

# **The Polar Truth**

A play

By

Yury "Strike" Klavdiev

Translated by John Freedman

*Contact for author and translator: [jfreed16@gmail.com](mailto:jfreed16@gmail.com)  
The Polar Truth by Yury Klavdiev " 2006. English translation by  
John Freedman " 2008.*

**Characters:**

Kid

Girl

Nettles + Dandelions

Tapeworm

*A few other people (a policeman, passersby, Ira, cashiers, Marina's boyfriend, Sasha, The Victim, cops) are best taped on audio. These are people who surround us but whom we don't notice until they die or do something else worthy of note.*

*Their voices on tape are sufficient.*

**Contents:****1. The Kid****2. Sunny****3. Nettles + Dandelions****4. Tapeworm****5. 2 + 4 + 1 (We Are Many)****6. 2 + 4 + 1 + 3 (It's Easy Being God)****7. A Lesson about the World****8. The Polar Truth**

**1. The Kid.**

-Howdy.

-Yeah, hi.

-You know what I'm here for?

-Pretty much.

-Alyona called me.

-You?

-Is that so surprising? That she called me?

-No.

-Then why do you ask? You think she's got no place to call from?

-I dunno.

-Wha' don't you know?

-I dunno.

-She said you guys have problems.

-What problems could we have?

-That's for you to tell her. She told me to come talk to you.

-What about? Did she say that?

-She did. She said you've given up.

-She said I'm given up? Did she say why?

-I don't give a fuck why.

-Ah, yeah, well...

-Yeah. Because whatever the reason is you figure it out with her.

-We don't have any problems with that.

-If you didn't have any problems I wouldn't be here. Is that clear? That's why I came here to talk to you, because you have problems.

-I don't have any problems.

-You're a strong, healthy dude, aren't you? You're a strong, healthy dude.

-What of it?

-Then apply your strengths where they're needed. You do have need of strength, don't you?

-What for?

-Because you're one fucked motherfucker.

*Kid grabs the other by the neck. The other guy twists*

*out of his grip.*

-What the hell are you doing?!

-Don't like that, huh?

-What's your problem?!

-She didn't like it either, you got that? What're you jumping around for? Stand still -

-I'm standing still. You stand still. Wha'd'you want?! Let's talk -

-I already told you; it's her you're going to talk to.

*Kid gives the other a knee chop. Grabs his clothes. The other grabs Kid's clothes.*

*Kid hits him in the chin. Kicks him in the ribs. Comes down with a hook on his ear.*

-I fuckin' told you! -

*Kid drops on his knees and twists the other guy's sweater on his fist. Holds him tight to the ground. Pushes his knee into his nose.*

-I saw Alyona. I saw her bruises. She said it was you. And I know it was you. Because you're a fuckface, goddamit. Because you're a cocksucker. And if anybody has any more problems because of you, man, you're not even going to come close to Alyona, is that clear? If any fuckin' mother has any problems because of you, you and me are going to have to meet again. And I have no fucking idea what I might do. Did you understand what you just heard?

-Yes -

-So that's how it fucking is.

*Kid smashes the other guy's nose with his knee.*

-So what happened?

-Nothin' man. We just had a talk and clarified a few things here and there.

-How come he looks like such shit after talking to you?

-What do I have to do with it? He looks like shit anyway.

-You mean he was already like that when you saw him?

-Maybe not quite. He fell down, too, you know.

-How did he fall?

-You want me to tell the whole goddam story? When I got there I see he's all bloody, like he's just been in a fight. So I ask him, where are they? Who're you fighting with? He says they just left. Then he got sick and keeled over. That's when you guys got here.

-Are you saying you didn't beat him up?

-Are you kidding?! I didn't touch the guy. What would I beat him up for? I've known this guy -

-You only beat up strangers?

-Man, I don't beat up on anybody, I'm telling you!

-So you know this guy, but you didn't beat him up -

-Nope.

-Well he says you did.

-Why?

-That's what I want you to tell me.

-Well I already told you I didn't beat anybody up.

-If that's true you can sit tight here until tomorrow.

-What do you mean? How come?

-Because he's in there writing up a complaint against you. And that complaint means you've got to go through an ID line\_up. But the only person who can schedule that is the detective. And the detective only comes in tomorrow. That clear?

-So you're puttin' me in a cell?

-I sure am. You didn't expect me to take you out for a walk, did you?

*Pause.*

-I'm HIV positive.

-So what?

-Nothing. I'll just bite through my veins and spill blood all over your floor here. And you're fucked. Good luck washing that up. You can't even kill the virus by boiling it, you know that? It dies only at 212 degrees and liquid starts boiling at around 200. That's how I got it. I didn't boil it hot enough. Naturally, they let me go. Made me sign a paper and let me go. And they didn't take that dick smack's complaint. I heard about it because he told everybody. The cop went to him and said, "That guy you're fingering has AIDS. He's dead in three years. What the hell good's jail going to do him?" That got me thinking. How did it happen? I started thinking about everybody. What I did with who. At least the last year I might come up with. Try to anyway. And I started thinking about all those people - you run across a lot of people when you're hanging out with junkies. It's all the same people, but there's a lot of them. You think it's a lot of them, but it's really all the same people. Anyway I was more worried about hepatitis than HIV. 'Cause they're all your friends... I'm going along thinking about the women, of course. 'Cause that's probably where I picked it up. Hepatitis you get from the drugs, of course. And HIV you definitely get that from the women. Because I can tell you right now that I didn't get anybody's blood in me from any needle. Anyway, I'm going down the hall back to the cell and on the right there is this room with easy chairs and a TV set. There's two guys drinking tea, sitting there watching television. With a DVD player on a glass shelf under the TV set. And there's this soft rug on the floor. And I think, what the hell is that room? Because there's just a hall there with nothing but cells. Brick walls and cells, like that, every ten feet. And it occurs to me I'm just seeing a picture of normal life. For the last time. I'm not making anything big out of that. Those're just thoughts I was thinking. That's the truth, that's how

my life came down. That never happened again because I was never in there again where I saw that. So this is all for real. I go into the cell and I sit down thinking. And all the other guys in there see I'm kind of in a world of my own and some guy comes up and asks me, "What happened? What'd they say to you?" At that moment there was nothing I wanted more than to share this with someone, to say it out loud. So I say, "I'm HIV positive." And he says, "You mean that's what you're all bent up over?" And I say, "Yeah." And he says, "Get off it. I thought something happened." And he points around at everybody and says, "This guy's got HIV and this guy's got HIV and this guy over here. Everybody's HIV positive in here. So what? Everybody's cool. What's your big problem? Life goes on. I thought your mother died..." Hold on a second, that's my phone -

## 2. Sunny.

-Hello. Is Sergei home?

-Yes.

-May I speak to him?

-Who's asking?

-It's Sveta.

*Dial tone.*

-Hello. Is Valya home?

-Who's calling?

-It's Sveta. May I -

*Dial tone.*

-Hello.

-Is that you, Sveta?

-Hey, hello, Sanya.

-It's not Sanya. It's his brother. Listen, slut. You show your face around here again I'll strangle your bitch ass, you hear me? Keep your diseased body away

from normal people.

*Dial tone.*

-Here, let me try.

