

HELICOPTER

by

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SCENE

On top of a mountain

A more or less flat area

Directly opposite, a steep cliff face

A damaged helicopter which has made an emergency landing.

CAST

Minister	:	Minister of maritime affairs. A politician to the core. Pompous and crude by turns and a political mercenary. Dresses well. Aged between 55 and 60.
Permanent secretary	:	A bitter, jaded, discontent bureaucrat aged around 60.
Under-secretary	:	A typical sycophantic bureaucrat who is not very clever. Aged around 45.
Bodyguard	:	Minister's bodyguard. Quiet, handsome and uneducated. Aged around 30.
Cameraman	:	Works for private TV channel. He's a irreplaceable man because of his good. Good-looking, bearded man. The most important is he's likable smart mouth. Aged around 35.
Reporter	:	Works for the same TV company. The only young and pretty face of the play. Aged around 25.
Pilot	:	He'll appear very briefly in the beginning. Because he had died he'll be lowered from the chopper by his arms and legs, and in order for him to act as if not breathing, his must be placed out of view of the spectators.

PLACE: Not Turkey, because there is no ministry
of maritime affairs in Turkey.

TIME : The present.

Theatral arts have been observed and practised since the evolution of mankind on Earth. When hunters returned from hunting they had to tell their stories to those who long awaited them with

curiosity. Therefore , hunters would imitate the behaviour of their preys and showed people how skilfully they got them. They were the first actors, and the ceremonies held around the fire were the first shows.

Anatolia, where for centuries people celebrated their affiliations with the environment and the change of the seasons in a “Scenic Theatre” fashion, is the first land observing theatral activities. People have been celebrating various ritual ceremonies, like the Dionyzos Festival, in Anatolia every year.

While continuously having its rural theatrical shows, Anatolia was first introduced with the western style theatre in the 19 th century. Although Turks developed the traditional theatre forms like “Ortaoyunu” , “Gölge Oyunu” , “Karagöz” , and “Village Scenic Shows” by that time.

During the Ottoman Era , foreign companies came and performed their shows first in the Royal Palace then in the theatres in İstanbul and in İzmir. Those were the days when Muslims were banned from stage activities. Therefore, only minorities established their own theatres.

The real western- type theatres were established after the foundation of the Republic. Many private and public theatres flourished during the seventy-five year period. Many universities now have performing arts divisions and conservatories side by side with the private establishments. In addition, the works of Turkish playwrights are being performed all over the world.

The author of “**Helicopter**” , Mr. **Tuncer Cücenoglu** is one of the most successful among the modern playwrights. His style is very modern while his message in almost of his plays is universal. His works have been translated into eleven languages. He has won numerous national and international awards for his several plays including the “**Helicopter**”.

I enjoyed this work when I read it and delighted when it was staged. I am certain that you’ll enjoy the English edition of it , too.

M.İstemihan TALAY
Minister of Culture

HELICOPTER

PART I

(Before the curtain goes up, the sound of a helicopter can be heard. It's getting louder until it is quite unbearable and the helicopter can be heard landing noisily, obviously in trouble. Silence. Curtain lifts. Twilight. Chaos and screams while pilot is helping everyone out. The Minister, Under-secretary, Reporter, The Bodyguard and Cameraman get down headlong from the chopper's steps. No one notices but the pilot collapses and falls back into the helicopter while the chaos continues.)

Minister	:	It might blow up!
Permanent secretary	:	Quick!
Under-secretary	:	Watch your head!
Reporter	:	Oh my God!
Cameraman	:	<i>(Camera on shoulder, keeping an eye out for reporter)</i> Run! <i>(They run as far away from the helicopter as possible)</i> Get down! <i>(Some sit down, some hide their faces in the ground while lying on the ground, some cover their faces with their hands)</i> Lie down, lie down! <i>(Turns the camera towards the helicopter and records)</i> Face down man! <i>(They comply; cameraman continues to film)</i> Cover your heads! <i>(Silence, they wait in that position, talking quietly)</i>
Under-secretary	:	Minister, sir... your head...
Bodyguard	:	<i>(Buttering up)</i> I'll protect your head, sir. <i>(Bodyguard almost places his body over the minister's)</i>
Minister	:	I can't breathe!
Under-secretary	:	Move over...
Bodyguard	:	<i>(Moves slightly)</i> Is this better sir?
Minister	:	You're squashing me!
Bodyguard	:	I'm sorry..
Minister	:	<i>(Almost about to beat the bodyguard)</i> You always overdo it damn it!
Bodyguard	:	<i>(Moves away)</i> Is this OK, dear sir?
Minister	:	You nearly suffocated me!
Bodyguard	:	It's for your safety, sir.
Minister	:	Damn you! Have you been eating something with onions again?
Bodyguard	:	I've had a kebab, minister, sir.
Minister	:	Haven't I banned kebabs, you thickhead?
Bodyguard	:	I didn't know we were going to be this close, sir.
Minister	:	That's enough!
Bodyguard	:	Yes sir...
Minister	:	Don't blow in my face! Get away! <i>(Bodyguard moves away from the minister.)</i>

Cameraman : *Cameraman fixes camera on tripod*
 : *(To reporter)*
 Reporter : Don't worry, it's over.
 : *(Shivering)*
 : I didn't even know...
 Cameraman : You're freezing, do you want my coat?
 Reporter : It's not being cold, it's just the shock...
 Cameraman : *(Takes his coat off)*
 : You'll get over it in a minute.
 Reporter : But...
 Cameraman : *(Puts jacket over her)*
 : I'll have it back later..
 Reporter : Thank you.
 : *(Silence.... Waiting continues...Cameraman*
 : *continues to record...)*
 Cameraman : It doesn't look as if it's going to blow up.
 Permanent secretary : It might.
 Minister : How do you know it won't?
 Cameraman : We didn't crash... It was more like a bumpy landing.
 : That's all.
 Minister : Let's give it a bit longer.
 Under-secretary : That's right, minister.
 Minister : Let's not take any risks.
 Under-secretary : Absolutely, minister.
 Minister : What say you, permanent-secretary?
 : *(It is apparent that there tension between the*
 : *two... Permanent secretary is respectful but*
 : *acts cold towards the minister)*
 Permanent secretary : It would be a good idea to wait a little longer, minister.
 Under-secretary : If you wish let's move a little further away.
 Minister : Why should we?
 Under-secretary : No need to move further away, minister.
 Minister : You come up with an idea and then you chicken out.
 Under-secretary : When you asked `why', sir, then I said to myself, `so
 : the minister doesn't want it.
 Bodyguard : Here is very good, minister, we'll wait wherever you
 : want wait, minister.
 Minister : Shut up, all of you!
 : *(Silence... Under-secretary pulls out his cellular phone*
 : *from his pocket, enters the pin code... All the heads besides*
 : *Minister had been turned towards Under-secretary... Under-*
 : *secretary turns the device left and right... It's obvious he can't*
 : *get a clear line... He signals to the others about this negative*
 : *situation... This time the Reporter pulls out her cellular*
 : *phone... Turns it on and enters the pin code... But it's*
 : *obvious that her device is out of system)*
 Cameraman : I wonder where we are.
 Minister : On top of a hill ...
 Reporter : You wouldn't call this a hill, minister, we're on top of a
 : mountain.
 Minister : What's the difference? We are on a place high up
 : enough.

Cameraman : What do you mean, there's no difference between a hill and mountain, minister? The difference is quite obvious: one is a mountain, the other is a hill.

Minister : What a stubborn bunch you are man! We're a long way up and that's that.

Permanent secretary : More importantly, why are we here?
(Silence. They wait. Cameraman is bored)

Cameraman : How long are we going to wait?

