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THE FIRST MAN

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THE VOICES:

FIRST

SECOND

THIRD

PART ONE

FIRST. It's not so simple. I don't know what it is... What is this connection between us?

THIRD. What is this connection between us?

SECOND. I love him deeply and he loves me too...

FIRST. But it's not that simple... I can feel him from far away. I had a dream about him the other day. We were at his house sitting at the table, eating, laughing... What a dream. And I started calling him. I didn't reach him. And then, when I finally got through to him, it turned out he was looking for me because he had written new poems and wanted to read them to me.

SECOND. He's got a different kind of mind. And he has his own truth.

THIRD. I understand. He's a closed off person. He's not very open about his feelings. Everything is inside. He endures everything.

FIRST. He never told me anything about his personal life - what it was like before I showed up. Everything I know about it, I did not learn from him.

SECOND. Except, he doesn't want to understand me. Our whole life had a rhythm - fight - peace, fight - peace. When there was peace then there was hugging, kissing, and we were very affectionate with each other...

THIRD. He loves himself a lot. He has his own rules. And he wants to break others. His own rules are very important to him. I respect his mind. But, of course, feelings are more important than rules.

FIRST. He came in late, and I was waiting for him, as always. I definitely couldn't sleep until he came home. I couldn't just fall asleep. I was laying in the dark with my eye closed, but I couldn't fall asleep. He knew I was waiting for him. I could fall

asleep, but in my sleep, I felt that he had come home, and I got up and ran into the corridor.

One day I saw him through the window by chance and he was running across the yard from the bus - like a little boy. He was running with his briefcase under his arm.

SECOND. I really, really loved watching comedies starring Depardieu or Louis de Funés with him. We were sitting on the couch. And it wasn't so much the comedy that made me laugh so hard, but the way he laughs. I loved these moments. I loved them to the point of exhaustion... Until a certain moment... Which I'll tell you about later...

FIRST. We went to visit relatives. It was a big enough group there. It was kind of relaxing. I remember he sat on the couch, and I wanted to sit on his, so I sat on his lap. I put my arms around him. And very gently, but insistently, he pulled me off him. He sat me down next to him and told me not to show my feelings like that. He immediately forced what program of emotions I should feel.

THIRD. He had his own office where he worked... And if I didn't have a pen or something... well, I would take something from there and forget to return it. And if he needed it... Then he would become very angry... Because in order for him to work normally, everything must be in its normal place. And I didn't like it either. Because who took it? It was you, wasn't it? Why didn't you put it back? This little thing, and you're having such a hard time with it. And it was this side of him that I didn't like. And we fought about that too.

SECOND. I was always the one to blame. And I always asked for forgiveness. He never asked...

And I started lying. And I realized that to avoid all of this... You have to lie. And lies became my parallel life. If you asked him to write my autobiography... you know, what I do during the day. Well, what he thinks I do. And compare it to what I actually do, it would be two different stories, two very different stories. Like sky and earth.

FIRST. I don't even know if I lied to him. The thing is, I've always had a huge need to share things with him.

THIRD. I wanted to work as a waitress in a café. This café in particular is only open at night, and well... rich men go there and drink with women. I wanted to know what the situation was like there. Because I lived an ordinary life, apart from that kind of world, and that kind of world is... well... dangerous, right? And people think it's bad. Because a man wants to be with women... well... it's normal... but for society it's not so moral... right? Well, I wanted to know, who works there, how they feel... I found a job in a café like this. It opens at seven o'clock and closes at midnight. So, you have to go home late. I talked about this. I have a goal - to get to know this unfamiliar world. Maybe it's useful to have that kind of experience. And he got very angry. He said - I thought you had a goal! I believed in you! And then you start a job like this, it's just very... crazy. Then I can't believe in you, that you have goals. You need to learn more about books, and you're wasting your time like this! I wanted to know, how he would react. He became very angry, reacting violently. So, I got scared and changed my mind too. Yes, he's right. And I did not take that job, yes, I refused it.

SECOND. What - I don't have the right to dance with my friends at a nightclub? And I said that I was tired of everything, and I wanted to live alone. I'm leaving. But I didn't get ready to leave right away - I thought, I'll pack my things tomorrow. And he called me a prostitute for not being home at night. He started shouting. You can go wherever you want, just so you don't have to set foot here again. It ended up that he actually kicked me out. It's that the way you want it, then let's get out of here.

FIRST. I just don't talk to him about some things because he'll get upset if I tell him.

SECOND. There were always insults. They grew - to a crescendo! To make him happy, I had to be perfect! One step to the left, one step to the right - execution. When serious conversations with him started, I tried to prove it to him, because I was right, and I had a lot of good arguments. But I couldn't say a word, because from the moment a serious conversation began, I was choking on tears.