-Go ahead.

-Hey, is Sergei home?

-Who's calling?

-It's Ira.

-What Ira?

-You probably don't know me. I just met Sergei recently.

-Is Sveta standing there with you?

-No, who's that?

-Forget it.

*Ira hangs up the telephone.*

-That's cool.

-What a bunch of cunts -

-Forget it.

-What do you mean, forget it, Ira! You can't imagine the shit that goes on. I'm like some fuck\_knows\_what for all of them now. Man -

-Cool it, Sveta -

-Cool fucking what?! They're all the cool ones. For me to cool it I need to talk to somebody. Just talk to somebody. Fuck!

-Screw 'em all, man. Who needs to fuckin' talk to them?

-Who else am I going to talk to? There isn't anybody else!

-Sveta -

-What?

-Let's go for a spin, huh?

So we headed up into the hills. It's not far - about 80 rubles by taxi. And on the way there's this place - Old Village. The highway from the factory is always full of these huge, stinky old trucks. The road around there is as black as the dirt under your nails. A nasty wind



whips across there. There are these abandoned homes, all burned out inside. Nobody's lived there for ages. Just stray dogs sleeping there. And homeless people. There are still some offices up there, but they're closed at night, locked down by armed guards. It's night already as we're driving up there and I get to thinking that these old homes are like us. Somebody made us but now we're left to our own devices. Some place that somebody used to care about but not anymore. It's like that with us - like we don't quite exist. Regular trucks don't even drive by, just these dirty old things. It's just that in this place by us there's something everybody needs. And that's what they come to haul away on these trucks. And we sit here, like these abandoned houses - doors wide open, windows kicked out. Nobody hears anything. Nobody even looks our way. It's just like we don't exist. That time we didn't stop in. It was late at night and really scary. The place was probably crawling with derelicts. They could kill you. But that place stuck in my head. I'd seen it before, but this time it was like for the first time. We arrived up in the mountains, got out and sent the taxi away. We walked around talking and looking down at the city below. We were just shooting the breeze about nothing in particular. Just regular stuff, whatever was happening to everybody. I told Ira what was on TV. She works all the time and only watches television on weekends. On the weekends it's all that pop entertainment shit. I have all kinds of time on my hands. I don't work. So I know what's going on in the country. I tell her all about it and she tells me what's going on in town. I stay home all the time - I don't get out almost at all.

*Snow whirls silently and  
aloofly past the houses which  
protrude above the earth on  
stilts. It is as though the  
houses don't even want to  
touch the earth. Although*

*people walk upon it. And stand on it. Buried to their knees in daily cares, sunk to their torsos in problems, buried to their necks in poverty.*

-Ira?

-Huh?

-There is somebody else besides us, isn't there? He made it all up, didn't he? We didn't think it up - we just use it as we can and then die, that's all.

-So?

-I wonder what's in it for him? Or did he sell us to somebody long ago? Developed the idea and then sold it off.

### **3. Nettles and Dandelions**

-Hey, man.

-Howdy.

-How're you doin' without me?

-You're indispensable, man. Things are bad without you.

-Hungry?

-Famished. Everything's ready, but I didn't eat anything. I was waiting for you.

-You waited for me? How about that? How romantic can you get?

-Fuzzy?

-Yeah?

-I love you.

-I love you, too. So what do we got here? Look at all this!

-I was walking through the marketplace and I look at all those tomatoes - really fat and juicy -

-Aha -

-And I think it's been ages since we had anything really special, hasn't it?

-It has -

-And so I -

-Christ. You're so cute.

*Marina and Volodya set the table: two dishes, two forks, two tea spoons. A sugar bowl. Candy in a dish. The doorbell rings.*

-Is that for you?

-I dunno. What time is it? I don't think anyone was coming. Hello, Nadezhda Ivanovna. My God, what happened?!

-For God's sake, help me, kids! Help me, please! Oh you sweethearts! How glad I am you're home! It's horrible, kids. You've got to help me.

-What happened, Nadezhda Ivanovna?

-Sit down! Have a seat!

-Volodya, bring some water from the kitchen!

-Nadezhda Ivanovna, calm down now!

-I don't have any time to sit, I'm in a hurry -

-What can we do, Nadezhda Ivanovna?

-It's Kolya. He was hit by a car.

-Oh my God!

-Is he alive? Is he alive, Nadezhda Ivanovna?

*Yes, he's alive.*

-He's alive, thank God! You kids are always so nice! But he doesn't - he lost almost all his blood, for God's sake. They told me how it happened, when he was hit his body flew through the air and he landed against the corner of the building. And there's a steel shaft sticking out there and it went right through him. When the ambulance got there they couldn't get him off and they had to have the steel sawed off. While they were doing that all his blood flowed out onto the snow.

-Sweetheart, what kind of blood type do you have? And you?

-A.

-B.

-My dear, sweet Marina! I'll say prayers for you for a

hundred years -

-Marina, do it! You're blood's right. It's no big deal-

-Marina, please! Marina, please help us!

-Nadezhda Ivanovna, I can't do it.

*God damn it.*

-Marina, please. Please!? Sweetheart, help us. He's in shock. He's in shock and he has no blood. He lost 20% of his blood.

-Nadezhda Ivanovna -

-There's nothing to be afraid of. It's a good hospital and they have all the latest equipment. It doesn't hurt at all. My dear, sweet girl, please help us -

*God fucking damn it.*

-I can't do it. I'm sick. I'm sick, Nadezhda Ivanovna. I'm sorry, I can't do it.

-Now, now, honey! That's all right, child! I'm so sorry, I didn't know -

-No, it's me who's sorry. But I really can't do it. Really, I can't do it.

*Son of a fucking bitch.*

-Were you that scared?

-That's not it.

-You mean you're really sick?

-Really.

-Really?

-You don't believe me?

-But you know Kolya. Why else wouldn't you help him?

-You think I'm really a bitch, don't you?

-Obviously not, if you're sick -

-I. Really am. Sick.

-How come you didn't say so? What's the matter?

*The tomatoes have gone mushy.*

*The glasses are empty.*

- I'm HIV positive.
- You're HIV positive?!
- Yes.
- Why didn't you tell me?

I picked my things up and left. Not far from our house there is this big cluster of heat pipes. A convergence of several systems or something - it's this whole heatpipe city. A little hill. Nothing ever freezes there. it's the first place to bloom in the spring. Homeless people always lay around there keeping warm. The place is covered with trash, newspapers, old bags and rags, but it's the first place to bloom. It was the end of May. The first snow was just beginning to melt. And nettles and dandelions were already pushing up. A few leaves here and there on this warm island by a manhole cover. Nettles and dandelions. Nettles and dandelions. I found out in spring, too. Everybody was having their blood checked. And I came up positive. Naturally the doctor went and told everybody. The church was right to burn those fuckers in the old days. 'Cause they always know best what people need. They fucking stand guard at the gates of life. Yeah. So they can drive like maniacs, charge as much money as they want and do whatever they want... Nobody would talk to me the next day. Just polite little nothings. Then I noticed everybody's drinking glasses were all together except mine which was off to the side. I found that doctor and I smacked her in the face. Then I quit my job. And I sat down on that plot of land with the nettles and dandelions and I started stroking the leaves. The weeds were still young and the nettles didn't sting. That's how we are, too. I mean, nettles and dandelions are weeds, but they're really pretty, too. When they're young. Then I flew to the Crimea. I have family there. Obviously I didn't tell them anything. Just my dad on the last day when I was leaving. He was cool about it, he said, "No big deal." He said, "No big deal."