Permanent secretary : What else can we do? Do we have anything to do emergency?

Minister : *(Mocking)*
Do you have an appointment to go, young man?

Cameraman : Well, I'll meet my girlfriend shortly.

Under-secretary : Then get up an go. He shouldn't keep her waiting, right minister?
(Hesitant laughter. Waiting continues)

Cameraman : *(Sitting up where he way lying)*
C'moon, I've had enough of this.

Minister : Be a little more patient.

Under-secretary : Absolutely, minister.

Cameraman : It would have blow up by now anyway.

Minister : You look as if you're sorry that it didn't?

Permanent secretary : Look, aren't you here anyways. It would be better if you just lay down.
(Cameraman starts to film the others who are lying on the ground)

Minister : What are you up to young man?

Cameraman : We must record the incident, minister. Title: They are waiting for the explosion... Minister of maritime affairs... Permanent secretary... Under-secretary and the bodyguard of the minister.
(Pleased, but not letting on)

Minister : Don't make us look foolish.

Cameraman : Oh no minister, I wouldn't dare to make you look foolish.
(They all lift their heads slightly. Especially the minister, under-secretary and the bodyguard over pose)

Cameraman : Cut it out, stop grinning. Hey, bodyguard, I'm talking to you. Look at him, he's still...

Minister : Don't laugh, son, stop it.

Cameraman : *(Suddenly)*
Bang!
(Everyone jumps)

Cameraman : Now it's show time...
(Continues to record)

Minister : What the hell is that?

Permanent secretary : *(Ends his silence)* Please!

Under-secretary : We're already shaken up.

Reporter : You shouldn't have done that.

Cameraman : It's just a reflex, I didn't mean to.

Bodyguard : *(Quietly)*
You slimy bastard!

(Cameraman pretends not to hear, but gets mad at the Bodyguard. Stops filming and puts the camera down. Takes out a packet of cigarettes)

Cameraman : Minister?

Minister : I don't smoke.

Cameraman : Permanent secretary?

Permanent secretary : No thanks, I stopped a year ago.

Cameraman : Anyone?

Permanent secretary : I hope you're not intending to light that with a match.

Cameraman : No, I'm not. And you know why? Because I'm going to light it with a lighter.

Permanent secretary : What's the difference? They could both cause an explosion.

Cameraman : Well, who'd have thought we'd all be stuck up here, on top of a mountain at this time? If it blows up, well, that's fate...
(As the others watch fearfully, cameraman lights his cigarette)

Cameraman : As you see, no explosion has occurred. You can all get up now, if it's not too much trouble. C'mon get up.
(They all sit up slowly. The tension is over but confusion still continues. They sit down where they were before getting up)

Minister : That was a close shave.

Reporter : Someone loves us up there.

Under-secretary : We nearly changed the worlds.

Bodyguard : We almost went to kingdom come.

Under-secretary : Well, congratulations, minister, sir.

Minister : Thank you.

Bodyguard : *(Kisses minister's hand)*
Congratulations minister, sir.

Minister : Thank you, son.

Permanent secretary : Congratulations.

Minister : *(Notes his coldness)* Thank you.
(To reporter)
My congratulations to you too, pretty lady.

Reporter : Thank you minister.

Cameraman : Actually that was a close for all of us. We really have overcome an important accident... We could have been 'once upon a time' by now...

Minister : Very true.

Permanent secretary : It was our luck.

Under-secretary : *(Nodding)*
In one word, it's luck.

Minister : I still haven't understood how it happened.

Permanent secretary : I knew it was coming.

Minister : How did you know man?

Permanent secretary : Like, I could feel it.

Minister : Aha no wonder... That's why you tried to stop the trip.

Permanent secretary : Well... That was because of... the meeting tomorrow.

Minister : We'll still have the meeting.

Permanent secretary : But the experts are coming from abroad.. This meeting was planned from months ago. This trip was a big mistake... It's a shame ...

Minister : There's nothing to be ashamed of... We're talking about an earthquake. There's been a massive earthquake in a part of our country. So we had to come.

Permanent secretary : With respect, minister, what has the earthquake got to do with the ministry of maritime affairs?

Minister : *(Pause)*
We'll discuss that later.

Permanent secretary : Okay sir.

Minister : This incident has frightened us all a little.

Reporter : Not a little, minister, a lot.

Minister : *(As if reading out a quotation)*
Son of man carries within him both the courage and fear.

Under-secretary : *(So everyone can hear)*
An excellent epigram!

Minister : If we are human, we will have fear.

Under-secretary : But I don't even have a pen to write it down.
(Bodyguard gives a pen to him)

Under-secretary : *(Opens a little notebook which he takes out of his inside pocket)*
I congratulate you dear Minister. May I take it down, sir?

Minister : Take what down?

Under-secretary : What you've just said, minister. It was exquisite.

Minister : What was it? Man's fear. Man's fear...
What's the matter, why aren't you writing it down?

Under-secretary : That's not how it was, minister. Man has courage and fear... It was something like that.

Minister : How can I possibly repeat the exact words? If you want to take these things down, you'll have to carry a tape recorder.

Under-secretary : Yes, minister.

Cameraman : *(Really starts to make fun)*
You can never have enough cassettes for the recorder. It's better to keep the pen and paper ready. When he does a good epigram, you'll write down instantly...
(Quiet for a short while)

Permanent secretary : If it weren't for the coolness of the pilot, we might all have...
(At the mention of the pilot, everyone looks around, trying to find him)

Minister : Where on earth is the pilot?

Under-secretary : What an observant minister do we have!

Cameraman : I last saw him... That's right, he was helping us out.

Bodyguard : Me too.
(They all get up and begin to look around)

Permanent secretary : I had seen him running with us...

Minister : No, no, he's not around.
(To bodyguard) Come on, let's get on the chopper and have a look.
(The Minister and Bodyguard head towards the helicopter. Under-secretary immediately cuts in front of them)

Under-secretary : No, minister.
Minister : Huh, what are you talking about?
Under-secretary : We can't let you go up there. You can't go into that
helicopter. This country needs you.
Minister : What kind of nonsense are you talking about ? What's
that got to do with this now?
Under-secretary : No, minister, no. What if it explodes?
Minister : Don't talk nonsense.
Under-secretary : We love our minister.
Minister : Let me go.
Under-secretary : I'll go minister. I'll happily sacrifice my...
(Minister pulls him aside quietly)
Minister : There's no danger. Now listen, if you want to make
yourself useful, make sure this son of gun films us.
OK?
Under-secretary : Yes, minister.
Minister : *(Loudly)*
If it is our fate to die, we will die. Move aside. I can't
leave that man in there.
(He walks towards the helicopter)
Under-secretary : *(To cameraman)*
Why don't you document it...
Minister : *(Slows down)*
This is called responsibility.
Cameraman : *(Realises minister is trying to show off)*
Dear Minister!
Minister : *(Stops and looks back)*
Yes?
Cameraman : What if it explodes?
Minister : *(Doesn't realise that he's making fun)*
That is fate.
(Minister & bodyguard approach helicopter)
Cameraman : BANG!
(The two jump)
Bodyguard : Son of a bitch!
*(Minister signals by his hand to bodyguard to calm
down)*
Cameraman : It was only a joke.
*(Cameraman starts to record. The Minister and
Bodyguard enter the helicopter... Reporter feels pain in
her back)*
Under-secretary : *(To please permanent secretary)* What is it we're
getting from this man? He's causing us great pains...
Reporter : Then why are you still with him?
Under-secretary : What can we do? We have to grin and bear it until we
retire.
Cameraman : I wouldn't be over exaggerate it if I say I've never seen
a bootlicker like you before! How do you defend
yourself?
Under-secretary : My defence is peace of mind. This is my second
minister. I'm quite experienced in this.
*(Minister in front and then bodyguard emerge from
helicopter)*

Minister : *(With a long face)*
I've got very bad news - we've lost the pilot.

