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**LABYRINTH**

**Translated by Tetiana Shlihar**

**CHARACTERS**

**Antonovych –** *67 y. o., former teacher*

**Pascal –** *35 y. o., French journalist*

**Mykhas’ –** *20 y. o., a student*

**Ksyusha –** *24 y.o., a prostitute*

**Serhiy –** *27 y.o., junior lieutenant of the police forces*

**The play is set in Kiev at the end of February 2014 nearby the Independence Square – Maidan**

**SCENE 1**

*A police van. ANTONOVYCH, heavily beaten, is lying on the floor completely exhausted. From time to time he is raising his head listening to what is going on outside. Shots are heard from afar, as well as sounds of exploding grenades.*

ANTONOVYCH. My God… Oh God, why do we need all this?.. Oh!.. What’s that?.. Sounds like submachine gun… Maybe, imagination.. Hell knows… Beasts… real beasts… What for? Why?.. Now they’re silent.. What will come next? They’ll definitely throw me into jail. Or maybe, not. Who cares for me? They’ll take me to the nearest corner and farewell, Igor Antonovych, former History teacher… Oh!.. They’ve worked me over pretty harsh. The ribs seem intact. But the teeth… Why do I need them now anyway? They won’t give me any food– that’s for sure, and in the other world… Oh, I wish finally... I wish they came or we went somewhere at last… Can’t wait any longer…

*Suddenly the door of the police van opens and PASCAL is thrown inside.*

PASCAL. Il ne faut pas! (Don’t!)… Ne faites pas ca! (Don’t do it!)

*The door of the police van closes.*

PASCAL. Où suis-je? (Where am I?)

ANTONOVYCH. Warmest greetings. I see we’ve got reinforcement. And a foreign one. Welcome in our temporary lodging. I’m Antonovych. And you?

PASCAL. Quoi? (What?)

ANTONOVYCH. Dammit, Frenchman? Seems like that… And my French is limited to a couple of words – most of which refer primarily to culinary matters. Let’s try English. I am Antonovych…

PASCAL (*cheerful*). Pascal. I’m Pascal. Do you speak English?

ANTONOVYCH. No speak, no understand. Memory fails me. Speak better Francais.

PASCAL. Je m'appelle Pascal. C'est une terrible méprise! (This is an awful mistake)..

ANTONOVYCH. Be quiet. I don’t understand anything anyway. Well, though I did understand something. Seems like your name is Pascal, right?

PASCAL. Оui. Et vous An-to-no-vych?

ANTONOVYCH. Pleasure to meet you…Dammit, my ribs… Quiet! *(listens)…* Seems like they started again…

PASCAL. Qu'est-ce que c'est? (What’s that?) *(points to the wall)*

ANTONOVYCH. La guerre! Have you ever heard this word? Revolution!

PASCAL. La revolution? En Ukraine?

ANTONOVYCH. Where do you think you are, my dear friend? Of course, in Ukraine. Who are you, by the way? A journalist?

PASCAL. Journaliste! Journaliste! Pas politique. Je travaille dans une revune de mode contemporaine. (I work for a fashion magazine).

ANTONOVYCH. I don’t understand.

PASCAL. Journaliste… Write… Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior…

ANTONOVYCH. Ah, I see, I see. You’ve decided to write about Maidan fashion, huh? That’s the right decision. The fashion here is so subtle, that it’s hard to perceive it. This season, for instance, balaclava helmets are especially in. They can be black. Or green. Even blue. From the best Ukrainian fashion designers.

PASCAL. Je ne comprends pas (I don’t understand).

ANTONOVYCH. I see you don’t understand anything. What can you understand, though… There is such a huge gap between here and fashion shows. … They’ll take you round the corner – and a bullet – after the latest fashion.

PASCAL. Qu'est-ce que vous racontez? (What are you talking about?)

ANTONOVYCH. *(puts his hand on Pascal’s shoulder).* Calm down, my friend! Maybe it’s for the better. When you don’t understand anything it doesn’t seem so terrible. It’s ok, it’s ok. It’s not going to be long to wait.

PASCAL. Il y a la guerre? (Is it war there?)

ANTONOVYCH. A war, Pascal. A real one. It’s no Hollywood here!

PASCAL. No Hollywood! Je suis un paisible journaliste! (I’m a peaceful journalist!) Qu'est-ce qui se passe ici? (What’s going on here?)

ANTONOVYCH. Stop it! Don’t shout! Nobody will hear us with the shots out there. Even if they hear, they’ll hardly come and save us.

PASCAL. On va nous tuer? (They will kill us?)