Kolya's a great kid. We're good friends. We were. When I got back I tried to start everything over from scratch. I got myself another job and never went back to the old place. I wanted to change my name, but everything here's such a hassle. Basically, everything's okay now. Twice somebody recognized me on the street - can you imagine that? In a whole year! I mean, this is a pretty small town but we don't even know each other - anyway, I told those people they were mistaken. Then I met Volodya, he's a really cute guy. Damn, incredible how things happen. And so I'm stroking those leaves with my palm and they're really soft and alive. And they'll keep living, they're not sick. They don't have HIV. Sometimes I start thinking that it's only we who die and that everything else will just keep living on.

*Kolya died without ever  
regaining consciousness.*

#### **4. Tapeworm**

*Sveta wanders through a  
crumbling, abandoned  
building. All blackened from  
isolation, wind and wet snow,  
the whole place is silent.  
The damp boards and wet trash  
exude a moist silence. There  
is nothing whole here at all.  
Nothing to sit on. Everything  
is broken. There's no place  
to rest - everything here is  
so old you have to keep  
moving if the floor isn't  
going to cave in.*

SVETA

Don't get me wrong, I didn't want to offend anybody.

It's just that everybody used to be cool; now there's no telling what to expect. Everybody did everything together. Did the shopping, the cooking, and we all came together in the kitchen. I'll show you.

*Picks a wad of tin foil up off the ground. Deftly shapes it into a cone-shaped figure. Attaches a stick to it.*

SVETA

See, this is the spoon. And this is where you put the shit.

*Puts a handful of snow in the cone - there's lots of dirty snow here. It falls through the holes in the roof and builds up in little piles all around the house.*

SVETA

And that's it. You pour water in. Then you boil it and you're done.

*Heats the cone up with a cigarette lighter. The snow melts.*

SVETA

See? That takes care of it. Then you drink it or you can share it. You only get infected if you use the same needle. But, hey, everybody's on top of that, everybody knows that this town is rampant with AIDS. Even kids know it. We all grow up knowing that you don't share needles. I mean, that's as simple as knowing that cops are assholes and grass is green and ratting is stupid. People still get infected though. What d'you expect? If I've got problems, if something's going down with me, whadda you think, somebody's gonna share with me if

I've got AIDS? But us here, we're all together in this, we're in it together, we're not like those others - screw each other for a kopeck. Everything's different here, we're the next generation. We're gonna make it better so there'll be a reason to live and something to remember -

*Shit, how did it work out  
like this?*

SVETA

Shit, how did it work out like this? Probably because although we were thieves and God-knows-what-all-else, fucking around with crime and prostitution - we still came up with something. We saw through into something. Because our ceiling was higher and more transparent. And the trees showed us where things are better. And our grass was softer. And our birds spoke in tongues. We woke up when we wanted to and there was always a sun there to greet us. Even when things were bad, it never got too stupid. Because you can always call someone or someone will call you and find you and help you out or you'll find somebody 'cause you're looking for them... We wanted it all. We went everywhere, on hikes, in the country, we were always heading somewhere. We read each other's books. When's the last time they gave somebody a book? Fuck, man, yeah, and our cigarettes were even longer than theirs! Flowers, toys... we were always cutting something out and giving gifts -

*Is she crying?  
Rustling from above.*

SVETA

We definitely had something. Right in our hands, almost. Almost in our blood. We almost had hold of it. We were almost right there in it. Shit. Maybe that's why. We're like those animals in the zoo that refuse to eat and die in their own shit because who in the hell needs a life like that? They know freedom. They had it.



They were there. It's just that you shouldn't put all your eggs in George smack's cart. It's like in the Garden of Eden with the apple. Like the knowledge of good and evil. Good is an open road. Evil is dependence. Because that road takes you somewhere and dependence, it just runs you up against anybody and everybody. Or it's like this: you fuck for money and then you get run up against anybody and everybody. And you keep running up against them and you don't give a fuck anymore and there's nothing to give a fuck about. Just kitchens and teapots and bottled water... And then you're just sucking dick and it's all because everything is so fucking screwed. And fuck if anybody'll ever hire you again but you don't want to die because you want to live because everybody's out there living and they're doing a worse job of it than you but nobody's taking away their life and in any case, what the hell did you do that was so bad? You're sucking cock and shooting up, so what's that, a crime?

*Cries.*

*Rustling from above.*

SVETA

Hey!

*A shaggy\_headed, supernaturally skinny kid jumps down from above. He's in a shredded overcoat and dirty shoes. Sveta stares at him awhile (he's wearing red jeans and a T-shirt of psychedelic colors; around his neck hangs a fat gold chain with a key-chain ornament of a hand skeleton).*

SVETA

Who are you?

BOY

I'm Tapeworm.

SVETA

You're what?

TAPEWORM

I'm Tapeworm.

SVETA

Why's that?

TAPEWORM

That's what they called me in school.

SVETA

What for?

TAPEWORM

Fuck if I knew. I was skinny.

SVETA

Was?

TAPEWORM

I was then. Now I'm just skinny.

SVETA

What are you doing here?

TAPEWORM

Who were you talking to?

SVETA

Nobody.

TAPEWORM

I talk to nobody too.

SVETA

You spying on me?

TAPEWORM

No. There's all kinds of newspapers and old magazines up there. I come here to read. It's my library.

SVETA

This is your library?

TAPEWORM

*(Approaches the window)*. And that's where I live. That's where my clothes are. My stove. My lamp. Only you can't turn it on at night.

SVETA

Why's that? The dogs?

TAPEWORM

Nya-uh. People. Dogs just want something to eat. That's normal. People'll kill you for fuck-knows-what.

SVETA

How come you left home?

TAPEWORM

I'm HIV-positive.

*Pause.*

SVETA

What?

TAPEWORM

You know, when you really want it bad you don't think about anything else. You just wanna have it.

How do I put this? I didn't have anything. My parents were Jehovah's Witnesses. I was just a little fuckhead, that's what I was. My whole life. Everywhere. Out on

the street, at school, who gave a damn what I thought? I was dying for... I was dying for everything. But most of all I wanted to fuck. I just wanted to have a good fuck. Have you ever tried getting a fuck when you're called Tapeworm? Who's going to take pity on Tapeworm? You go out on the street and everybody says, so who's your boyfriend? And you say, I'm hanging out with Tapeworm. You know, the guy whose old man and lady preach God up everybody's ass. Oh, he's fucking hot -

Shit, man. When you're nobody you got no business at all. You're no metal head, no kid, no cat, no funky monkey, no bro, no snitch, no Joe, no Jack, no Jake, no hobo, no Rastaman, no freebaser, no thug, no hood, no skater, no skinhead, no amphead, no bagboy, no bag bride, no bag man, no nothing. Even if you're all those things, if you're a nobody, you're a nobody. You can wear whatever you want and you can walk any walk you like. 'Cause everybody who's anybody has a chick. And they all fuck. Because you only fuck who you love. They like each other. That is so totally cool when you like somebody. And then if somebody likes you, well then that's just the coolest thing there is. That means you're fucking hot. You can't be fucking hot if you're not fucking. That's when you're fucked royal.