Under-secretary : *(As if he didn't understand it)* We'll search for him, minister.

Minister : He's dead!

Permanent secretary : I knew it.

Under-secretary : May God rest his soul.

Cameraman : My God!

Reporter : He's dead huh?

Permanent secretary : I knew he wasn't feeling well.

Cameraman : I thought our landing was due to engine failure.

Permanent secretary : No young man. The pilot became sick while we were in the air. But he managed to land the helicopter in great self-sacrifice. He even managed to get us out in case it exploded. Then he died.

Cameraman : Sounds feasible.

Reporter : How awful.

Minister : Thank God he managed to land.

Permanent secretary : But we're still stuck on top of this God-forsaken mountain. I knew we were heading for trouble.

Minister : What do you mean, you knew?

Permanent secretary : We should've waited for the co-pilot.

Minister : Then we would be late.

Permanent secretary : Now we'll never get there.

Minister : We couldn't know this was going to happen.

Permanent secretary : But I did warn you, minister, to wait for the co-pilot.

Minister : *(He's angry but trying not to show it)*
It couldn't be helped.

Permanent secretary : We would have been there by now. Instead, this trip may yet cost us our lives.

Under-secretary : Our nose didn't even bleed, permanent secretary.

Permanent secretary : There's already one man dead. Don't be so sure that we'll get away with this so easily. We're on top of a mountain we don't know. Our pilot is dead and it's getting dark.

Minister : *(Irritable)* You seem to be enjoying this.

Permanent secretary : I'm merely pointing out the misjudgement.

Minister : We'll talk about that later.

Cameraman : *(Silence)*
Actually we need to see the truth and discuss it..
Where the hell we are. Come on gentlemen. .
(Cameraman starts looking around. Minister, under secretary and bodyguard also wander about like an official inspection team but separately. Reporter and permanent-secretary remain seated)

Reporter : I can't believe the pilot is dead.

Permanent secretary : I had a friend... He'd been divorced for at least 10 years. His teenage son lived with his ex-wife. My friend only saw him during summer vacations. Once, we were all together at the seaside... He and I were playing chess. Suddenly, we realised his son was in trouble in the sea. He was shouting for help, he was about to drown. Despite his age, my friend managed to swim to him with a great effort. He caught him by his hair and pulled him to the shore with and unbelievable

difficulty. His son was safe but my friend couldn't get up ... I don't know why, but the pilot's death reminded me of how he died..
(Reporter tries to reach her back, she is obviously in pain. The others arrive back, with minister leading and Cameraman beside him)

Minister : We're a long way up.
Cameraman : Worse still, it's steep. You'd need to be a mountaineer to go down this one; and you'd need proper equipment like ropes, crampons and pick-axes. You know something, we could be stuck up here for days.

Minister : Oh no, no, they'll find us soon.
Cameraman : For them to find us, we have to make contact with them somehow. I wonder if the radio is working. Or more to the point, I wonder if any of us can obtain a contact.

Under secretary : *(Shows his cellular phone)* If we can notify them they'll find us but, there's no line.

Reporter : Mine doesn't pick it up either.
Cameraman : *(To bodyguard)*
What about you?

Bodyguard : *(Pointing to radio)*
This is kaput.

Cameraman : Take a look at the one inside.
Minister : Go on, hurry up.
(The Bodyguard runs to the chopper. Others wait in silence)

Bodyguard : *(Comes back)*
It doesn't work, minister.

Cameraman : Well, what did we expect? If this one can't work, that one wouldn't either. So, we have no means of communicating with the outside world.

Minister : The moment they realise we're lost, all hell will break loose.

Cameraman : But they don't know where the hell we are. Undoubtedly they'll look and find us, but it could be tomorrow or in a week. Do you get my drift, ladies and gentlemen? So we're here and we don't know how long we might stay here. Anyway is there anyone who can fly the chopper then? Permanent secretary?

Permanent secretary : If I had a skill like that, we wouldn't be here now.
Cameraman : I don't even know how to drive a car.
Reporter : *(Makes fun)* If it was a plane, it would've been easy.
Bodyguard : I don't know much about these things.
Cameraman : Even a pilot wouldn't have been any use friends. See the thingamajig of this damn thing that turns on top has fallen down.

Minister : We are all aware of the situation, what's the point of painting this black picture?

Cameraman : I'm just painting a realistic picture, minister. We can't use the helicopter. And since we can't send signals, it's impossible for them locate us. Is that not so?

Permanent secretary : I'm afraid they'll find our dead bodies.
Under-secretary : God forbid.

Permanent secretary : Well, if we're stuck up here for a week, that's what's going to happen.

Minister : *(Shouts)* What the hell are you talking about?

Permanent secretary : I'm just expressing my fears, minister, my worries...

Minister : Shut up! You've been talking stubbornly for days. Even though you know you'll get on my nerves you keep talking like that!

Cameraman : *(Tries to calm him down)*
Morale is low, minister ...

Minister : No, no, you don't know the whole story. I said shut up!

Permanent secretary : You can't talk to me as if you were scolding a child.

Minister : I said shut up. Cut it out!
(Silence)

Cameraman : Let's discuss things calmly, minister. It'll be dark soon. We've got to take precautions while it's still light. Look, someone has lit a fire here before. So that means probably mountaineers have been here. We should gather some stuff for a fire. This way we'll keep warm, and it might even alert a passing plane or helicopter. Would you agree, minister?

Minister : *(To bodyguard)* Go get some stuff for the fire.
(Bodyguard jumps into action)

Cameraman : No, no, we should all do it together. It'll be quicker and and a fair was to participate in this situation

Reporter : That's right.

Under-secretary : Please minister, don't tire yourself out, we'll sort this out.

Cameraman : Come on then, bring whatever you can find to burn. But don't go too far. And be careful.
(Everyone goes, except the minister. He waits a little, then reluctantly, he joins them)
(Darkness)
(When lights go up on stage, there's a fire in the middle. All except the minister have piled twigs, etc, that they've carried, near the fire. And are piling down)

Cameraman : Good, we've got enough for the winter.

Minister : And it's free.

Cameraman : I guess that should be enough to the morning.

Under-secretary : Well, if it's not enough, we can always gather some more.

Reporter : My back really hurts. It's in pain. It's like a knife going through.
(Cameraman examines externally)

Cameraman : The back of your shirt is torn. Hold it, let me see. *(Puts his hand in. Expression of disgust as he takes it out)*
There's something on your back. See it's blood. As if you've hit it somewhere.
(The others gather around)

Under-secretary : I wish you get well.

Permanent secretary : At the end our nose bled!

Cameraman : How come you didn't realise it till now?

Reporter : I don't know.

Bodyguard : I hope you get well soon, sister.

Under-secretary : Yeah me too.