ANTONOVYCH. Don’t understand what you’re murmuring in your French. Probably you’re asking if they are going to kill us? *(showing by gestures).* Is that right?

PASCAL. Nous allons etre fusillés? (Will they shoot us down?) *(showing by gestures).*

ANTONOVYCH. Who knows. But they will hardly present you with an award – that’s for sure. Don’t worry, though – the embassy will rescue you. Ambassade – you understand?

PASCAL. Ambassade?

ANTONOVYCH. The French one.

PASCAL. L'ambassade française! C'est très bon! (This is great!)

ANTONOVYCH. It’s good you’re so happy! It will be easier for you to die. Although, maybe they’ll let you go. An international scandal in a way. Though… there are other examples – it’s only yesterday that two Polish journalists were shot dead. Very enthusiastic guys! And stupid! I told them not to go to the front. They only shouted: “Press! Press!”. They’re used to their fair life in Europe. However, for our special police forces there is no damn difference if you’re a journalist or Antonovych! Gone for nothing!

PASCAL. Qu'est-ce que vous dites? (What are you talking about?)

ANTONOVYCH. No! Nothing! Don’t worry! Better sit, have a rest. *(Showing)*

PASCAL. Ok! *(Sits down.)*

**SCENE 2.**

*The door of the police van opens and they throw Mykhas’ on the floor. He has only trousers on. Naked above his waist.*

ANTONOVYCH. (*dashes to MYKHAS’ lying on the floor*) Hey! What are they – savage animals?.. My God, what brutes. It’s freezing cold out there! *(Turns MYKHAS’ onto his back).* Seems like alive*.. (to PASCAL).* Hey, Frenchman, do you have clothes in your backpack?

PASCAL. Quoi? (What?)

ANTONOVYCH. *(showing with his hands)* Clothes! Spare clothes?

PASCAL. Un costume?

ANTONOVYCH. Let it be a costume. At least something warm.

*PASCAL takes a jacket out of his backpack, and after a short doubt also a shirt.*

PASCAL. Calvin Klein! Nouvelle Collection!

ANTONOVYCH. Even if it were Chinese second hand!

PASCAL. No! No second hand! Brand!

ANTONOVYCH. *(grabbing the clothes).* Such a pain in the neck, these Europeans… Brand! A man is dying here! Help me, come on!

*ANTONOVYCH is putting the jacket and the shirt on MYKHAS’. PASCAL is helping him.*

ANTONOVYCH. Well! This is much better! Now it’s a real brand! *(Listens).* It’s all quiet out there! Something’s wrong. Must be preparing…

MYKHAS’. *(opens his eyes).* No! No!

ANTONOVYCH. Calm down. Calm down, my friend. Nobody’s going to hurt you here.

MYKHAS’. *(trying to sit down)* Where? Where am I!..

ANTONOVYCH. In a police van. It’s a place for having a rest.

MYKHAS’. A rest before what?

ANTONOVYCH. Who knows. Perhaps before a long trip.

MYKHAS’. What trip?

ANTONOVYCH. Don’t ask so many questions. Your head will feel better…

MYKHAS’. Oh, my head aches!

ANTONOVYCH. Want a pill?

MYKHAS’. For headache pain?

ANTONOVYCH. No, dammit, for birth control! A headache pill of course! Hey, Pascal, do you have some water? I see – the cops didn’t check your backpack. Wasser! Water! Understand?

PASCAL. No wasser. C'est du bon vin! (Good wine) Chateau Canon! Millésime! *(takes a bottle out of his backpack)*

ANTONOVYCH. At least something wet! Give it to me! *(Looking at the bottle).* Well, you see! It didn’t even break! That’s what I call – quality wine! But how shall we open it?

MYKHAS’. *(takes a small knife out of his boot).* Take it.

ANTONOVYCH. Where did you get it?

MYKHAS’. They didn’t find it. They were searching everywhere but didn’t find!

ANTONOVYCH. *(looking at the knife).* Deadly weapon! But… it will do for the bottle. *(opens the bottle, gives it to MYKHAS’).* Take it. This must help combined with the pill.

*MYKHAS’ takes the pill, washes it down by the wine.*

MYKHAS’. Phew! Really good! But my head still aches.

ANTONOVYCH. It’s gonna help in a moment. Where did they take you?

MYKHAS’. In Hrushevsky St. They swooped down on me… Didn’t have time to run away… Then they undressed me and worked me over with the clubs…

ANTONOVYCH. Beasts. Real beasts!

PASCAL. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit? (What is he talking about?) Je ne comprends pas! (I don’t understand!)