Man I jerked off all the time. I was the super\_hand\_cunt meat flogger to beat all teenage meat floggers. I was 14 and I was jerking off and I was 16 and I was jerking off and then I started hanging out with other guys - somehow friends started showing up from somewhere. I met this chick Angela and two days later we get drunk sublime out there on a park bench. We started sucking face and she'd already been shooting up for a year or so, she was 17. She was definitely doing hard stuff, sometimes going cold turkey. She'd come see me at home, hit me up for a couple of rubles for a syringe. I'd boil up some water - my parents weren't home - and she'd set it all up. I'm sitting there next to her, touching her and stroking her hair and all the time she's looking at me. Nobody ever

looked at me like that.

Nofuckingbody.

Not one normal motherfucking healthy person ever looked at me like that. We were together about a week I guess. Later I heard she was nympho. She'd say, "What a nice kid, I can't turn him down, can I?" That's not why I dumped her though, it's just that I finally found a girl who, you know... Angela and I just fucked. With this new girl it was something else entirely.

A year later I run into the guys I was hanging out with and they say, "Did you fuck Angela?" And I say, "Yeah." And they say, "Go check it out, man. She's got the clap, she fucking infected half the neighborhood. So I went down there and I didn't have the clap. But I had HIV. So I come out of there thinking finally I'll get some use out of the old man and old lady. They're God\_fearing folk, they'll help. Yeah...

*For Jehovah's Witnesses blood is something of a fetish. When his parents found out he was HIV-positive they gave him his own tin pan and spoon. They didn't give him any forks or knives. They declared the toilet and bathtub off-limits to him. He took sponge baths in a pail and then washed it out in boiling water. He had to wash out his tin pan and spoon with boiling water every day too. One day they saw him feeding the dog and they refused to give him any food for the rest of the day. They wouldn't let him go outside. They said, "Screw you going out infecting normal people." He'd sit home for days and*

*read. They only let him have one book.*

TAPEWORM

The fucking Bible. They said, "Read this. You'll be seeing Him soon."

SVETA

Did you read the whole thing?

TAPEWORM. Yeah. Only I still don't get it. So I die and I end up there - what's there to talk to Him about if I already know everything there is to know? Go figure - we sit down to talk and He says, "So, did you read how cool I was to let those high priests go?" Yeah, that was great. "And did you read how I forgave that dude on the cross?" Yeah, totally cool. "And do you remember how Peter came in denying things?" Right on, man, what the fuck are you gonna stick your neck out for?

SVETA

So what would you want to talk to him about?

TAPEWORM

With Him?

SVETA

Anybody.

TAPEWORM

How about you?

*The night is long. Longer than any of us even if every one of us has been through several thousand nights. What difference does it make what you talk about at night? No matter what you talk about the conversation will come*

*out longer than anyone doing the talking. Although sometimes there's something to just being silent with somebody who thinks like you or who is going through the same thing as you... Just talk. Just have a talk. Silently. Out loud. Doesn't matter how. The main thing is to say everything you need to say before winter ends. Because then spring comes and you start wanting everything that you can't have. Fuck.*

## **5. 2+4+1**

*Dark. Voices in an abandoned building.*

-Pull him over here -  
 -Come on, come on. Quit shitting. Nobody's going to kill you. Put him over here or somebody'll see him from the street -  
 -Who the hell's going to see him? There's nothing but trucks out there -  
 -All right. Let's hear it now. What the hell's going on?  
 -Dudes. I'll tell you, only don't hit me, okay?  
 -Nobody's hittin' you yet, all right? We should have beat the shit out you back there but nobody did that. Yet. You hear? So if you start fucking with us your ass is down the stairs and you're dead. See that hole over there? You got that?  
 -Sasha, gimme a flashlight. I can't see a fucking thing. I'm gonna crack his ass and I'll miss. Then he'll fuckin' shit in his pants. Are you shittin' in your pants, pretty boy?

*A slap is heard.  
A flashlight comes on. In the  
darkness a room can be seen.  
It's an abandoned building  
but it's still a livable  
room. Or at least somebody is  
trying to make it look that  
way. The walls are papered  
with newspapers. A lamp hangs  
from the ceiling. The floor  
is clean. Random furniture  
stands about. But the main  
thing is the bed in a corner:  
Tapeworm and Sveta lie on the  
bed.*

KID

You two - who are you?

TAPEWORM

Who are you?

SASHA

He fuckin' asked you first, fuckface. Are you fuckin' hobos?

VICTIM

Call the police.

*The guy holding Victim brings  
his knee down on his throat.  
Victim groans.*

SASHA

Who fuckin' said you could talk? Shut up.

SVETA

Sorry about this, gentlemen, but we live here.



KID

You hobos?

TAPEWORM

What's it look like? (*Gets up. He's sleeping in his clothes.*)

KID

Maybe not.

VICTIM

Hey guys -

KID

Sasha, shut this fucker up -

*A groan.*

TAPEWORM

Listen, guys. I'm sorry to put you out but you're going to have to go someplace else. Next door maybe. We live here and we're sleeping.

KID

Isn't that something. What's this, you guys fucking run away from home?

TAPEWORM

Yeah. We fucking ran away from home.

KID

Don't get me wrong. I'm just asking.

TAPEWORM

No problem. It's a natural question. This is our house now.

SASHA

What did you buy it?

SVETA

No. We just moved in.

KID

Isn't that something. All right, Sasha, we're outta here. There's residents here now -

SASHA

What for? Listen, dude, we won't bother you for long. We've just got some business to take care of here-

TAPEWORM

No.

SASHA

Say what?

TAPEWORM

No, I said. This is our house. I won't put up with that here.

SASHA

And how do you plan to do that?

SVETA

Listen guys, let's not get started. He asked you nice -

KID

Sasha, don't make a nuisance of yourself. There's tons of these places. Let's just go to another. There's people living here. Let 'em alone.

TAPEWORM

If you want to know I can show you. (*Pulls out a crude homemade gun.*) It's loaded. You just light it here - (*pulls out a cigarette lighter*) and that's all there is to it. I tested it on a three-inch-thick slab of oak. Then I'll cut you up. We'll keep the tender parts and the rest I'll throw out the window. This place is fucking swarming with stray dogs. In two hours' time

there won't even be stink left of you. Is that clear?

SASHA

Fuck me. These guys are runaways. Here's what I'll tell you-

VICTIM

Hey, dude! Shoot these fuckers' asses! They're trying to kill me!

TAPEWORM

Fuck you. It's not my problem.

KID

No truer words ever spoken. You done time?

TAPEWORM

No. I just don't give a fuck about anything that doesn't concern me. And this house here is a place of peace. If anybody doesn't believe me, I'll shoot this fucker and throw him out the window.

SASHA

You shoot many people?

TAPEWORM

Nobody yet. But you can be the first.

SASHA

No problem, dude. We're outta here. This is your territory.

KID

Wait a second, Sasha. I want to ask him one question and that's it.