Permanent secretary : I wish you a speedy recovery.
 Reporter : Thank you.
 Cameraman : I think I saw a first-aid box in there.
 (To bodyguard) Quick, get it.
 (Bodyguard runs)
 (To reporter)
 It's probably best if we go in there too. It'll be more comfortable. We'll do whatever is necessary...
 Reporter : Oh no, I couldn't bear to see the pilot.
 Cameraman : Oh all right, all right. *(Takes box that bodyguard has brought)* Turn your back towards the fire. I hope it's not too deep. *(Lifts her shirt up, disgusted expression)*
 Don't worry, there's nothing to worry about.
 Reporter : I remember now, I hit something as we landed.
 Ouch... That hurt.
 Cameraman : Jesus, which one is the damned antiseptic?
 Under-secretary : *(Finds it and gives it to him)*
 Do you want some cotton wool?
 (Cameraman drops oxygen water on the cotton that under secretary had given and starts to clean the wound)
 Reporter : *(Tries to hide the pain but...)*
 Aah, ouch... It really hurts...
 Cameraman : Hang on.
 (Reporter moans)
 Cameraman : Almost over... Just a little bit longer, hang in there...
 Now comes the iodine. Now you'll have to be a little bit... Endure this one.
 (Cameraman rubs on the wound as he pours some on the cotton from the bottle that Under secretary gave. The reporter shrieks with pain. And even screams a little. Cameraman finishes the process, even the girl continued to scream. Wraps the wound with bandages)
 Cameraman : Hold it. I'll help you get dressed.
 Reporter : Thank you.
 Minister : Well I hope you get well soon.
 Permanent secretary : I hope so too.
 Under-secretary : Me too.
 Bodyguard : Get well soon sister.
 Reporter : Thank you all, thank you.
 (Cameraman is reading the names of various drugs he's found in the first aid kit)
 Cameraman : Look, I've found a pain killer. Water please.
 Minister : *(To bodyguard)* Go get some water. Bring me some too.
 (Bodyguard runs to the helicopter)
 Cameraman : You'll be just fine, just try to relax.
 (Bodyguard returns with two bottles of water and two glasses, giving one to the minister first, then to cameraman. Because of not giving it to him first the Cameraman looks at the Bodyguard in anger)
 Cameraman : *(As he's pouring the water)* How many bottles do we have in there?
 Bodyguard : I didn't count.

Cameraman : Well, go and count it!

Minister : (Gives the tablets to the reporter) Come on!
(*Not happy about someone else ordering his bodyguard around*)

Cameraman : Do you think that is necessary?

Cameraman : I believe we've been over this before, minister. We may be here for some time and it would be wise to organise an equal distribution of whatever food and drink there is.

Cameraman : (*Minister signs to bodyguard to go; he does*)
I don't really want to say this, but I think it's best if I do... You may remember that there was a similar accident in the past... The victims were stranded on a mountain and ended up eating each other... I don't mean that they quarrelled, but that they... ate each other. I think the first to be consumed were two army generals, three MPs and two businessmen... And they had guns, believe it or not. But, as you know, guns cannot stand in the way of hunger. There isn't a more devastating weapon than a hungry man.
(*An uneasy silence; it seems for a while that everyone feels this situation to be real*)

Minister : If I'm not mistaken, the mountain was covered in snow on that occasion - not at all like this. (*Laughs*) Still, I don't think you'll find my mature flesh all that appetizing.

Cameraman : (*Laughing*)
You just can never tell, unless we try it minister... Do you always know for sure if the chicken you've bought will be tasty? We still eat it. I would think you and your bodyguard will provide enough food for the rest of us for a month.

Minister : (*Grinning*)
My subordinates have always sacrificed themselves for me. Is that not so?

Under-secretary : (*Worriedly*)
I would gladly sacrifice myself for you, minister.

Minister : (*Seeing that the permanent secretary is quiet*)
And as for those who won't, I'll eat them myself.

Cameraman : It was only a joke, honest.

Permanent secretary : Every joke has a piece of truth in it.

Bodyguard : (*Returning*) There are ten bottles.

Cameraman : And the ones we have here?

Bodyguard : Makes twelve.

Cameraman : Right, how many are we?

Under-secretary : Seven.

Cameraman : (*Counts*) Six.

Under-secretary : We were seven when we left.

Cameraman : You've forgotten about the pilot. So, we each have two bottles of water. Let everyone take their bottles with them. You can either drink it all up now or keep in mind the days ahead and save it... It's all up to you.

Minister : Oh dear, there really is no need for all this careful planning. They are going to find us anyway.

Cameraman : And what if they don't? It's the end of August and

there's no snow to be seen anywhere. Let's just be wise and take our precautions.
(Permanent secretary notices that the reporter is asleep)

Permanent secretary : *(To cameraman)* She's asleep.
 Cameraman : Of course she is. She didn't sleep well the night before and I've given her a sleeping pill... I hope there's no risk of tetanus.

Minister : Oh no, I don't think so.
 Cameraman : But it's a pretty deep wound. I wonder where she hit her back. I'll go and have a look inside.
(Cameraman goes into the helicopter. Bodyguard obeys minister's sign to follow him inside. Under-secretary rekindles the fire. Permanent secretary is glumly quiet. Suddenly, the projectors of the helicopter are switched on, making the scene very bright. Cameraman and bodyguard return)

Under-secretary : That was clever of them, wasn't it, sir?
 Minister : Well done.
 Cameraman : We were messing around, it suddenly came on. The bad news is, she's hit something pretty bad. I hope she'll be all right.

Permanent secretary : She'll get cold here.
 Minister : She should lie down inside.
 Cameraman : The pilot is there. But let's take him out... He won't get cold!
(Cameraman and bodyguard return to the helicopter)

Under-secretary : They will surely find you, minister. You're not an ordinary Joe, sir. The whole country must be in turmoil by now. Everyone will be up in arms.

Minister : What are you bullshitting about, for God's sake! They might not even be aware of the accident.
(Silence. Cameraman and bodyguard are carrying the pilot's body outside by the arm and legs)

Minister : Get up and help.
 Under-secretary : Certainly, minister.
(Begins to run, but stops and turns)
 I... suffer from hernia, sir.
(The two place the body behind the helicopter, away from the audience's view. - And that's for the best. Otherwise the actor who plays the pilot had to act if not breathing for the rest of the show- The Cameraman and Bodyguard return after leaving the pilot)

Cameraman : *(Nudging the reporter)*
 Come on get up. Get up, you'll be cold here.

Reporter : *(Wakes up slowly, confused)*
 What's going on?

Cameraman : The chit-chat is continuing... (repeats as if it is a name of a film or play) Chat- Chat on the Mountain... Prattle- Prattle on the Broken Wing... No these didn't fit... Doggone propeller chat...

Minister : She's getting cold, take her in, and then you can carry on.

Cameraman : I'll take you in.

Permanent secretary : Are you in pain?
Reporter : It's just throbbing. It gets worse when I move.
(Cameraman gets in her arm and they walk)

Permanent secretary : Sleep tight in there.
Minister : I hope you feel better soon.
Reporter : *(About to enter helicopter)*
Oh no, no, I won't go in.

Cameraman : We've taken the pilot out. Look, you can see his feet,
poor guy.
(They enter the helicopter)

Under-secretary : Minister, that man isn't covered.
Minister : What man? Don't talk like a puzzle!
Under-secretary : The pilot.
Minister : So? Don't worry, he won't be catching a cold.
Under-secretary : Just wandered about wild animal or something...
Minister : What are you babbling about? The pilot might be
eaten up! Is that what you're trying to say?

Under-secretary : Something like that, sir.
Minister : *(To bodyguard)*
And what do you think?

Bodyguard : There're some newspapers inside, minister. I'll cover
him with those, if you wish, sir.

Minister : *(To bodyguard)* Son, is this a roadway? Did he die in a
car accident so that you want to cover him with
newspaper? *(Answers himself)* Yes you can say that
he died in an accident *(But still)* See that there is wind
blowing. Would the newspaper stay on him? What
kind of men do I work with? You even surprise me...
*(Cameraman returns with a bottle of whisky and a tray
with glasses, nuts and paper plates)*

Cameraman : Look what I've found for you! Don't forget this favour of
mine, eh? Wow man we even have whisky. And this
baby will keep us warm. *(To bodyguard)* Why don't
you help me. Take these nuts and put them in the
plate. *(The Bodyguard does so)* You will have some
right? *(He pours whisky in the glasses and gives them
to Minister, Permanent secretary, Under secretary in
order. He gives one to the Bodyguard)* Why don't you
take it man?