ANTONOVYCH. Gestapo. That’s Ukrainian gestapo.

PASCAL. Quoi? La gestapo? Ukrainienne?

ANTONOVYCH. Can you imagine.. We couldn’t even think of all this a couple of months ago. A bad dream! No, it’s not even a dream! A nightmare! And the morning isn’t coming. At all!

MYKHAS’. What’s your name by the way?

ANTONOVYCH. I see the wine is working. It’s definitely not a swill, this is a… What did you say it is?

PASCAL. Chateau Canon.

ANTONOVYCH. I see. You can call me Antonovych. That’s the way people call me here in Maidan.

MYKHAS’. And…

ANTONOVYCH. And this is Pascal. Says he is a journalist.

MYKHAS’. A journalist? We brought three more from there today. Two are in hospital. And one of them…

ANTONOVYCH. Bastards! My God, what bastards!.. But, you see… Seems like Pascal doesn’t belong to those. As far as I got it, he is more into fashion. Check out the suit he gave you.

MYKHAS’. Wow! I didn’t even notice!.. Cool outfit. Probably costs heaps of money?

ANTONOVYCH. If it’s warm enough it’s worth of it.

MYKHAS’. It’s warm.. But what… What…

ANTONOVYCH. Want to ask me what’s gonna happen there next?

MYKHAS’. Something like that. By the way, I’m Mykhas’.

ANTONOVYCH. So what do you want to hear? The truth?

MYKHAS’. I’d like to.

ANTONOVYCH. As for the truth, I don’t know it. They might let Pascal go. But as for us…

PASCAL. Est-ce que c'est de moi que vous parlez? (Are you talking about me?)

ANTONOVYCH. Don’t worry. Everything’s fine. So far. Here you are. Have some wine*. (Offers Pascal the bottle).*

PASCAL. Boire? (To drink?)

ANTONOVYCH. Take some, take. Hardly could I ever think that I would drink expensive French wine in a place like this and in such a company. Although the company isn’t bad.

MYKHAS’*. (listening).* Do you hear that? Sounds like engines, right?

ANTONOVYCH. APCs? Yesterday we blew up one of them. Good job, guys. Cops were running away like rabbits.

MYKHAS’. Yeah, I saw it. It was funny.

ANTONOVYCH. Funny? We’ve learned to have fun out of things like that too fast.

MYKHAS’. What else should we do? Cry?! Or suffer from pangs of conscience? They don’t feel remorse at all!

ANTONOVYCH. Don’t get hot. I was happy like a child too when the APC started burning. If anybody told me about it half a year ago.. I would spit this person right into his face!

MYKHAS’. Yeah, you see. We have changed a lot. And as for them, they have always been like this.

ANTONOVYCH. You’re right.

**SCENE 3**

*The door of the police van opens. They throw KSYUSHA inside. She is wearing expensive but somewhat torn clothes.*

KSYUSHA. Assholes! Open! You’ll lose all your shoulder straps tomorrow! Together with your balls! Do you know what people I know!

ANTONOVYCH. They don’t hear you.

KSYUSHA. *(turning to them).* What?

ANTONOVYCH. I say – they don’t hear you. And even if they do hear, they don’t care.

KSYUSHA. What do you mean they don’t care? They will come crawling on their knees and apologize to me!

MYKHAS’. They won’t.

KSYUSHA. What do you mean they won’t. I will make only one call!..

MYKHAS’. You won’t make any calls. Do you have a phone?

KSYUSHA. No! They have taken it, fucking bastards. The latest model. But it doesn’t matter! They will pay back to me for the phone as well.

ANTONOVYCH. Calm down, my dear. Better have a sit. They don’t hear you anyway. And I doubt they think about you now. Do you hear the shots?

KSYUSHA. *(listening).* Seems like that…

MYKHAS’. They got louder. They’re attacking.

ANTONOVYCH. Probably…

KSYUSHA. What attacks? Who are you? What’s going on here?

MYKHAS’. Where did you fly from? From the moon? They throw her into a police van on the Independence Square and she is asking what’s going on! A revolution my dear. Have you heard about Maidan by the way? Or maybe you’re from a different planet?

KSYUSHA. Maidan? You mean the place were drugged Bandera supporters get together? I heard about it of course. You think I’m retarded or what? But what does it have to do with me?

MYKHAS’. Drugged, you say? Who told you that?

KSYUSHA. Well.. a general.. I’ve just been to his place.. Well.. I mean, he’ll show all these bastards here where they belong.

ANTONOVYCH. Who do you mean? The Bandera supporters or cops?

KSYUSHA. Both.