TAPEWORM

It's past our bedtime.

KID

Two seconds, bro. I just wanna ask - how come you guys are living here?

TAPEWORM

We like it here. And there's no place else anyway.

SASHA

Why's that?

SVETA

We're HIV-positive, dudes. We've got no place else to go. His folks made him eat out of a pan. And nobody talked to me for six months. Get it? Now get outta here. Leave us in peace.

KID

HIV, huh? Then put it here, bro! (*Extends his hand to Tapeworm.*)

TAPEWORM

You too?

KID

Three years. What about you?

TAPEWORM

A year.

SASHA

Fuck, Vitya! You've got HIV? What the hell didn't you tell me for?

VICTIM

Fuck my ass. I'm fucked.

KID

I'll fucking say -

TAPEWORM

You guys done now? Go on, get outta here.

KID

Sasha, I'll be right there, okay?

TAPEWORM

Now what?

SVETA

Hey, kid, if you don't mind, now, we'd like to get back to sleep.

KID

No, no, I... You guys really live here? Or just for now?

TAPEWORM

Forever. It's our house now. Forever.

KID

Would you guys mind too much if I, you know, came by sometimes to visit? We could sit and have tea or something. How do you guys get along here?

TAPEWORM

Stop by. I'm Tapeworm. She's Sunny.

KID

Did you guys pick those names yourselves?

TAPEWORM

Yep.

KID

Then call me Kid. That okay? Just Kid.

SVETA

Howdy, Kid.

TAPEWORM

Hello.

KID

This is so cool. How do you guys, uh, you got a stove or something? How do you guys stay warm?

TAPEWORM

However we can. There's a stove over there. Over here, under the bed, we put a box of hot coals. It's enough to keep us for the night.

KID

That's great. What about firewood?

TAPEWORM

There's plenty from the buildings all around us. They're all wooden.

KID

So you can live here, huh?

TAPEWORM

Of course.

KID

There's one thing I don't get, though. Why not in the city?

TAPEWORM

We don't want to.

SVETA

Why should you live where your own mother makes you eat out of a tin pan? Or where everybody refuses to talk to you? It's good here. We go into the city if we want to get out. Go to the movies or something.

KID

Sounds good. But where do you get your money. To go to the movies -

TAPEWORM

I work.

KID

Where?

TAPEWORM

Wherever I can find something. Mostly unloading trucks. Most other places won't hire me. I'm still too young.

SVETA

I work in a store.

KID

And that's enough to live on?

TAPEWORM

Mostly, yeah.

SVETA

We don't need much.

KID

Well, that depends on what kind of life you want, I guess.

TAPEWORM

Who knows how to live? We used to live differently and we got HIV.

KID

I get your point.

TAPEWORM

Get outta here now. People are waiting for you.

KID

All right. But can I really come visit?

TAPEWORM

Sure you can. Write down my number and call before you

come.

*Kid leaves.*

SVETA

What the hell did you give him your phone number for?

TAPEWORM

Why not? He's one of us. He's got a right to be here, too.

SVETA

What if he wants to come live here?

TAPEWORM

Why not?

SVETA

But why should he?

TAPEWORM

Because he liked it here. That's good when somebody likes where you live. People have to have the chance to grow, don't they?

SVETA

Meaning -

TAPEWORM

Meaning places have to grow, too. That's how cities happen.

SVETA

You want there to be a city here?

TAPEWORM

If it's going to be better than that one, why not?



**6. 2+4+1+3 (It's Not Easy Being God)**

*New furniture has showed up in the house. The stove is now made of stone. Glass panes are now in the window frames. The ceiling is painted white. There is carpet on the floor. Shelves stand at the walls. On the shelves are pots, pans and books. There are flowers on the window sills.*

KID

Sveta, is the water hot?

SVETA

Yeah.

TAPEWORM

Vitya, pour me a cup, too.

KID

All right.

SVETA

*(Looks out the window)*. These dogs are so wild. Why do they fuck so crazy?

TAPEWORM

They die fast so they fuck crazy.

KID

I heard on the radio today that Korn is coming to town.

SVETA

Yeah! I'd love to go.

TAPEWORM

That shit's decadent music. Doesn't interest me.

KID

Then Sveta and I'll go. I haven't been to a concert in ages.

SVETA

You want a concert? I'll make you sing. Who put the Bible in the bathroom? You got nothing else to wipe your asses with? We've got toilet paper. Let's be a bit more respectful of our books, gentlemen.

TAPEWORM

It wasn't me. I didn't even know we had a bible. How'd it get here in the first place?

KID

It was probably me. Sorry. I put a whole bunch of books in there for reading matter when we're just sittin' there... It must have been in with them.

SVETA

Where'd you get that in the first place?

KID

Probably when I was just casing joints, looking for things I might use -

SVETA

Pasha.

TAPEWORM

Yeah?

SVETA

Would you read us something from the Bible?

TAPEWORM

What the hell for? There's nothing about us in there. And everything else we know already.

KID

What do we know?

SVETA

What everybody else does. Thou shalt not kill. That shalt not steal or fuck in vain.

TAPEWORM

Don't fuck a woman who's not yours. Fucking in vain - that's jerking off.

KID

What's wrong with jerking off? Without that in prison everybody'd kill each other at the drop of a hat. Well, that and heroin, of course.

SVETA

Who gets smack into prison?

KID

You know, it's the priests who do it mostly. And they sell it during services. Nobody else is in there but you. They fuckin' tap the bags or dilute the shit with flour or sugar or laxatives, the fuckers. But at least you can get it.

SVETA

The church is no better than the people who make it.

TAPEWORM

You got that right. They're all the same. So there's no point bitching about how everything's gone to shit.

KID

But that's not true, Pasha. It's just that whoever needs God goes and prays to him. He who needs smack, goes out and buys. Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.

SVETA

What's HIV then?

TAPEWORM

HIV is a gift.

KID

Yeah, right. Why is HIV a gift?

TAPEWORM

Because a person with HIV is a person closer to God. It cuts his life down to the period that Jesus lived. HIV-positives die right around 30 or 40.

KID

Meaning?

SVETA

I guess I get it. You mean if everybody -

TAPEWORM

If all of us would think that these last 15 years are our last, if everyone would just sit down and think for a few minutes, just give five minutes to thinking how these 15 years are our last -

KID

What? We'd be God?

SVETA

I dunno -

TAPEWORM

We will be. We all will be.

KID

Well, I doubt that -

SVETA

Me too.

TAPEWORM

Well, I don't. What's so strange about it? If you think about it, what did God do that was so great?

KID

He created the Earth. He did everything.

TAPEWORM

Exactly. He's already done all the hardest stuff for you. Now all you have to do is follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

KID

You think everyone can be like Jesus Christ?

TAPEWORM

I don't doubt it.

KID

You're fuckin' me.

TAPEWORM

I can tell you why.

KID

You're on. If you're right, I'll haul your share of firewood today.

TAPEWORM

Okay. What did Jesus Christ do?

KID

Well -

SVETA

He did lots of things.

TAPEWORM

He healed the sick. Any of us can become a doctor.

KID

Maybe. What else?

SVETA

Can you make water into wine? And can you walk on water?