Bodyguard : *(Quietly)* Not in front of the minister.
Cameraman : Oh forget your minister.
Bodyguard : No, it would be a shame, I can't.
Cameraman : If it's a shame, he's doing it too. Come on, take it dude.
Bodyguard : No.
Cameraman : Minister, can he have some too? Otherwise, he'll
freeze his ass from cold.

Minister : Drink son, drink.
Cameraman : Do they ask for permission when they go for a pee as
well?

Minister : Ah, that reminds me. I've been dying for one over an
hour. *(To bodyguard)* Come with me. *(They go.
Bodyguard takes a flashlight out of his pocket)*

Minister : Where did you find that?
Bodyguard : I found it inside, minister.
(They disappear)

Cameraman : Cheers! To your health.
 Under-secretary : *(While sitting down)* We'd better wait for him. Otherwise he'll make sure we don't enjoy it.
 Cameraman : You've got it tough there all right. You know what the Devil is whispering? Take the camera and sneak up behind them, record him while he's taking a dump. Then sell it to a competitor TV station and let them show it under the title 'see they are polluting the earth/neighbourhood'.
 Permanent secretary : I'll never forgive him if something happens to that poor girl.
 Under-secretary : What could we do about it, permanent secretary?
 Permanent secretary : Nooo, we could do a lot. I don't expect anything more from the civil service anymore. I'm at the top of the ladder with nowhere else to go. I'm due to retire soon. I'd expose him in the press. He doesn't have the right to mess with my personality. I won't allow that. I've had many ministers in my time. What business does he have at the scene of an earthquake in the other end of the country? On top of it he's due to meet a foreign delegation tomorrow. Do you know how long ago that meeting was arranged.
 Under-secretary : *(Alarmed)*
 He's coming... Permanent secretary, he's coming. Please, he will get agitated all over again.
(The Minister and Bodyguard behind him. Under-secretary stands up. Permanent secretary is already standing, to avoid having to do so on minister's arrival)
 Under-secretary : Is it OK, minister?
 Minister : Is what OK?
 Under-secretary : I mean, Have you done? Your thing oh...
 Minister : *(Angry)*
 You just talk for the sake of talking, don't you? You just babble on. You just talk for the hell of it!
 Under-secretary : I won't talk again, minister.
 Minister : Look at that, one extreme to the other. Just talk when It's necessary.
 Under-secretary : Yes, minister.
 Cameraman : Come on everybody, cheers!
 Under-secretary : To your health, minister.
 Minister : Cheers, everyone.
 Permanent secretary : *(Grudgingly)* Cheers.
(Bodyguard drinks furtively, despite permission. Everyone drinks and eats nuts)
 Minister : Oh yeahhh... That's much better.
 Cameraman : Should have been raki, instead of whisky. And two hefty sea breams, nicely cleaned. *(Describes by holding one elbow with other hand)* Oh boy, we have the fire ready too... One sea bream coming up, yes sir. And just put behind the ones you couldn't eat
 Permanent secretary : Next time we crash, eh?
 Cameraman : Aha! Next time, we will take all the necessary precautions, isn't that so, minister?
 Minister : In all possibility they must be searching for us now.
 Cameraman : I sincerely hope that you are in good terms with the

interior minister.

Minister : Why do you say that?

Cameraman : Otherwise, why would he mobilise all those resources just to find you... and if he doesn't, we'll bite the dust. *(Minister isn't all that amused, but manages a smile)*

Cameraman : I'll just see how she's doing. *(Cameraman goes to the helicopter with the first aid kit)*

Minister : What a creep!

Bodyguard : He's a ass hole, minister. I almost kicked his butt, when he scared us with biffs and bams.

Minister : God in heaven! That's all your brain can handle. When are you going to grow up son? Am I getting angry with him? This son of a bitch is an important cameraman for television, and he's USEFUL to us!

Bodyguard : Yes, but... minister... he's a bit of a nuisance.

Minister : Nooo on the contrary, I find him quite sympathetic. You just have to turn a blind eye to his slimy jokes. Because he's USEFUL. Do you think he'd be recording us again if you roughed him up?.. In fact, we're wasting our time. *(To under-secretary)* See we're actually getting late. You know what I'm thinking? Listen, let's film the whole incident as if the helicopter had just landed! Do you get it? I said do you get it?

Under-secretary : Yes, minister, I get it... But ... how exactly?

Minister : This jerk has already documented us coming out of the helicopter and lying on the ground, hasn't he? All we need to do now is to set the scene and give our comments to camera. Do you understand?

Under-secretary : I understand now, minister.

Minister : Ssshhhh! He's coming. As if I don't know anything.

Under-secretary : Yes, minister.

Minister : *(As if they were talking about another subject)* There's no need to panic. The men will be staying for a whole week. We'll re-arrange the meeting for later in the week.

Cameraman : *(Quietly to permanent secretary)* That is, if we make it.

Minister : How's our patient?

Cameraman : She keeps moaning. And she's got a fever.

Minister : She'll be alright.

Cameraman : Actually I started worried... I hope things don't go sour. She's already going through an unlucky period.

Minister : How?

Cameraman : She's just split up from the man she was with. A week Ago. They've sent me with her on this job for the hell of it to cheer her up.

Minister : I can't solve the logic behind the idea to be send to an earthquake area to cheer up?

Cameraman : *(Really starts mocking)* No, it's perfect. I myself had the blues about a month ago. My news editor packed me off to the Middle East to cover the war in order to cheer me up. For a week, I toured the bomb shelled towns and I returned home thoroughly cheered up. Because I hadn't been wounded and, what's more, I

was alive!
(The Minister, Permanent secretary, Under secretary laugh in order. Only Bodyguard is quiet. He too act like he has understood the witticism and smiles oddly)

Minister : Have to drink to this one. Cheers!
 Others : Cheers, minister, to your health.
 Cameraman : Let me have your glass, minister.
(Pours whisky into Minister's glass)
 And how are we doing, gentlemen?

Under-secretary : Splendid! Absolutely splendid!
 Cameraman : Why is the permanent secretary so quiet, though? I brought this out to perk us up a bit. But if you like we don't have to drink it.

Permanent secretary : It's my daughter's ceremony tomorrow.
 Cameraman : What ceremony?
 Permanent secretary : She's won a prize, the second prize, in an international art competition. It's that presentation.

Cameraman : What does your daughter do?
 Permanent secretary : She's a student. She's in her last year, studying English language and literature. She's also a interested in painting. *(Obviously proud of his daughter)* She has real talent.
(In the mean time the Minister secretly indicates to under-secretary that he should be prompting the cameraman to film and stands up)

Minister : *To bodyguard)* Come along then, let's survey the surrounding area.

Under-secretary : Should I come too, minister?
 Minister : *(As if to say, `you idiot!')* No, no.
(Minister and bodyguard go away)

Cameraman : That's right, you take a walk, minister. And hopefully, when you return, you'll be in a better mood. He doesn't let on but he's worried too.

Permanent secretary : He doesn't even say `congratulations.'
 Under-secretary : Surely, permanent secretary, you know him by now. Right now, he's mad at you. But, he'll make it up to you when we get back.

Permanent secretary : I don't think so.
 Cameraman : Any more children in the family, permanent secretary?
 Permanent secretary : I also have a son. He's doing a Master's degree in the States. He's an economist.