MYKHAS’. Who are you to this general? His daughter? Or maybe, wife?

KSYUSHA. What the heck do you care?

MYKHAS’. I don’t care at all. But if you’re not his wife or daughter don’t even dream about help.

KSYUSHA. Why is that?

MYKHAS’. They care only about themselves now. They have no other choice. Either they defeat us or we defeat them. That’s what it’s all about. Earthly matters don’t bother them any more.

KSYUSHA. I wouldn’t say so. He was so gentlemanly. Asked about our next meeting…

MYKHAS’. Good friends you have…

KSYUSHA. I have what I have.

MYKHAS’. And we’re not worth to be your friends, right? By the way, we even have a Frenchman here. A real one.

KSYUSHA. Where?

MYKHAS’. Let me introduce him to you. Pascal! A French journalist.

PASCAL. Enchanté! Pascal. (Nice to meet you. Pascal.)

KSYUSHA. Ksyusha.

PASCAL. Il est regrettable que nous fassions connaissance dans un tel endroit. (It’s a pity we met in such a place).

KSYUSHA. What is he saying?

MYKHAS’. Do you think we’re interpreters here for you? Seems like it’s you who mixes in noble circles.

KSYUSHA. So what?.. A journalist, you say, huh?

ANTONOVYCH. Not a general of course.

KSYUSHA. Why are you pestering me with the general?

ANTONOVYCH. Not at all. It’s you, miss, who started talking about him.

MYKHAS’. And the journalist is not a skinflint by the way. Didn’t begrudge even fine wine for us. Would you like some?

KSYUSHA. Wine? Why not. Give it to me.

MYKHAS’. Take some.

*MYKHAS’ passes the bottle to KSYUSHA. KSYUSHA is drinking.*

KSYUSHA. Not bad.

PASCAL. C'est un très bon vin. (That’s a very good wine).

KSYUSHA. What?

PASCAL. Go-od. Vin go-od!

ANTONOVYCH. And expensive.

KSYUSHA. Well, maybe for you it’s something extraordinary, but for me…

MYKHAS’. I know, I know… The general…

KSYUSHA. Go to hell! Why are you teasing me? Who are you by the way?

ANTONOVYCH. Hey, girl, calm down. We’re actually those drugged Bandera supporters. I’m Antonovych. Used to be a school teacher. History teacher. This is Mykhas’. By the way, what do you do?

MYKHAS’. I’m a student. Conservatory student. Future pianist. But judging by the situation, I won’t see my graduate diploma just like I’ll never see the back of King-Kong.

ANTONOVYCH. You see, what a noble company we have. And you say we’re drugged.

KSYUSHA. Do you want to say that the general was lying?

MYKHAS’. I just want to say that your general is an asshole! And a bastard! Do you hear the shots? Do you hear that, girl? They are killing my friends. By the orders of such generals! Do you know how many friends I’ve lost over the month? And how many of them are missing? How many are crippled? You came here so neat. A ragged doll! Feel happy now! You’ve got into the same swamp that we did! You’re not going to have any more generals! And no more wine! Your beautiful body will be found when the snow comes off. Somewhere in the outskirts of Kyiv. That’s the lie!

KSYUSHA. Do you.. how… are you serious?

MYKHAS’. No, dammit, I’m just kidding! I’m sitting here in the police van just for fun. Telling jokes. Better listen. Do you hear the shots? Do you think it’s a shooting gallery out there?

KSYUSHA. Well… I was told... those are.. those are criminals…

MYKHAS’. Criminals? Are we criminals? Am I a criminal pianist? Or Antonovych? Or maybe Pascal?

KSYUSHA. You.. you’re mistaken…

ANTONOVYCH. Calm down, Mykhas’! Let me explain everything.

MYKHAS’. Whatever you want. But will she understand?

ANTONOVYCH. You see, my dear… how is it better to explain… Tell me one thing. In what country do you live?

KSYUSHA. In Ukraine of course. Do you think I’m a complete idiot?

ANTONOVYCH. Well, you see, in Ukraine. And do you like everything in our country?

KSYUSHA. Me? Do I like it? I dream of getting out of this bog as soon as possible.

ANTONOVYCH. Have you ever considered the idea that when it’s dirty in the house people usually don’t move to another house but do the cleaning up?

KSYUSHA. No need to preach how I should live. I’m not a girl to you and I have seen life, maybe even more than you have.

MYKHAS’. I see that.

ANTONOVYCH. Keep silence, pianist. So what did you see?

KSYUSHA. Such male scumbags like you. First they instruct you how to live, then fuck, then preach again, saying what a bad girl I am.

