⁶ seller comes down the road and wakes you up in the morning, calling 'matsoni, matsoni'....

IRINA: What's all this foolishness?

SANDRO: Forgive me - with this drink I want to toast David⁷ the Great, David our Architect - king...Let's drink to the great work that man devoted himself to and even sacrificed himself to - and which will be of import for generations and generations.

IRINA: What the hell are you talking about?

SANDRO: What toast should I make then, according to you? Alright, let's all stand up and drink a great toast to the author of our play. Here's to Bassa Janikashvili.

GULIKO: Is this Bassa's play?

SANDRO: Thank you, my dear Bassa. Where would we all be without you? It was your talent and hard work, your great hospitality, your oratorical skills, which brought us all here today. Here's to you, Bassa, all the best to you...

IRINA: Such nice words!

(Guliko and Tamazi stand holding one another)

: Come on to our place now, this man's exhausted...

SANDRO: Yes, come to our place. Irina, lay the table. Come over to our place.

(Sandro and Irina take the drunken militiaman away. Tamaz stands up)

MILITIAMAN: I have a meeting! A meeting! *(tries to resist)*

GULIKO: Don't move! Lie down now. It only happens once in a blue moon, a thief breaking into your house - so you're quite right to have a wee relax to yourself.

TAMAZI: Guliko, you remind me of Mary Stewart!

MILITIAMAN: Yes, yes, she does look like her, she looks like the stewardess.

SANDRO: Who does she look like?

MILITIAMAN: Our Marika, the stewardess.

GULIKO: The fact you're alive simply proves how courageous and brave you are. Tamaz, would you mind if I see these people out?

IRINA: Didn't you hear me, boy? Come home immediately! You come too, Mr Uniform. Let's go on with our festivities there.

(Everyone leaves the room. Tamazi and Guliko are left alone. Silence. Suddenly Sandro comes in)

SANDRO: *(produces some money)* Here, take this money. Just in case some nasty man breaks in again, then you'll have something to protect. *(leaves the room)*

TAMAZI: I've never had my hands on so much money. I've only seen it on TV.

IRINA: *(comes in, carrying a machine-gun)* Isn't this a good idea? You should have this around. I know you can handle one or two on your own, but just in case lots of them come... *(Irina leaves)*

SCENE 3

Tamazi and Guliko are on their own.

TAMAZI: I'm an old man, but ever since my mother's death, I've had no one to take care of me.

GULIKO: I've been your neighbour for years now, Tamaz, and you've never got to know me properly.

TAMAZI: But I think I've become a celebrity in your eyes now, Guliko. So I'm asking you to have a cup of tea with me. I think I've the right to ask you today.

GULIKO: Don't try to get up. I don't think you should really be doing this.

TAMAZI: I'm not going back on it. No way, Guliko.

GULIKO: What do you mean?

TAMAZI: Guliko, at least once in a lifetime, everyone has the right to do something out of the ordinary...Something like...How can I put it, Guliko...Something extraordinary.

GULIKO: I'll make some tea.

TAMAZI: So, you agree? Guliko, you know I'm a single man...and...

GULIKO: *(on the way to the kitchen)* I think it's ridiculous for neighbours to be so formal with one another.

TAMAZI: Guliko, and...

GULIKO: Yes, Tamazi.

TAMAZI: Um...Not sure.

GULIKO: Alright?

TAMAZI: Alright.

GULIKO: What were you saying?

TAMAZI: I don't remember.

GULIKO: I do. You're a single man aren't you? And you've no idea what to do.

TAMAZI: Maybe.

GULIKO: You want to have a family, a wife to cherish, children to cherish, a good job - to leave at nine and come home at six - your wife to prepare a nice hot dinner, so that you can sit down with your children at half past six and eat - then you'll put on your slippers and your twin-striped pyjamas... and you'll sit and watch movies with your wife into the wee small hours.

TAMAZI: In the meantime, the children will be doing their homework.

(Serving the tea)

: But Guliko, you can't get twin-striped pyjamas anymore!

GULIKO: We'll get them, Tamaz. Twin-striped, triple-striped, quadruply-striped - we'll get anything. The tea's ready.