TAPEWORM

That's a trick. If he did that, he did it like David Copperfield.

KID

So what's important then?

TAPEWORM

God healed and we can heal. God raised the dead and each of us can do that, too. All you've got to do is manage to be at the right place at the right moment and say, "Dying is stupid." And then stand up and go. It's amazing the powers you have -

KID

And what else?

TAPEWORM

What else? Don't kill? That's easy. Don't wage war? A snap. Don't fuck up other people's lives? It's harder pissing in a pot. Don't fucking go fucking everybody? What's so tough about that? Don't steal? That's the easiest one of all.

KID

And what about those, uh, friends of his? What do you call 'em? You know, that team around him.

SVETA

The apostles.

TAPEWORM

You think spending 20 years to convince 12 people to do good deeds like you is so difficult? You really don't

think you could do that?

KID

What is this, the new gospel or something?

TAPEWORM

Now I like that: The Gospel According to Tapeworm.

KID

Yeah, yeah -

SVETA

Shit, if you're right... If only you were right, Pasha -

TAPEWORM

It's easy to test.

KID

Get outta here.

TAPEWORM

Live one day like that. It's not difficult. Just one day. 24 hours, during which time you get to sleep for 8. So it's just 16 hours. You can still eat and go where you want and take elevators and wait for busses and sit in cafes and watch movies in the evening. After all that there can't be more than 8 or 9 hours left. Is it really so difficult? Eight or 9 hours a day and you're God. Then another day. Then another. Don't you think it's worth it?

KID

Fuck, man -

SVETA

But you can't swear -

TAPEWORM

Why not? I'll bet Jesus cussed a blue streak when he chased the merchants out of the temple. The main thing

is not to fuck up. God does not fuck up. We kill and screw everything up. That is why, and only that is why: He is God and we are people.

KID

Did we have to get HIV for that?

TAPEWORM

No. It's just easier for us. We only have 15 or 20 years of life left. We won't even get tired of being good.

KID

Okay. I'll try it.

TAPEWORM

First go bring the firewood.

KID

Oh shit -

SVETA

Come on, wasn't he convincing?

KID

No, yeah, everything makes sense. I promised and I'll keep my word.  
(Leaves.)

SVETA

Do you really think it's that easy, Pasha?

TAPEWORM

It is totally not easy.

SVETA

And you think that's all there is to it?

TAPEWORM

Yep.



SVETA

You really believe all that?

TAPEWORM

I believe everything I say. Otherwise I believe there's no goddam reason to open my mouth.

SVETA

I still don't get it. You say it's not easy -

TAPEWORM

Of course it's not easy. Nothin' is easy for us, man. There's no way we should be living. But we are. So why shouldn't we make the extra effort and live a good life instead of just taking it as it comes? Why live like everybody else?

SVETA

But then you'll be all alone. Not like everybody else - that means going it on your own.

TAPEWORM

I've always gone it alone. In the corner, with my Bible and my tin food pan. And you've never been like everybody else. And now we're all not like everybody else. Why should we be like everybody else? And what does that mean, to be like everybody else? Can you say what it means?

SVETA

It means - having a family -

TAPEWORM

Depends on the family. A wife and a child isn't a family yet. Sitting down at the same table every evening - that isn't a family yet. The main thing is - you know what it is?

SVETA

What?

TAPEWORM

To be the one-and-only. The very last one. Everything you do will never be done again by anyone. Everything you say will never be said again by anyone. Everybody you meet will gain something from you. You change everything you come into contact with. It's like you reach up and touch the sky every time. You know everything there is to know and you yourself expand knowledge deeper, wider and farther. Now that's a real person. Those would be real people. When every one of us is the last of our kind. When every one is unique. When you can't afford to lose a single one because you can't go on without him. Now that's life. Everything else is a fake.

SVETA

Do you think we're like that?

TAPEWORM

We can be like that. And we can do it faster than anyone else. Everything's in place. But only for us. That's why HIV is a gift.

*Kid returns. With him is Marina, who is nearly frozen to death.*

SVETA

My God! She's white!

TAPEWORM

Where did you find her?

KID

Next door. I look over there and I see her burning newspapers. She can hardly talk.

SVETA

I wouldn't think so.

TAPEWORM

Wrap her up in a blanket, quick. And then put her next to the stove. Only not too close, like that -

KID

(*To Marina*). How're you doing? Huh? What are you doing out here?

SVETA

She doesn't look like a homeless person, does she?

TAPEWORM

No. Maybe she's a whore?

MARINA

No... no. Thank you. Thank you. God, it's cold -

KID

I would think so, sweetheart. It's kinda like winter out there. You could throw a shoe tro<sup>u</sup>ttin' around out there. Have you noticed?

SVETA

Just what she needs to hear from you -

TAPEWORM

Did you run away from home?

MARINA

No, I don't have a home.

KID

Just our type, then. Pasha, Sunny - what do you say? We let her in to get warm? Maybe she'll end up staying -

MARINA

I don't have a home... He used to be so good to me. He was so fine, but he's not anymore. Now he does nothing but drink.

SVETA

Look, she's covered in bruises.

TAPEWORM

Yeah.

KID

That's my job. (*To Marina.*) Somebody hurt you? What's his name? Where's he live? We'll get the car warmed up and go pay him a visit -

SVETA

Hold your horses! Do you see what shape she's in?

MARINA

He was so good. But I can't stand it anymore. He was fine. We had everything. We had everything. We had everything. We had everything. We lived better than anybody. Better than everybody. You know, it was like... we had -

TAPEWORM

Kid?

KID

Yeah?

TAPEWORM

You remember what we were just talking about?

KID

So?

TAPEWORM

You want to try it? Be like God?

SVETA

Pasha, this isn't the time for that.

TAPEWORM

You want to?

KID

What do I have to do?

TAPEWORM

You want her to stay. She'll stay. If you help her. Remember? Be God. Make her want to stay. Make her smile. That's really being God. See to it that people don't die and that people are happy. (*Tapeworm leaves with Sunny.*)

MARINA

He was perfectly normal. Until he found out. Even then he was fine at first. And then someone said something to him. Someone told him it was the fucking end. And the shit hit the fan. He became someone else and I didn't have anyone any more. I don't have anyone anymore and he's been yelling at me for a month. I just... All I have is HIV. I don't have the plague. I'm not a leper. I'm not dying. There's nothing wrong with me inside. I just have HIV, it's just a sickness, it's just a sickness, IT'S JUST A SICKNESS AND NOTHING MORE, WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU ALL OVER ME FOR? WHAT THE FUCK DID I EVER DO TO YOU?!

KID

Shhh. Shhh. We've got it too. We've got it too. Look. Look. It's just us. We live here. You like it? Look, that's our stove. It used to be just a metal barrel. And then we put bricks around it and broke off an old stovepipe from another place. Pasha and I climbed up there and looked after each other until we got it down. Nobody fell and got killed. And you're not going to die either.

Now, let's go in here. By the way - you see that carpet on the floor? Sveta brought that back. She wanted to surprise us. She bought it and brought it back here herself - cut it to size and laid it out. We come back and we can't believe it - she's standing there grinning. We say, how'd you do that? And she

says, You don't really fuckin' wanna know. She told us later, though. She forgot her gloves at home and she nearly froze her hands off. Like you, there. But that didn't stop her. She did it all herself. The cabbie wanted to help her but she told him no. Because first she wanted it to be a surprise and second she didn't want anybody to know we live here. So she did the whole thing with her own hands and she did it great. And everything's going to be great with you.