MYKHAS’. As I understand, your professional career is clear.

KSYUSHA. So what? I’m a prostitute. An expensive one! So what?

MYKHAS’. Nothing actually. No problem.

ANTONOVYCH. Well, my dear courtesan, don’t you want to live in honest and beautiful Ukraine?

KSYUSHA. Fairy tales again? For ingenuous boys?

ANTONOVYCH. I wouldn’t say I look like a boy.

KSYUSHA. I don’t care a heck about Ukraine. I want to live in a normal country.

ANTONOVYCH. Well, that’s clear. I didn’t expect anything else, actually. Do you think it’s so easy to start from scratch – to learn a foreign language, traditions and lifestyle, to lose all your relatives and friends? Wouldn’t it be better if your native country became normal?

KSYUSHA. Well, maybe it’s better, but it’s unreal. And it’s not easy for sure.

ANTONOVYCH. Just imagine that there are people who care about the country they were born in, who want to change it, although they know it’s not easy…

KSYUSHA. Oh! I’m fed up with your patriotic prattle!

MYKHAS’. Fed up? Huh! Now you’ll be not only fed up, but you’ll choke on it.

KSYUSHA. What are you talking about?

ANTONOVYCH. About your future, my dear. The nearest future.

KSYUSHA. I don’t understand.

ANTONOVYCH. Do you think I am a revolutionary? Or our pianist is a revolutionary? Or maybe you think Pascal came to us to do revolution? We are regular peaceful people who want to live a normal life. Because we have the basic rights: the right for life and freedom. That’s what we’re standing for here in Maidan. They have taken our freedom, put us into this cage, and probably they’ll take our life as well. It happened so that we turned out to be here altogether. And it seems like the future will be common for all of us.

KSYUSHA. Don’t frighten me with the future.

ANTONOVYCH. I’m not trying to frighten you. And if you’re not a revolutionary – how come you’re here?

KSYUSHA. Well, I … I… by chance… I was brought here in a car yesterday night…To some apartment in the downtown.. Well… I mean… I went out in the morning… Wanted to have some coffee somewhere… And here they run… “Berkut” police forces… They grabbed me.. Threw me in here… Bastards…

MYKHAS’. You see how it turns out. You wanted to hang out in Bahamas, and now you’ll have to vegetate in prison. In the best case.

KSYUSHA. Why are you intimidating me? Maybe it’s good they have arrested you. I was told a lot about those like you. You pelt poor guys from Berkut police with Molotov cocktails. Damned revolutionaries! Do you want freedom? Work hard. That will be your freedom.

MYKHAS’. I see the general has done a great job.

KSYUSHA. The general has nothing to do with it! I have my own brains. I see everything with my own eyes.

ANTONOVYCH. So what do you see?

KSYUSHA. I see you have believed those rosy fairy tales. You want to join Europe? Why the heck do they need us there?

ANTONOVYCH. You see what it’s all about – it’s not about Europe at all. I am a teacher. I know history well. It has always been like this. In all times. Somebody bends to a tyrant, somebody’s running away, somebody can close his ears. But the thing is that there are also others.

KSYUSHA. Who do you mean?

ANTONOVYCH. Those like Mykhas’ and me. Regular people. Those who consider this land their native country and want to manage it themselves.

KSYUSHA. And you kill cops for that purpose?

ANTONOVYCH. So why, should they kill us? Just for nothing? For a peaceful protest? We’ve been peaceful for two months, and what? They beat us, tortured us, arrested us, killed us… We have the right to protect ourselves against the murderers! Everything has its price. Or maybe you think that revolutions are done in glamorous clubs?

KSYUSHA. I don’t think anything. I’m fed up with your politics. I want to go home.

MYKHAS’. This is hardly possible. You’re in a trap, my dear. Say good-bye to your dreams about beautiful life abroad. And send good-bye to your generals. Now the only thing you can dream about is in the best case a prison guard. For a pack of cigarettes.

KSYUSHA. Shut up! I don’t want to listen to you any more!

MYKHAS’. You may not listen to me. What will it change?

PASCAL. Ecoutez! (Listen!) Des explosions (Explosions!) Très proche! (Very close!) *(urges them to listen by gestures)*

KSYUSHA. What’s that?

MYKHAS’. That’s your general. Came for you.

KSYUSHA. *(lost)* This is .. this is.. will they kill us?

MYKHAS’. Maybe just cripple.

KSYUSHA. I … I… don’t want *(begins to cry).*

PASCAL. Il ne faut pas pleurer. (No need to cry.) Tout va s'arranger. (Everything will be alright.) *(Embraces KSYUSHA around her shoulders and consoles her).*

MYKHAS’. What a French cavalier!