FIRST. Or maybe this was a kind of peculiar manifestation of what is often called male chauvinism. Well, like, "The leader is always right, and if the leader is wrong, see point one."

SECOND. He is a well-respected, communicative person who can find common language with everybody... He is loved and respected by everyone. I've always been proud of him. He and I are both opinionated, stubborn, and able persuade others. If he needs to convince someone of something, it's easy. And if I need to convince someone of something, it's easy! But when we've had a fight with him!..

FIRST. Once, I decided to give him a throw blanket for his birthday. I wanted to give him something useful and good, I thought about it for a long time and remembered that, not long before, his wife had said it was a pity that there was no bedspread or throw blanket on the sofa or on his bed, because he had already worn out the decorative silk bedspread by constantly lying around on it. I went to a good store and bought an expensive German - or Dutch, I don't remember - well, in general, it was a nice, branded throw blanket made from pure wool, with a very noble pattern - in a black and blue checkered design on a white background. When I went to visit them, he was not at home yet. It was no longer his birthday, but a few days later - a regular workday. I must say, he didn't like to celebrate his birthday, and at the time I don't think he did celebrate it either. Well, anyway, I went to visit. Tanya (his wife) met me, we sat as usual, I played with Katyusha, and I left in the evening. I didn't wait for him, he called and said that he would be very late. Yes, Tanya really liked the throw blanket. She spread it out over his bed, said that he would definitely like it, and that it was exactly what he needed. And when I came to visit them a few days later, Tanya met me, and she was very embarrassed and guilty.

I looked and saw the throw blanket rolled back up into its packaging on the little table in the foyer. I was just stunned. Tanya began to explain to me in embarrassment that he had told her to give it back to me, that he himself had rolled it up neatly and carried it to the door so I wouldn't forget. He says that it was an expensive thing, and I was not a rich person, so there was no point in throwing money away. He has everything, he says.

When it dawned on me, and it didn't dawn on me right away, I had this feeling at first. I felt like I was looking at myself in a movie - that this wasn't actually happening to me. So, when it finally hit me, I sat down on a stool and burst into tears - I probably

cried for two hours. I couldn't calm down. I was terribly offended. Of course, I understood that he was much stronger than me, that he didn't need anything from me, but I really wanted to do something for him at least! I cried so much when he came home. And he started making fun of me. He said things like, "You found something to give me, I don't need it at all." Tanya started arguing with him. I said: "You know, I gave this thing to you, do whatever you want with it. If you don't need it, at least put it down the garbage disposal, that's your business, but please do it yourself and don't give it back to me." Then I left, of course. Well, the argument over it must have continued there, because a few days later he called me at work and said that "we have adapted your device. It works." Overall. He backed down.

SECOND. And when we fought, he gave me the cold shoulder. He wouldn't speak to me... Until I had apologized.

THIRD. But when we were fighting... usually... in the evening... The next morning, I would find a letter from him. And I read... I understand what you want, but my opinion is important too... Explaining my feelings is not very easy. He has a lot of thoughts - it prevents him from being able to openly explain his feelings. And I've forgotten why we were fighting in the first place!

FIRST. My mother told me: "If you love, fight for your love till the end and never marry someone you don't love."

THIRD. Mom was always worried if I came in late. Mom would go meet the electric train. Dad would sleep and Mom would go meet the train.

SECOND. All problems come from childhood, that's for sure.

FIRST. I was dropped on the floor at birth, and I had three bone fractures - two places in my collarbone and one of my ribs. My rib is still broken to this day, because they hid the fracture. They didn't treat me properly, didn't think I would survive, and so they didn't want to take care of me. And the third fracture was discovered in its neglected condition when my mother and I had already been discharged home. You see, it's this rib here...

THIRD. Fourteen years old... At that age I went to middle school that was all-girls. The boys were separate. I was only with girls, all around me were only girls. A private non-public school. I got used to it slowly... well... It's hard for me to be social with boys because there were only girls around. And only by train... Well, I'm at home and at school... And it was only by train that I went, and only on the way to school, and on the way home I see... well, a man. Well, of course, there are men, teachers, at the school, but besides them there's no one else. Therefore, on the train... it was scary when a boy or a man. Because at that age you really hate some scandalous things. For example, on the train... sometimes it happens that... a man touches a woman... Yes, I was afraid.

FIRST. Right now, I'm afraid, I'm afraid that we're fighting, somehow, we've stopped understanding each other. I'm always afraid that somehow, I won't love him fully, I won't give him everything I wish to, that I should give him.