Look over here - you see that flower in the window? I stole that from the movie theater. I'll give it to you if you want. Come on. It's yours. It's yours to take care of now. It's some tropical kind of thing with these big leaves. It'll croak in a minute if somebody doesn't look after it. The main thing is that it will be grateful to you for taking care of it. Every day. It's a nice plant - it's not like all those people out there. Because it doesn't give a shit if you're HIV-positive, no. The main thing is that you have somebody nearby. Somebody who can't live without you. Then you won't die. Because you can't. Right? Okay, lie down now. Everything's going to be fine. I'll go get your things tomorrow. And that'll be it. Okay?

## **7. A Lesson about the World**

*A room in a big house. The place is outfitted beautifully. Several chairs stand in a semi-circle around a large pane of glass in place of a blackboard. Kid and Tapeworm sit on the windowsill and smoke into the open window.*

KID

Everything all right yesterday?

TAPEWORM

Fine. Were you warm?

KID

Love is the best warmer. Everything's great.

*They laugh.*

TAPEWORM

What's up today?

KID

I guess today's the first day of the new quarter. After that, who knows?

TAPEWORM

I guess there's no way avoiding school entirely. But basically we've got it better here than they do there.

KID

I'm with you on that all the way. Gimme five.

TAPEWORM

As for you. I've been wanting to tell you what a killer job you did back then.

KID

You, too - when I came here and stayed. Yeah. Because -

TAPEWORM

Because otherwise you wouldn't have come and stayed.

KID

Yeah, that's right. Because when you pointed that pistol at us, I'll tell you, my knees went a bit jelly. Man, you described it all so vividly what was going to happen - "We'll throw to the dogs whatever we don't want."

TAPEWORM

Tell you the truth? I was pissin' rivers in my pants. But that's the funny thing. You're pissin' rivers and a voice inside you starts talking and you hear it like it's coming from somewhere else. And you realize that this voice that's talking - it'll help you out. It'll squeeze the trigger if you don't. It'll take care of everything for you.

KID

So where's that voice come from?

TAPEWORM

I think it's God. He makes people answer for all the shit. Because all the real shit comes from God. And he's always right there when you're on the mark and you aren't blowing shit.

KID

You know, I could tell that. And that's why I came. You didn't look like a tough at all, but everything about you was tough. I saw you were ready with answers. I wanted to find out how that happened. I saw it right away you'd done time.

*Marina and Sveta enter the class.*

MARINA

Hello everybody.

KID

Hello.

TAPEWORM

Howdy.

MARINA

Shall we sit?



*Everyone sits on chairs.*

Today's lesson is a lesson about the world. You remember how on the first day of school they would always start us out with a lesson about the world? Today I'm going to teach you a real lesson about the world. Let's talk about what the world means to us. How do we understand it. What does the word mean. What we think it should mean. And why doesn't it mean what we think it should? All right?

KID

Only I want to say let's not do this for long. 'Cause me and Pasha have to go gather firewood and it takes a lot longer after dark. Plus, not all the dogs around here are on our side yet. And you can talk forever about the world. For example, I would -

MARINA

Okay, let's keep things in order and not talk out of turn. And don't forget to raise your hand? All right?

*Tapeworm raises his hand.*

Yes, Pasha?

TAPEWORM

Sveta should be the one.

MARINA

Ladies first? If you're ready, go ahead, Sveta.

SVETA

It's not so much that I'm ready, 'cause I think every person's ready. Every one of us, when we come into this world, is ready to come. Because everybody thinks the world is there specially for him. Think about that. Isn't that so? We grew up thinking we'd do it, that we'd become those people, these people we wanted to be - that we'd grow up and would basically be ready for

that, to make the world what we thought it should be. And, for me, I kinda think we have. These buildings, these trees. The air we breathe. Our earth. It's me, it's you, my friends. Everything I know and everyone I know. You know what I've noticed? That all the evil that happens in the world happens because of people I don't know. I don't know a single bureaucrat. I don't know a single politician. And they don't know me. When I get to know somebody they immediately cease to be my enemy. This person can no longer do me any harm. Maybe that's because he knows now that I exist in the world. And so he tries not to fuck things up for me. I think if everybody knew us, if they knew us personally, then things would be a lot better. Then it would be a lot easier to elect a president because then you'd really know the person. And we wouldn't elect some moron.

MARINA

That's an interesting point of view. Anyone want to add anything?

KID

Can I?

MARINA

Of course.

KID

I just want to add one thing. The main thing is it's a shame they don't know us - I mean those of us who have HIV. They think we live in our own little world. That some of us got HIV because of drugs or somebody else or some other way and that that makes us some sort of.. pirates or something. Like we live in a cave and we'll die there. So first of all I want to say that fuckin' hell we're going to die - they can choke on that if they want.

*Everybody laughs.*

Yeah. And second of all sometimes we understand everything a lot better. We know what's what. Nobody can ever kill any of us. Because we're all on short tethers already. We know what life is. Yeah? The only people who kill and send others out to kill are all healthy as horses because they don't give a flying fuck about anything. And that's all there is to it. All they care about is making a pile of money and that's what all the wars are fought about. Isn't that what you told us, Marina? Money is the root of it all. Everything else is just pissin' in the wind, isn't it? We don't have time to piss in the wind. Because we want to live. For me there's two worlds - theirs and mine. And mine's better. Because mine's real and in mine everything people do or say has real value. Because our measuring stick isn't money - it's time. If you do everything right, you live longer. You do it wrong, you just die. And dyin', man, that's really stupid shit. That's about all I got to say.

MARINA

Do you want to add anything, Pasha?

TAPEWORM

Yeah, I do, because -

*Tapeworm gets no chance to add anything because a bunch of cops burst into the room.*

FIRST VOICE

Just like they said.

SECOND VOICE

Okay, everybody. Line up nice and neat.

THIRD VOICE

What are you guys up to in here?

MARINA

Excuse me, but who are you? We're in the middle of a

lesson.

FIRST VOICE

A lesson?

SECOND VOICE

Fancy, fancy here. Look at this, Pasha, they've even got flowers -

THIRD VOICE

I don't get it. What the hell is going on here?

MARINA

We're living our lives.

FIRST VOICE

Hell of a place to live!

TAPEWORM

Put that pot back where it belongs.

SECOND VOICE

Aren't we feisty? Get that warp outta your back -

KID

Listen, boss, take it easy, huh?

SECOND VOICE

Listen, smartypants. I know you. You're that fucker with AIDS, aren't you? I remember you recently -

FIRST VOICE

AIDS?

SVETA

He's got HIV. So what of it?

SECOND VOICE

I'll tell you what - you're all going down with us and we're getting' to the bottom of this -

MARINA

No.

THIRD VOICE

What's that?

MARINA

No. This is our home. We're not doing anything wrong. This building belongs to nobody. Nobody cares about this place. It was just falling apart.