Cameraman : You're lucky with your children.
 Permanent secretary : Yes, yes we are. But it's not easy, with one studying abroad, especially in the States. Plus he's got a scholarship too. What we sent is just a pocket change but it's difficult enough for us.

Cameraman : *(While Pouring whisky in permanent secretary's glass)*
 How long is he going to be there?

Permanent secretary : He'll finish it next year.
 Cameraman : Well, you've almost made it. And you, under-secretary, do you have children?

Under-secretary : I have two, a girl and a boy. They're nice, respectful children. But they're still in high school; the girl will finish this year, and the boy next year.

Permanent secretary : That's when the real problems will begin.

Under-secretary : We don't have any choice.
 Permanent secretary : And you, young man?
 Cameraman : I live alone. Well, actually for the last two months. I had a girl friend that I was with, but it didn't work out, so we separated.

Permanent secretary : If it's not so private, may I ask why?
 Cameraman : *(Seems to get sad but recovers quickly)*
 I am an Aries and so was she. She tried to control me... So she spoiled the whole thing.

Permanent secretary : *(Laughing)* You should have chosen someone with a more compatible sign.

Cameraman : I get on best with Leo.
 Under-secretary : Aha! But the lioness will eat the ram in the end. I know a little about these things.

Cameraman : But my are lionesses aren't large ones, they are cubs... So, I would have them for breakfast. *(While the others laugh)* I also get on with Gemini. And especially Virgo... Oh and I forgot Aquarius... In fact, I get on with everything other than Aries. The truth is, I like all women. They all have different smells, different skins. *(Sighs)* Instead, I'm stuck up this mountain...
(Minister approaches, signalling to under-secretary as if "haven't you told him yet?" Under-secretary signals back that he's about to do so and to hurry)

Under-secretary : Would you listen to me? Hey you.
 Permanent secretary : *(Happy with the subject of women scent)*
 I wonder which one he's thinking about now?

Cameraman : Aaah, yes... At your service, under-secretary.
 Under-secretary : Please, no need for that... I was going to say...
 Cameraman : Yes, go on. No need to be shy.
 Under-secretary : Right after we were forced to land you were filming, and documenting some things. Why don't you carry on?

Cameraman : If only our reporter was able to talk, I could create a masterpiece...
 Under-secretary : Well, why don't you ask the questions yourself. Then can't you dub her voice in the studio?
 Cameraman : This is the minister's idea, isn't it? That's why he's gone away on purpose, so you could prepare the ground. Oh no don't worry, it works for me too. Come on, call the Minister.
(While the Cameraman starts to prepare, Under-secretary goes by the Minister, who had been hanging around by the chopper)

Under-secretary : *(Quietly)* Okay sir... I've convinced him.
 Minister : *(Quietly)* Well-done! You caught a mice since you've become a cat...

Under-secretary : *(Loudly)*
 Minister, if you please, sir, we're about to start filming.

Minister : What filming?
 Cameraman : *(Shouts)*
 I'd like to interview you, minister.

Minister : *(Pretends to joke)* Is this an appropriate time for it?

Cameraman : Well, it's up to you, *(To Under-secretary)* If you
Well, see for yourself... I wouldn't dream of doing
something without consent.

Minister : *(Comes next to the Cameraman quickly)*
I was only joking... We've got plenty of time. In
any case, I'm the sort of politician who has always
co-operated with the press, even at my busiest times.
You're a clever and quick-thinking young man,
I thought you'd understand the joke.

Cameraman : Oh yes, I'm clever, minister. But so are you. In fact, it's
more a case of two acrobats on the same wire.

Minister : *(He is flattered)* Shall we start?

Cameraman : Yes, let's start. Now, gentlemen, listen to me carefully.
You're all going back into the helicopter. Then you'll
come out running as if the crash has just happened.
That is, run out when I call out.

Minister : But haven't you already filmed our escape?

Cameraman : There's no harm in extra shoots... It'll be handy during
the editing.
(Quietly to the minister)
Let's have you in forefront place, minister.

Minister : Good idea.

Permanent secretary : *(Quietly)* Sheer buffoonery!

Under-secretary : *(Very quietly)* What's new? But he mustn't hear
it... We just have to put up with him, do we
have any choice?

Cameraman : Come on, hurry up little, go into the helicopter.
*(Everyone except the cameraman walks
towards the helicopter... Cameraman is busy
with the camera)*

Under-secretary : *(To cameraman)*
But the reporter lady isn't here.

Cameraman : I'll add her part in the studio... Wait for my
instructions...

Under-secretary : After you, minister.

Cameraman : *(He talks while he is looking through the
camera, determining the angle of shooting)*
Let's rehearse it first... Hey, that's enough,
don't go all the way in.
*(Minister is at the front, sprucing up.
Permanent secretary is reluctant, as if to say,
"how the hell did we get into this?" Under-
secretary has a complete air of duty.
Bodyguard keeps grinning)*

Cameraman : No, bodyguard, no! That's not good enough!

Minister : What do you think you're doing? You're
grinning like an idiot... You fool!

Cameraman : You'll ruin all our efforts... You mustn't laugh.

Minister : Don't laugh!

Bodyguard : *(His face freezes with fear)*
Yes, sir.

Cameraman : Yes, yes, that's great, sheer terror... Obviously,
being scolded by the minister is just as
terrifying as the helicopter crashing! Get ready,
gentlemen... *(They get ready)*

But not like athletes preparing to run a 100 meter race... and certainly not like athletes preparing for a marathon! You're escaping from a crashed helicopter, gentlemen... well, not quite escaping... more like moving away from it. OK?

Minister : OK!
(Cameraman beings to make sound resembling that of a helicopter... Others look like athletes waiting for the start sign. Only Permanent secretary looks like an outsider. Now Cameraman makes a sounds like a helicopter crash)

Cameraman : Go on, run!
(Others begin to run slow motioned. But the Bodyguard is grinning)

Cameraman : Stop.... Stop it! You're grinning again!

Minister : Are you a lunatic? Let's take him out of the shoot.

Cameraman : I can't believe it... I don't even have the reporter anyway.

Minister : Don't laugh, you swine!

Cameraman : Let's try again.
(Everyone goes to his original position and waits. Cameraman makes the same sounds of a helicopter and a crash)

Cameraman : Come on, run!
(Once again, they run in slow motion. Minister pretends to be watching over others and helping them as he runs. Cameraman continues to shoot)

Cameraman : Lie down... Bravo.. That's it, excellent!
(They lie on the ground)

Minister : *(To bodyguard, affectionately)*
 Son, watch your head.
(To the others, protectively) Keep your head down.

Cameraman : Excellent minister, bravo... Very good. *(Stops filming)* That's enough. Thank you all very much.
(Everyone gets up. Minister quietly approaches the cameraman)

Minister : So, are you happy with that?

Cameraman : I'm extremely happy. You seem to know these things sir...

Minister : It'd be good if we could have the girl as well at some point.

Cameraman : I'll deal with that during editing, minister. Don't worry ..

Minister : I'm sure you will. But still, it might be a good idea to do it now... it would mean that you don't have to worry about it later.

Cameraman : *(Determined to mock)*
 I've got a brilliant idea, minister. And it would be well worth your while too.

Minister : *(Gets excited)*
What's that?

Cameraman : *(Suddenly, his enthusiasm turns to despair)* Do you suffer from a back problem minister?

Minister : A dislocated disc... it occasionally gets bad.

Cameraman : Damn! It was such a good opportunity too...

Minister : Let's use the opportunity.

Cameraman : But you can't carry weight.