SECOND. Anyway, I left. My friends borrowed money rented me a room in a communal apartment. Do you remember Rosenbaum's song "The Homeless Room"? Completely homeless, it was big, it was empty, there was a big bed in the corner - broken - a table and two dressers, and that was it. And a big red rug. And the door that was... There was a balcony - on that side, and on this side - there was the entrance to the room. And on the front door hung a big mirror like that, shabby and scratched. And so, I spent almost all my evenings and nights at that time... they went like this: I sat like this in the lotus position on the floor, looking into this mirror, sobbing. I mean, I had bags under my eyes that didn't go away at all, puffy red eyes from constant crying. I was sitting. And I remember that all this time I was talking to him through the night, like I was imagining him right across from me. I'd tell him - look what's happening. And who's to blame for this? Yes, of course, it's my fault. But, you see, it's also your fault. Yours - for this, this, and this. And mine - for this, this, and this. But it's like, we can't get back together because you don't understand what is your fault and you blame everything on me, and I don't understand what is mine...

FIRST. He was forced to make his own way in life. I remember the movie "The Last Days of Pompeii." And there the hero Diomedes is a famous merchant. There they accuse him of being ambitious. And he answers - I carried myself. He, too, had to carry himself all his life. And if he had a different personality, he wouldn't have achieved what he achieved. And these people, as a rule, they cannot give in, and it's very difficult for them to admit their own mistakes. Especially in those cases when they see someone right in front of them who is knowingly considered a less powerful person than they are. It is hard for him to admit that he could be wrong. And when it turns out that I was right, he doesn't notice it, and it seems to him that the whole problem is that we didn't do what he said well enough.

SECOND. I talked, and talked, and talked, it was getting to the point of a mad delirium... I thought I was going crazy because I could see him right in front of me and I was laying it all out for him, telling him everything. And he was in a sanatorium at the time... It was a terrible period. When it was over, people didn't recognize me - I had aged ten years. The world was turned upside down - a completely different person.

THIRD. When it's very hard for me, I say to myself - why did God give birth to me? But for me, God is just a handy word. I don't believe in the existence of God. I can't visualize an image of God.

FIRST. I also had some pretty rough stuff with him later, when, for example, he suddenly came to the conclusion... that I needed... That it was an outrage that I was still single. And it was urgent that we address this issue. And he's the organizer. He works in manufacturing, in business. He understands that there's a certain system, a certain task, and it needs to be organized and get such a real result. And that's how he builds everything. And it is completely impossible for him to understand anything else. And so, he said - here are these and these options for you. Let's consider them, discuss everything, weigh the pros and cons. You'll choose from these options and that's it. Some agreed to this themselves, and some were mama's and daddy's boys from his circle of acquaintances, and they wanted to put their sons in safe hands, because he had promised a good arrangement.

THIRD. They say that people born in the year of the Dragon are influenced by their first love.

FIRST. There was a moment of jealousy.

He decided that he was going to choose a man for me himself, and he openly told me that "I want to be a leader for you always - I want your husband to submit to my will. And I said - firstly, I don't understand at all. It's a strange method. Secondly. I don't love any of them. How am I going to live like this? And anyway, I don't want to have a baby with someone I don't love. And at first, he just didn't want to listen to me. And then we had a serious conflict - we didn't speak for half a year.

THIRD. But if he's tired or he doesn't feel well, he slams his cup against the table like this, or the door like this - slams it. He doesn't say it, but he shows it outwardly. I really didn't like that.

SECOND. Of course he's worried too. The way he sees me in his imagination, there may be some truth in it. I'm not arguing. I'm not that pure and chaste, and innocent. Right? Here. But that monster of depravity and vice that is painted in his head in relation to me - it has nothing to do with me. But why should I dissuade him if he's convinced anyway? He beat me, shouted, called me a prostitute, a whore... On my birthday he wished me lots of men and money...

FIRST. And then how would I... it could also have happened because... I had a love affair with his friend... And... Well, in short, he left me. I was very much in love with him... yes. But he left me. For another woman. Although he eventually broke up with her too. It must be said that this woman was not known for her integrity. But that's a completely different story. But she was older than me, so she was more experienced. And at the right moment, she turned things the way she needed them to be. And anyway, he married her. And I was very worried. I've had some very scary thoughts come into my head. I could've killed myself. It's crossed my mind. And I was terribly depressed. And he was just afraid that something would really happen. Here. After this story, he stopped communicating with this friend of his. Besides, the situation was such that, in principle, he could've had a tough talk with him at the time, demanded something. But he just talked to him, convinced him that... It was such a situation that this friend just wasn't sure about me. Of course, I was much younger. And I said then - why couldn't you press on, demand? He said - well, you're smart, you'll understand anyway, that he got married under pressure. And it will always be unpleasant for you, you won't be able to live peacefully with him. And I agreed with him. He probably said it then because there was nothing more he could do. And then we had a conflict. We didn't speak for half a year because I refused to get married to his choice. He chose a groom for me, and I refused. He was a very big authority over me.