SECOND VOICE

I don't give a fuck about this place. We came out here. We wasted our time on you. And now you're going with us. You got that?

THIRD VOICE

Come one. Move it! Get going. Explanations later.

TAPEWORM

No. I'm not going anywhere. This is my home.

FIRST VOICE

What's your name, kid?

TAPEWORM

You can call me Tapeworm.

SECOND VOICE. You want 'em spread-eagled in the snow?

KID

Think about your health, boss. We're at home here.

THIRD VOICE

Shut your trap, mother! You want to get your arms twisted?

*Tapeworm pulls out his  
homemade gun and aims it at a  
cop. Another cop pulls out*

*his pistol and aims it at Tapeworm. Kid pulls out a high-powered slingshot and aims it at the cop. Cop number three unsnaps the safety on his submachine gun.*

SECOND VOICE

All right, drop your weapons motherfuckers! Asses on the ground! Face down!

KID

Don't cuss in here. You're in a schoolroom. As for this slingshot, I can put out a dog's eye with it, brother. So put down your shooter -

FIRST VOICE

Isn't there another way to do this?

TAPEWORM

You see, Marina? That's just what I wanted to say. The world is you and you alone. Everything else is war. War every day. War begins when you're still a kid. In kindergarten. Because I guess somebody like these assholes here dreamed up a world for themselves and now they try to make us all live like them. Not even HIV can save you from that. It can only save you from thoughts about death. Because death was dreamed up by assholes just like these guys. To give them something to threaten you with.

FIRST VOICE

Listen guys... and you, girl... Marina's the name, yeah? Let's settle this like civilized people. Nikita, put down your pistol. Valya, put that machine gun away.

SECOND VOICE

Only after them.

## THIRD VOICE

So what are we going to surrender our weapons to every shithead who comes along?

## SVETA

Shitheads?! God\_fucking\_dammit you motherfucking prick, who are the shitheads here?! You're the dick smacks that came barging in here. Our house. Guns drawn. And you fucking molest our plants. You didn't even take off your goddamed shoes when you came in. You didn't say hello. You call us names and want to drag us down to the station just because we're here - and you call us shitheads? What do you want, you cocksucker? What do you fucking want from us?

*The wind blows a window open.  
Snow blows into the room.*

## KID

You dudes ought to make tracks while you still can. My fingers are getting tired. And this fucker splits bricks. I made it myself.

## FIRST VOICE

All right, guys! Drop your weapons!

## SECOND VOICE

You got your head screwed on right?

## FIRST VOICE

I'm doing fine. Put down your fucking shit. What are your eyes all bugging out like Rambo for? What are these guys, felons? What did they do?

## SVETA

We don't have anything, anyway. We've only got two months of summer. We can't eat anything. We take pills every two hours. Nobody'll talk to us but they call us all kinds of names. You pricks would hang yourselves after one week living like this. Our own parents chase us out of our homes. We're abandoned by everybody we

loved all our lives. Nobody'll give us any work. Everybody fucks us up the ass and they think we're going to die because of it. But we're alive. We're ALIVE, fuck it. Because everybody wants to live. More than anything on earth, people want to live. They want to LIVE, suck my ass, and there's no fucking ifs, ands or butts about that. What're you guys after? You want us to leave this place? We've done everything here and now you want us to leave? Go fuck yourself in your goddam nose, man, because this place belongs to us, not your cocksucking asses. (*She draws a knife from her sock and slits the wrist on her right arm. She makes a snowball out of the red snow at her feet.*) You ever read the Bible, you fucking horse prick? Eat my flesh, you cocksucker, because other than this snow, there is no other flesh in Norilsk! (*Flings bloody snow at the cop.*)

*Pasha reaches out to her;  
Sveta cuts him with her  
knife. With his other hand,  
Pasha scoops up another ball  
of snow from the floor.*

#### TAPEWORM

Drink my blood because soon there will be no other blood left in Norilsk! (*Throws the snowball at the cop.*)

*Kid aims at the lamp overhead  
and fires at it. Darkness.  
Shots in the dark.  
Wind. Dogs bark.*

## 8. The Polar Truth

*A circle of light. Kid stands  
in the middle. Talks to  
himself.*



-Hello.  
-Hello.  
-Hello.  
-You coming today?  
-Are you free?  
-I am after nine.  
-So early? How about the girls? They free?  
-It's the boss's birthday today. Short day.  
-Yeah? That's cool.  
-You coming?  
-I'll think about it.  
-You'll think about it?  
-Yeah. It's just that I have to pick Polina up today.  
If I come with you, what am I going to do with her?  
-Let's all go together.  
-Together? With Polina, too?  
-Why not? Here's the key -  
-Wow! The key already?  
-What's the big deal?  
-Nothing -  
-So go pick up Polina, then, and come over to my place.  
You can have a normal bath at my place.  
-All right -  
-Well, good, then. I'll go out this evening and pick  
some things up. Something to go with tea or maybe a  
little gift for Polina or something. All right?

I want to live a normal life because here you can't  
live a normal life. Not me, not anybody else. That's  
just what this place is like. So that's my dream. A life  
like that. Where you just live a normal life. And  
nothing more. Everything else is money and what's the  
point of dreaming about that? People earn money, but a  
dream, that's... that's something you'll never have. On  
the other hand, it's something that'll make you live  
your life in a way that might make your dream come  
true. Yeah. A dream - that's the truth. There's nothing  
else but dreams and truth.

*The circle of light. In it*

*stands Girl.*

The truth? That's what we are. Those of us who live. Who work. Who earn wages. It's people who don't beg for anything from anyone - gimme money, gimme trust, gimme an office, gimme taxes, gimme soldiers, gimme, gimme, gimme and I'll just go and do as I please. People like that don't know anything about life - look at all the sciences they went out and invented. Organizations. Administrations. Welfare offices. All that to explain to us why we still keep living so stupidly. But we don't live stupidly. We just live. We try to have children. We raise and educate them. We. Not they. We try to feed our families. We do that ourselves. Not they. The truth is me. The truth is we. It's every single individual. Not them. And that's all there is to it. Because we go for swims in the river. We like to go for walks. Sometimes we get our butts kicked and sometimes we kick butt if we care enough. All those people drive around in super\_duper, heavy-duty armored cars and they block off half of the beach for themselves with barbed wire so that people won't come and drown their fucking asses. Because they don't know the truth. They ain't got it. It's us. Not them.

*The circle of light.*

*Nettles+Dandelions stands in it.*

The truth, that's when you're almost dead and a friend comes to you and says, "Don't die, because if you die everything's going to be horrible." Or when it rains and you're cold and you think there's nothing worth anything left anymore and there's nobody around and you find a little money where you thought there was none and you go and buy yourself some pie and a kitten at the animal market. And you sit there together and you look at the rain and now it's nothing more than rain and there's nothing sad about it. The truth - that's everything that's good. Everything that's happened to

us. Because good things happen all the time. With everybody. And bad - that's just an illusion, it's an untruth. Because everything bad ends sooner or later. It always comes to an end.

*The circle of light. Tapeworm  
stands in it.*

The truth is HIV. Because HIV shows what a person's worth. In real terms. Ask yourself what you'd do if you were going to die in ten years. Your answer to that question will show how much truth you have in you.

**THE END.**