Minister : Why shouldn't I, if it's going to be worth my while? And it rather depends on what I'm going to carry. Come on, say it?

Cameraman : Just think, if you were to carry the wounded reporter in your arms out of the helicopter... And if I were to film that... Wouldn't that be just killer? Eh minister?

Minister : *(Persuaded)*
How heavy is the girl?

Cameraman : 130-135 pounds.

Minister : 130-135 pounds huh? What if she were to come out leaning on me?

Cameraman : What use is that? But maybe... The bodyguard could carry her. I won't include his head in the film. And later, I will edit the whole thing so that YOU appear to be carrying her.

Minister : You're a genius!

Cameraman : But... You're not wearing a ring. That ape has a giant ring on like horseshoe.

Minister : If you want, I'll ask him to take it off. I'll even make him swallow it...

Cameraman : But it's not just the ring... Look at his hands, they're like the hands of a bear... Whereas yours are refined, elegant hands. It'll be quite obvious... a sharp-eyed viewer will quickly realise those hands do not belong to you.

Minister : *(Trying not to miss a good opportunity)*
The permanent-secretary's hands are just like mine... Look... And he doesn't have a ring.

Cameraman : Would he agree to carry the girl?

Minister : How can he not agree? As long as he doesn't know about the editing, he will jump into it.

Cameraman : He won't know about it. But what if he goes wild when he sees it on TV and tells everyone the truth?

Minister : He wouldn't dare... I'd ruin him...

Cameraman : No, no, it won't do... In any case, he can't carry the girl, he'd be crushed under her weight. But, hang on... my hands are just like yours, see! I'll carry her for you.

Minister : But then who'll be doing the filming?

Cameraman : Aah, I'd forgotten about that. Well, let's forget the whole thing.

Minister : No, no, don't give up so quickly. Show me how and I'll film it.

Cameraman : Do you think you can do it?

Minister : What am I, an idiot?

Cameraman : No, no, of course not minister.
Minister : I'm a man who's learned how to swim in a single day! You see, when I became the minister for maritime affairs, I had to learn swimming in just one day in order to stop any adverse publicity from my opponents.

Cameraman : Learning to swim and learning to use a camera are not the same, minister.

Minister : And another thing: I didn't have a clue about maritime affairs until I became the minister. Yet now I am the most successful minister of all, as you can see for yourself.

Cameraman : Minister... being a minister is quite different. While it is not that difficult to pretend that you are a minister, you can't really pretend to be filming!. Now, if you will permit me, I'd like to get on with the interviews. Maybe over here. Now, you're standing here with the helicopter visible. Since we don't have our reporter, I'll be asking the questions. I'll change it during the editing. Are we all ready?

Minister : I'm ready.
Under-secretary : I'm at your service.
(Permanent secretary indicates that he is ready by nodding)

Cameraman : The bodyguard is ready too. Now then, let's begin with the minister.
(Meanwhile, under-secretary is adjusting the minister's tie and dusting the minister's shoulders using his hands as a brush)

Minister : I'm ready.
Cameraman : I think it would be better to stand here. I want to make sure the helicopter can be seen. Permanent secretary, could you move aside, please?

Minister : Yes... *(To under-secretary)* Get out of the way!
Under-secretary : Just this bit too, min...
Minister : *(Quietly, between his teeth)* Stop fussing!
Under-secretary : Yes, minister. *(He moves over)*
Minister : *(Poses with a smile)* How's this?
Cameraman : *(Looks through the lens)*
Good view. Ah, but, what do I see minister? You've got a big grin on your face. He identifies the role just like a film director) Listen, in there is an injured passenger. Out here, is a dead pilot. The helicopter has just made an emergency landing. Don't you think it would be more appropriate, minister, if you seemed a little... sorrowful?

Minister : Don't worry, I know exactly what to do once the camera begins to roll. *(Contorts his face with pain)*
Is this better?

Cameraman : That's perfect. Keep that. That must keep that expression throughout the interview.

Minister : Don't worry, young man, you just relax.
Cameraman : *(Indicates with his hand that camera is rolling)*
This is the place where our helicopter has had to make an emergency landing. Or better yet, it's as if this flat area was prepared for our emergency landing. As you

- can see, the helicopter has only just managed to land without hitting the surrounding rocks. Unfortunately, we are now mourning the pilot who achieved this feat of aviation. One of the six passengers was the minister of maritime affairs, we all know... Let us talk to him. Minister, what message would you like to give to our viewers concerning the incident?
- Minister : *(Same contorted face)*
First of all I would like to say that my sadness is immense... I have sustained the deepest of wounds by the... *(Pretends for a while that he's trying to force back the tears)* ... the loss of our irreplaceable pilot... *(Pretends he has finally managed to force the tears back)* If we go back to the beginning... *(Pretends he's about to cry again)* I hope you will excuse me... The loss of the pilot has ...
- Cameraman : As you can see, the minister is still in shock. Minister, are you all right? *(Meanwhile, cameraman indicates to others that minister is doing a good job by putting his thumb up in the air)*
- Minister : *(Pretends to be calm again)*
Let's begin from the beginning. Myself, my permanent secretary and my under-secretary were at a holiday resort, attending a conference. Just as the conference was drawing to a close, we received news of the earthquake. Indeed, the earthquake must have been extremely powerful, as we actually saw the conference table move back and forth. We were about three hours' drive from the earthquake site. Acting with a deep sense of duty, I gathered my colleagues and we decided to reach our unfortunate fellow citizens at whatever cost. As our car was beginning to pull out, we were told we could join a reporter and a cameraman who were about to set off in a helicopter. *(Permanent and under secretaries indicate to each other that minister is twisting the truth)*
- Minister : We were waiting for the co-pilot. The truth is, we had to reach those poor people as quickly as we could. God knows how many had been killed and how many had been injured? How many were groaning under the rubble? I had to make an instant decision, because the prime minister was abroad and the rest of the cabinet were in the capital. It might have taken a long time for other ministers to get there. Meanwhile, people were groaning under the rubble. I made the helicopter leave immediately, without even waiting for a co-pilot. I made this decision fully conscious of the great risk to our own lives. Everything went well until... here. I suddenly saw that the pilot was worried; he was trying to land. *(Contorts face once again)* I believe he had a heart attack. *(Unbelievably, he's crying)* After the landing, he opened the door and... helped us out... one by one. He was saying "It might blow up"... *(He's sobbing violently)* He saved us all... Then... *(Now, he's hysterical)* He made his final flight... to eternal resting place.

Cameraman : Perhaps we will end on that note, minister. Let's not deepen his wounds. The situation is that we are here on top of this mountain, without any means of communicating with the outside world and we are waiting to be rescued... It is now 9 pm... This is Zama Zingo. KTL One. Himalaya - Everest.
(Stops filming)

Minister : How was I?

Cameraman : I've seen many ministers, even prime ministers during my career... But I swear to God, I have never seen one as talented as you, minister.

Minister : Thank you.
(To under-secretary)
What did you think?

Under-secretary : You were impressive, minister. And convincing too. You were absolutely superb!

Cameraman : I'm not joking, you know. I was pleasantly surprised. What deluge of tears! Hell, how did you manage to cry so quickly?

Minister : Listen, young man, I lost my father in a road accident. An eighteen-wheeler went over him at great speed. He was chopped into three. I just have to visualise that scene when I want to make myself cry. I don't need onions, in other words.

Cameraman : I give up! You are simply amazing, I take my hat off to you, minister.
(To under-secretary)
You're next. But let's determine what are we going to talk about with you?

Minister : *(Quietly approaches to cameraman)*
Do you really need talk about these? Haven't you got enough?

Cameraman : I want it to be a rich programme. I'm even going to interview the reporter.