*KSYUSHA dashes to the door, begins knocking on it vehemently with her fists.*

KSYUSHA. Let me out! Let me out! Does anybody hear me there?!..

PASCAL*. (trying to take KSYUSHA away from the door).* Il ne faut pas faire ça! (Don’t do it) Stop!

MYKHAS’. Don’t keep her. Let her knock! Maybe the general will hear her.

KSYUSHA. *(turning to him sharply).* I hate you! I hate you all!

MYKHAS’. So what? I can’t stand those like you as well.

KSYUSHA. You’re so innocent, of course?! A musician! A prostitute is no good company for you, right? I hate you so much! Those innocent like you! Defender of the Homeland! I only want to live! To live well! You got it?

PASCAL. Il ne faut pas crier. (No need to shout).

KSYUSHA. What! You’re also here! One more innocent boy? A journalist? Came here to advertise Maidan, didn’t you? What’s up in your satiated France – have you enjoyed the show?

PASCAL. No Maidan.. Je… Je suis… journaliste… De mode… Les défilés, tout ça… J'écris sur la mode (I’m writing about fashion)…pas la politique…

ANTONOVYCH. You see? You’ve attacked the guy for nothing.

KSYUSHA. *(continues sobbing).* All the same… I hate those innocent all the same.. *(moves away from the door).*

*They’re sitting silent for a while, listening hard. Then ANTONOVYCH takes the bottle of wine, makes a sip and passes to KSYUSHA. She takes the wine, sips and passes to MYKHAS’ automatically. He drinks and gives the bottle to PASCAL. A pause.*

PASCAL. C'est du bon vin. (Fine wine.) Vous entendez? (Do you hear?) Explosions.

ANTONOVYCH. Seems like explosions…

**SCENE 4**

*Suddenly the door opens and SERHIY is thrown inside. A young man in a torn police uniform. He is lying on the floor for a while, then raises his head, moaning, sees people and quickly gets back into the corner.*

MYKHAS’. Well. Well, well! Who is here? Hey, man, you must have mistaken the door!

SERHIY. Stay where you are! Don’t approach me!

MYKHAS’. Why are you so frightened?

SERHIY. Don’t come up to me, I say!

MYKHAS’. Do you think we’re gonna kill you? That’s the right thought. Such a gift of the destiny. At least one cop done in before death.

ANTONOVYCH. Stop it!

MYKHAS’. Why should I stop? Look what a bird joined our flock. A lieutenant. Directly from the fire front. When else will I have guests like this?

ANTONOVYCH. Stop it, I say! First find out who and why, and then start all this…

MYKHAS’. Find out? Did they find out? Did they find out first when they fired at unarmed people? Hey, Antonovych, give me my knife…

ANTONOVYCH. I’m not going to give you anything. Take a sit and calm down! Have some wine.

MYKHAS’. *(sitting down).* Ok… D’you want to talk? Let him talk. Before death!

PASCAL. Qui est-ce? (Who’s that?) Un policier?

ANTONOVYCH. Judging by it all – ex-police. *(to SERHIY)* So who are you?

SERHIY. I.. I’m .. Serhiy…

ANTONOVYCH. Good. But it’s still not clear how come such a bird turned out in our cage. Want to tell us?

SERHIY. I… I… refused…

ANTONOVYCH. This is interesting. What exactly did you refuse?

SERHIY. To shoot.

MYKHAS’. It’s something new.

ANTONOVYCH. Why is that?

SERHIY. I couldn’t any more! I couldn’t! When we had rubber bullets – that’s ok. But in the morning they gave us firearms…

MYKHAS’. What? Your conscience woke up, huh?

SERHIY. Your fellows, by the way, injured our guys as well. My four friends are now in hospital with burns.

MYKHAS’. I have the same number already in heaven. Your friends, though, fired at unarmed people…

SERHIY. Unarmed? What about the Molotov cocktails?

ANTONOVYCH. Stop it! *(to Serhiy)* Please continue.

SERHIY. Ok. Well, to make it short… they provided us with firearms… and set the task to clean up the Maidan by the end of the day by all means…

MYKHAS’. *(To Ksyusha)* Did you hear, my dear, what orders your generals deliver?

ANTONOVYCH. So what happened next?

SERHIY. Well.. well.. I refused to fire at people…

ANTONOVYCH. Why?