TAMAZI: Thank you. You forgot the spoons.

GULIKO: I'll go and get them.

TAMAZI: No, I'll do it.

GULIKO: Don't get up! You really shouldn't!

TAMAZI: I'd forgotten. Oh, my back's sore and my ribs ache.

(Guliko goes into the kitchen and gets spoons. Tamazi puts some music on and lights a cigarette)

GULIKO: Two spoons, right? Yes, Tamazi. I do understand. You see I live alone too. I've been married just the once, but it didn't work out. We stayed together just for one year, two months, three days and a couple of hours. What can you do... things happen. There's never been anyone else in my life since then, for I completely lost my faith in men, I don't trust them anymore, don't believe what they say...

TAMAZI: That's no way to talk, Guliko.

GULIKO: No, Tamaz, I really don't trust them anymore.

TAMAZI: Guliko!

GULIKO: What can I do, Tamaz. The person I loved, trusted, was devoted to, upped and left me for another woman. I've lost faith in myself then. Nobody needs me, nobody's interested in me.

TAMAZI: I am, Guliko.

GULIKO: Tamaz, lie down this instant.

TAMAZI: Oh, I'm on my feet...I've never known the warmth of a family, the care of a family... and obviously the people who have, have an advantage over those that don't...

GULIKO: It's not easy, Tamaz. You know, you haven't even praised the tea I made...

TAMAZI: It's very tasty.

GULIKO: Today is a very important day for me.

TAMAZI: Same here, Guliko.

GULIKO: I was given hope today, Tamaz.

TAMAZI: Same here, Guliko.

GULIKO: I could even regain my faith in men.

TAMAZI: Same here, Guliko.

GULIKO: Don't interrupt me.

TAMAZI: Yes, yes...

GULIKO: You are a very special person...

TAMAZI: You too, Guliko.

GULIKO: Let me finish!

TAMAZI: Yes, yes, Guliko.

GULIKO: You're very positive. You've no flaws and you're somewhat...

TAMAZI: Yes, yes, Guliko, you too.

GULIKO: You're a celebrity, Tamaz.

TAMAZI: Yes, I know.

GULIKO: I must confess something to you.

TAMAZI: Go ahead, Guliko.

GULIKO: It's hard for me, Tamaz...

TAMAZI: Guliko!

GULIKO: I can't cook, Tamaz.

TAMAZI: I'll cook, Guliko.

GULIKO: I grind my teeth in my sleep, Tamaz.

TAMAZI: I sleep very soundly and won't hear a thing, Guliko.

GULIKO: I've a disturbed sleep, usually toss the blanket to the floor, or completely lose it somewhere.. and I make noises as well....

(The door opens and the thief comes in. He unhurriedly takes out the stolen items and replaces them on the table)

THIEF: Excuse me opening the door without asking.

TAMAZI: The thief!

GULIKO: Tamaz!

THIEF: I'm exhausted.

TAMAZI: The thief!

GULIKO: Tamaz!

THIEF: May I sit down?

TAMAZI: The thief.

GULIKO: Tamaz!!!

THIEF: You weren't expecting me. I always arrive unexpected. My misfortune. I'm a thief, but I'm no like the others. Dark nights, white socks and Nicky Lauda's gloves, cannae be doing with them. I always attack face on. That's my style...

GULIKO: Your what?

THIEF: My method. May I have a cigarette? May I have some tea too?

TAMAZI: In a moment.

GULIKO: What are you doing, Tamaz!... Tamazi's got a machine-gun, you know... he'll go and get it now and then there's no telling what will happen...

THIEF: That's why I'm here in the first place - to apologise.

TAMAZI: Will you get the thief some tea, Guliko?

GULIKO: Don't ask me that, Tamaz - You beyond recognition!

THIEF: I am a thief, I attacked you and robbed you today, but it turns out that I chose the wrong entrance door.

TAMAZI: I'm scared.

THIEF: I made a mistake. I broke into your flat by accident. I'd been surprised that it was this flat anyway I'd been told to break into...But it was too late...