SECOND. What do we need? Just a little bit of care and attention. And where can we get it after all we've been through?

THIRD. And I have friends, but if suddenly I'm gone, what changes for them? Nothing changes. That's how it felt. And I'm very sad - why am I alive? But I didn't tell him that. I didn't want to. I was a little ashamed... We have lunch every day, we talked together. But that's not who I am. I felt like I was a very boring person. Who

needs me?.. It seems to me that sometimes his business is more important to him. I'll come over - give me a good book to help me. Of course, he will give me one. But that's because I came over. But if I hadn't come over, he wouldn't

FIRST. And I always thought he was a strong personality. And anyway, in order for me to feel a deep affection for a man, that man has to be as strong a personality as he is. And when I met such a man, I stopped talking to him about my personal life. This man is whole and static - he is a man who seems to have swallowed a grenade. It's some kind of inner doom. It's akin to how Soviet troops burned their own cities while retreating.

THIRD. I got into university. It was very interesting for me to socialize with boys - a different character than girls. But after half a year I realized that boys - they're not very strong. Weak. Even women are stronger. Boys... they... don't think that much. They're not interesting. It was interesting at first, but then... I wanted discoveries. But there weren't many people like that around me. I just read books. And socializing with people wasn't that interesting because that's not how they think. But I accidentally found a circle of friends... that do plays in Russian. And I met a boy there. And he wants to become a writer, so it's very interesting to talk to him.

SECOND. I need my own corner, quiet, peaceful, where I can lock myself in and think for a little while. Rethink.

THIRD. You need to stand on the ground firmly, like a tree, with roots. But I feel like fluff, flying in the air. I have no foundation...

SECOND. It's all gone to shit. No communication at all. We exist in the same living space; our toothbrushes are in the same cup - nothing more. At first, we at least said hello and goodbye when we saw each other, but then...

THIRD. I saw a movie, over Christmas break, a boy was sleeping and the parents carried him to bed. I remembered a moment like that too - and I was sleeping on the couch, but not in my bed. Then my parents took me and carried me to bed. And it was very nice. And they put warm blankets on the bed. It's a very happy memory I have connected with my parents.

FIRST. My parents never even hugged in front of me, never spoke to each other affectionately, never said "I love you" to each other. Instead, they were constantly fighting in front of me. I remember, I was little, I was falling asleep, and they were shouting at each other on the other side of the wall. I would put my hands over my ears and fall asleep when I got tired of crying.

SECOND. The most disgusting thing is that I would give half my life to figure out where the exit is.

FIRST. I'd like to say to him: "Let's just walk the streets in silence for a little while."

SECOND. He doesn't believe me, doesn't believe me at all. Well, he's probably right. I lied a lot...

THIRD. I was born and I will die.

FIRST. I remember myself from the age of three, even a little younger. By analogy with the hero Yevstigneev ("Winter Evening in Gagra") who said that "I had a moment in life for which I was ready to give up everything" (this was when he was dancing with his daughter) - I sometimes think that I would probably give up everything for that evening... At the time I was... probably four, yes, three or four years old. More like three than four. Dad and I went to the park. We were there often. He and I actually went out a lot when I was little. It was the beginning of June. A thunderstorm started and Dad... and we were just by the pond. And, anyway, my dad grabbed me in his arms and ran home as fast as he could. And he also made me laugh so hard. I remember that it was very funny to me. Here. And then suddenly it started hailing too. And I, of course started crying. Then Dad took off his shirt, wrapped me in it and started running home again with me in his arms. And the hail was hitting his bare back, but he was still trying to cover me with himself somehow. And I remember holding onto him. And it was a great happiness. A very strong feeling of happiness. And probably, well, probably forever, all other feelings will be, so to speak, they will be comparable to this for me. And I don't know of any stronger yet...

SECOND. We were sitting in a big room - I was sitting in the armchair, and he was on the couch opposite me. I was sitting on the armchair with legs, so. And he was flipping through a songbook. He was flipping through the songbook and at some point he opened to a song... now I remember... "Old songs about the main thing". Leshchenko also sang it... With someone, with Varum, I think... I don't remember... It's an old song, a good one... Something there... "spring has passed..." "Why didn't I meet you... Young and tender..."

FIRST. (singing along). "in those years of mine long ago, in those years... those springtime years..."

SECOND. And he started to sing it. And I look - he has tears welling in his eyes, now he's going to cry, really... I felt so sorry for him! It's just unreal! And something just tugged at my heartstrings! Like a tortured conscience! I was ready to throw myself on his neck! I was ready to get on my knees! I'll give up everything! Everything! Forgive me for everything, DAD! DADDY!

FIRST. DAD! DADDY!

THIRD. DAD! DAD!