SERHIY. I can’t, I don’t want! We were told that those are criminals… standing there for money… drugged… we’ve been here already for a week with the guys… I couldn’t do it… at people… to death… with firearm…

ANTONOVYCH. Interesting. Very interesting. So you say, you couldn’t?

SERHIY. Couldn’t.

ANTONOVYCH. And what happened next?

SERHIY. Next? The colonel dashed to me. Took my gun. Told me I was arrested for treason. And ordered to throw me here.

ANTONOVYCH. *(To Mykhas’).* You see, how it comes out? And you grabbed your knife immediately.

MYKHAS’. Huh! Tell me - conscience! He got scared – that’s what it is!

SERHIY. I didn’t get scared of anything. I just took the aim, then saw a woman on the barricades – she looked like my mom. I couldn’t shoot at this woman. I couldn’t shoot at all!

MYKHAS’. Do you believe this snivel?

ANTONOVYCH. Who knows? Why would he lie?

MYKHAS’. Who knows those cops? What if he is a whistleblower?

ANTONOVYCH. Why would they need to send a whistleblower to us? Everything’s clear with us. Whatever it is – we’re now in the same boat. Let’s get acquainted. We already know your name. The guy attacking you is Mykhas’. Our only lady crying over there is Ksyusha. Next to her is our French guest Pascal. A refined company. I’m Antonovych.

MYKHAS’. This is really a refined company! A teacher, a musician, a prostitute, a Frenchman and a cop.

KSYUSHA. Shut your mouth!

MYKHAS’. Hey! What’s that? Since when prostitutes protect cops?

KSYUSHA. Shut your mouth I say. Did he do anything bad to you?

MYKHAS’. Bad?! They shot down my friends!

KSYUSHA. But it wasn’t him, right?

MYKHAS’. Those like him! They are all the same. Hate you all!

ANTONOVYCH. Stop it! Stop this hysteria. *(to Serhiy)* Better tell us what’s going on out there. Why don’t they take us anywhere?

SERHIY. We received an order to fire at Maidan with metal bullets, and then withdraw. Snipers are going to work afterwards. We’re not moving because the engine in this van was shot through. Now it serves only as a prison. And it’s not going to move anywhere.

ANTONOVYCH. Well! That’s a situation. What about guards – are there any?

SERHIY. They threw me in here, and ran away to catch up with the others.

MYKHAS’. So you’re saying nobody’s watching us?

SERHIY. Nobody. So what?

MYKHAS’. We can try to run away.

KSYUSHA. How exactly do you plan to run away?

PASCAL. Qu'est-ce que vous racontez? (What are you talking about?) Qu'est-ce qui se passe? (What’s going on?)

KSYUSHA. Calm down, calm down my dear. Don’t worry.

ANTONOVYCH. Wait a minute! Do you say there are no guards out there?

SERHIY. No guards.

ANTONOVYCH. That’s our chance.

KSYUSHA. What are you talking about?

ANTONOVYCH. It’s simple. They need time to take the cops away and check if everybody has retreated. Do you hear that? The shooting seems to have stopped, right?

MYKHAS’. Seems like that.

ANTONOVYCH. Snipers won’t start working unless everybody has backed off. Does it make sense?

MYKHAS’. Makes sense.

ANTONOVYCH. That’s our chance. But how shall we open the door?

SERHIY. That’s actually not a problem at all. If only we had a knife. I used to open such locks on a bet.

ANTONOVYCH. We’ve got a knife.

MYKHAS’. And then? We’ll open the door, what next?

ANTONOVYCH. And then we’ll let Serhiy go. Even if snipers are in their locations they won’t shoot at a person in police uniform.

MYKHAS’. Supposedly.

ANTONOVYCH. Then Serhiy will distract their attention.

SERHIY. In what way?

ANTONOVYCH. You can run, shout, do whatever you like. So that snipers don’t understand what’s going on. While they are thinking we’ll jump out of the van and run in different directions. Snipers won’t manage to react so instantly.

MYKHAS’. The plan isn’t bad but… What if we just wait here? It’s less risky.

SERHIY. We can’t wait. There is an order to kill. Complete destruction. They know there are arrested people here. They will just give a burst of machine-gun fire – and that’s it.

ANTONOVYCH. So we have no other options.

MYKHAS’. Seems like we don’t. But where is the guarantee that this one *(nods at Serhiy)* won’t betray us?

ANTONOVYCH. In what way? And why? He is now with us. Well? Agreed?

MYKHAS’. If there is no other choice…

ANTONOVYCH. No choice. *(to Ksyusha)* Try to explain our plan to the Frenchman.

KSYUSHA. How?

MYKHAS’. You’ve got a vast experience in communication…

KSYUSHA. Bastard!