TAMAZI: I don't know what to say, really -

THIEF: At first I didn't pay any attention to you saying I wasn't like this, I wasn't like that...

TAMAZI: And then?

THIEF: Then....then... (*begins to cry*)

TAMAZI: Is that you crying?

THIEF: No, no. I'm a thief. I don't know what to do. Why did I have to meet up with you. I'm just a miserable, lonely man. At least someone is giving you a hot cup of tea..but there's no one gives me a plate of soup. (*wipes his tears*) I'm calm now.

GULIKO: Tamaz, get rid of that man immediately.

TAMAZI: To tell you the truth, I don't want to kick you out, but it seems that's exactly what I should be doing.

GULIKO: Yes, you should.

TAMAZI: You must be going. Don't know why, but you've got to go. I'm always contradicting myself, but I realise, that's what should happen.

THIEF: I should go?

TAMAZI: Your face is breaking my heart.

GULIKO: Tamaz, either he goes or I go!

THIEF: What do you say, Tamaz?

TAMAZI: I'm no sure. You robbed me, but I feel very grateful to you. I got to know my neighbours because of you, they'll all go round saying that I was robbed. Do you know what that means?

GULIKO: Now everyone will point Tamazi out, saying - look at him, he was robbed in such a special way...

TAMAZI: Yes, in such a special way. I was attacked by a burglar, armed with a knife. I fought back, didn't get scared.

GULIKO: On the contrary, it was the thief who was scared of Tamazi.. Brandishing his knife, the thief gave Tamazi a kicking all over his body...

TAMAZI: But still I went on resisting in a brave and dignified way.

GULIKO: Now Tamazi's the talk of the whole neighbourhood. Tamazi has been robbed, and he's become an example to us all.

TAMAZI: What's more it was thanks to you I got to know Guliko, thanks to you that she took care of me. If you hadn't beaten me up, kicked my ribs in, who would have put Band-Aids on my wounds? Who other, than Guliko?

GULIKO: And who would offer me a cup of tea?

TAMAZI: Who would worry about me?

GULIKO: Who would think of becoming a family?

TAMAZI: And after all that, you just come in here, all high and mighty, and put back what you'd taken? Is this how you want it to end?

THIEF: I just came to apologise; I just want your forgiveness...

TAMAZI AND GULIKO TOGETHER: We don't need your apologies.

THIEF: I'm just a poor man. Take back your things. I'm sorry I hit you and hurt you. Didn't you say I wasn't the kind of thief you'd imagined - and you were right. I'm not like that. I've been thinking about your words for a long time, you asked me for understanding. I didn't listen to you and I deeply regret it. And now I'm asking you for mercy, now I'm

begging you to listen to me and give me understanding. I'm just as you'd imagined me at the start. Take back your things.

(The thief returns the stolen items. Tamazi goes to fetch the machine-gun. Guliko and the thief hide)

TAMAZI: I don't know how to fire this thing, but I'm still going to shoot.

(The thief runs away. Tamazi now aims at Guliko)

GULIKO: Tamaz, go and lie down this instant. You mustn't get up. Would you like a smoke? *(takes the machine-gun from him and puts a lit cigarette into his mouth)*

TAMAZI: *(Takes a long drag)* Phe-e-e-e-ew.

GULIKO: It's been a hard day today.

TAMAZI: I wonder what it feels like - to be on the verge of getting married.

GULIKO: It takes a lot of courage.

TAMAZI: Doesn't it seem to you - that there are people out there, who've simply got families, and then there's us, we just stand by and comment on the fact that they've got families. *(takes a long drag)* Phe-e-e-e-ew.

The end

CURTAIN

¹ A vessel for wine drinking, made from wild goats' horns, widely used in Caucasian cultures.

² A village in *Kakheti* region, east Georgia.

³ Citation from a famous Georgian poet's Galaktion Tabidze's, verse.
Translated by Donald Rayfield

⁴ Contemporary money (coins) in Georgia

⁵ Implies the present minister of Internal Affairs of Georgia, Kakha Targamadze

⁶ A Georgian variety of yoghurt.

⁷ King of Georgia in XI-XII Centuries, a national hero of the country.