MYKHAS’. Likewise.

ANTONOVYCH. Stop it! Wrong time for quarrelling! *(gives Serhiy the knife)* Take it. Start working!

*SERHIY begins rummaging in the lock. KSYUSHA is whispering something to PASCAL.*

MYKHAS’. Do you think it’s gonna work?

ANTONOVYCH. Who knows. But waiting for death without doing anything is absurd.

MYKHAS’. Don’t think bad of me – I’m not like that at all… But when I saw the uniform on this guy – everything got boiling inside me…

ANTONOVYCH. No need to apologize. I understand. I understand everything. Over these months life has changed us a lot. Something new was moulded out of us. Different people.

MYKHAS’. Do you believe it was worth of it?

ANTONOVYCH. Could we keep on living otherwise? Would you personally be able to continue floundering in this swamp? Seeing as they humiliate us so outwardly? Would you be able to give birth to your children into this swamp?

MYKHAS’. No

ANTONOVYCH. That’s what it is. So it’s not in vain. And the rest is only scum on the water surface.

MYKHAS’. Are we scum as well?

ANTONOVYCH. No, man! We are the water! A tide! A tsunami!... It is already inevitable. I believe it wasn’t in vain! *(to Serhiy)* How is it going?

SERHIY. Done! We can start now!

**SCENE 5**

ANTONOVYCH. So, once again. Serhiy jumps out first. Attracts attention of the snipers. You can swing your arms, shout, whatever. While they are thinking Mykhas’ and I get out and run in different directions. Right after us – Ksyusha and Pascal. Have you explained it to him?

KSYUSHA. As far as I could.

ANTONOVYCH. Ok. Is everybody ready?

KSYUSHA. Maybe.. maybe… we shouldn’t…

ANTONOVYCH. We must! That’s like in a labyrinth. If you want to find your way out – move. Otherwise you’ll stay forever in the imbroglio. Well! No more philosophy. Get ready.

*SERHIY jumps out of the van first. In a moment MYKHAS’ and ANTONOVYCH get out of it as well. A pause. KSYUSHA and PASCAL are about to jump, but here three shots are heard.*

PASCAL. Qu'est-ce que c'est? (What’s that?)

KSYUSHA. Shooting… seems like that…

PASCAL. Des snipers?

KSYUSHA. Probably…

PASCAL. Trois coups de feu! (Three shots!) Sergei, Mihas, Antonovych?

KSYUSHA. I don’t… don’t know…

PASCAL. Ils vont nous tuer! (They will kill us!) C’est la mort! (Death!) Tu comprends? (Do you understand?)

KSYUSHA. Oh God! What for? What did they do? Beasts, beasts, beasts!..

PASCAL. Je ne le crois pas! (I can’t believe it!) Ça n'est pas possible! (It can’t be true!)

KSYUSHA. What for? Why, my God!

*A pause. There is silence outside. KSYUSHA is sitting on the floor, quietly crying. PASCAL is sitting next to her, embracing her around her shoulders.*

PASCAL. C’est la mort? (Is it death?) Il ne fait pas pleurer! (No need to cry!) Nous sommes encore vivants! (We’re still alive!)

KSYUSHA. I’m… I’m not crying… no need… everything will be all right…

*Pause. KSYUSHA and PASCAL are silent. Suddenly Pascal begins singing.*

PASCAL. Allons enfants de la Patrie…

KSYUSHA. What?

PASCAL. Le jour de gloire est arrivé!..

KSYUSHA. What?

PASCAL. Je chante la Marseillaise! Révolution! Pas la mort! (No more death!)

KSYUSHA. No more… no… never…

PASCAL *(keeps on singing).* Contre nous de la tyrannie

L'étendard sanglant est levé

 Entendez-vous dans nos campagnes

 Mugir ces féroces soldats?

 Ils viennent jusque dans vos bras.

 Égorger vos fils, vos compagnes!..

*KSYUSHA listens silently for a while, then begins singing along with him. Suddenly somewhere far away the sounds of the Ukrainian anthem are heard. KSYUSHA begins singing the anthem Two anthems overlap, turning to the Ukrainian one, Pascal is singing the tune.*

Ще не вмерла України Shche ne vmerla Ukrainy

Ні слава ні воля, Ni slava ni volia,

Ще нам браття українці Shche nam brattia ukraintsi

Усміхнеться доля… Usmihnetsia dolia…

Ukraine has not yet died,
The glory and the freedom!
Still upon us brave brothers,
Fate shall smile!

*The sound gets louder, filling in the whole space.*

*CURTAIN*