Minister : Why don't you interview yourself too?

Cameraman : They'll talk to both myself and the reporter back at the Office before this is broadcast. *(Serious)* Have you ever had a part in a play in theatre? I mean, have you done any acting or done a course in acting?

Minister : No, nothing of that sort. I've got a natural talent for this. But that's right, I'd forgotten about that. My dad, the one who died in a car crash, did, apparently have an amateur part once. So I probably got it from him.

Cameraman : Now that's possible. But the truth of the matter is that you have an unequal talent.

Minister : No, of course not! What on earth do you mean?

Cameraman : You said 'the one who died in a car crash...' I thought maybe you had other dads who hadn't died in similar circumstances. Anyway, one thing is for sure: you've got an astonishing talent.

Minister : God damn it! We're too late now. You should have seen me at the scene of the earthquake!

Cameraman : You never know, they might find us. We might just make it.

Minister : What's the point? All the others will be there already.
(Minister wanders off with bodyguard - perhaps to take care of their nature calling)

Cameraman : Boy, he goes pissing quite often.
 Under-secretary : He's diabetic.
 Cameraman : Let's begin, permanent secretary.
(Starts to shoot) Permanent secretary, would you like to tell us briefly what happened? How did you realise that the pilot was dead?

Permanent secretary : Yes, well, I was the first to see that he was not well, while we were still in the air. I didn't tell anyone, in order not to create panic. The pilot is worthy of the highest praise for ensuring that we all got out safely. Yes, I do believe he was an exceptional person. May God bless his soul... We are also extremely concerned about the injury sustained by the lady reporter. She may have broken a bone in her back ribs. We're extremely lucky that no one else has been injured. We're still here and we're waiting in the hope that they will find us...

Cameraman : Thank you, permanent secretary. And now, let's talk to the ministry of maritime affairs Under-Secretary. Yes, under-secretary?

Under-secretary : Our eminent minister and our permanent secretary have told the story very well. I have nothing to add... I hope they will find us soon. Thank you.

Cameraman : Thank you, under-secretary. *(While filming, walks towards bodyguard who's waiting for minister near the helicopter)*
 And now, let's have the views of the minister's bodyguard. What are your thoughts about this incident? Do you have a message for anyone, your family? Go on, say something.

Bodyguard : *(Gets shy, flounders)* We crashed... We're safe... God showed mercy on us... God has spared us for the sake of our children... *(Now standing up straight, hands firmly at his sides)*
 Father, we are fine here. Mother, don't worry about me. I kiss both your hands. I say hi to my wife. I kiss my children's cheeks. God willing, we are waiting for someone to find us. I send my best regards to all my relatives, my friends and my mates. I kiss the hands of the elders and the cheeks of the young.

Cameraman : OK. *(Stops filming. Minister has heard the last words of bodyguard)*

Minister : *(To cameraman)* What's he been saying?
 Cameraman : Messages home from the Turkish contingent in Somalia.

Minister : I told you! This was completely unnecessary.
 Cameraman : It adds colour. Also, it adds to the value of your interview by bringing out the difference in quality.

Minister : Yes... you are a smart ass.
 Cameraman : Minister, those of us who are behind the camera see many things. We see at once who has integrity and who is a trickster, who is an honest man and who is a

con... who is a coward and who has courage. We see all this because we're the ones who put them in the square. *(Takes the bottle on the ground and pours for himself)* There's only a little left, we'd better finish it off. *(Finishes the bottle by offering some to everybody. Then tosses it away)*

(IT GETS DARK)

Cameraman : It's a nice evening.
 Minister : Sure is...
 Cameraman : It would be even nicer if we could leave when we pleased...
(Everyone is silent)
 Cameraman : What is this, have you got the blues or something?
 Under-secretary : The children must be really frightened...
 Cameraman : Which children?
 Under-secretary : MY children.
 Minister : The whole country must be talking about us now.
 Cameraman : Then again, no one may have noticed yet...
 Minister : Everyone must have known it by now that we're lost.
 Cameraman : If they did, we would have seen that they are looking for us. They might not be aware yet... Or, maybe, they'll begin the search in the morning; that would be less dangerous.
 Permanent secretary : We won't be in time for anything.
(Suddenly)
 Minister : What the hell are we doing here?
(Stops himself from saying anything)
 Some people are still dropping hints. I'm beginning to lose my patience again.
 Permanent secretary : Look here, we're not kids! I guess it can't go on like this.
 Minister : *(Directly to permanent secretary)*
 No, it won't go on! Because when we return, I shall dismiss you! Understand? I will dismiss you!
 Cameraman : Please, minister, you can discuss these matters later. Let's listen to the extraordinary stillness of this beautiful evening.
(Everyone is quiet. Minister is frustrated that he couldn't burst out little more, permanent-secretary is depressed because of not being able to talk back; he seems to be taking certain decisions. This time the silence continues longer. Suddenly, the noise of a helicopter is heard in the distance)
 Minister : Heeey...
 Under-secretary : Yes, minister!
 Cameraman : I think they've found us!
 Permanent secretary : *(Even him)* Yes, maybe they have!
 Cameraman : Quiet!
(Everyone gets up quietly and slowly. The noise gets nearer)
 Cameraman : *(Points in the distance)* Look, it's coming, look, look.
 Under-secretary : There!
 Cameraman : Look!
 Bodyguard : It's there!

Minister : Shout! Let's shout, come on!
 Bodyguard : Heeeeeeey!...
 Under-secretary : Heeeere, here!...
 Bodyguard : Heeeeeeey!...
 Permanent secretary : *(Even him) They're going to find us!
 (They all start shouting together... The noise has
 woken up the reporter and she joins them)*

Cameraman : Look, can you see it?
 Minister : It's there!
 Under-secretary : They've found us!
 Bodyguard : Come on, come over here. Here!
*(Everyone is shouting and jumping up and down. But
 suddenly, they freeze. Because the helicopter has
 flown right over their heads and away. They watch with
 despair as the sound of the helicopter fades away.
 They wait a while, then lose all hope)*

Minister : I'm going inside for a rest.
*(Minister and behind him bodyguard enter the
 helicopter. Others are around the fire. Suddenly, the
 projectors of the helicopter go off)*

Cameraman : I guess it's power cut at the hotel.
 (Bodyguard comes back)

Bodyguard : (Sees the questioning looks of others) The minister
 has asked me to turn them off... so the battery doesn't
 go out...

CURTAIN

PART TWO

(Permanent secretary and under-secretary and cameraman and reporter sit in two groups around the fire. Bodyguard is dozing off, leaning against the helicopter.)

Permanent secretary : *(Reads his resignation, puts it into his bag, pointing the bodyguard)* He's sleeping

Under-secretary : I'm a bit drowsy myself.

Permanent secretary : He'll catch a cold. Do you mind telling him to go in?

Under-secretary : *(Walks towards bodyguard)*
Maybe he's told him to stay outside.

Cameraman : I wouldn't be surprised.

Permanent secretary : It could be.
It's this sort of behaviour that's made him the lonely man that he is. First it was his son, then his wife.. they've left him. It's a shame.

Under-secretary : Wake up, son, wake up.

Bodyguard : *(Startled)* What's up? Something happened?

Under-secretary : You're sleeping.

Bodyguard : I must have dozed off.

Under-secretary : Go sleep inside.

Bodyguard : What if he gets mad?

Permanent secretary : You'll freeze out here, son. go inside. I'll be going in as well. *(To under-secretary)* Are you coming too?

Under-secretary : Well, I'm not going to stay out here.

Permanent secretary : Young lady how are you feeling?

Reporter : It still have pain it hurts.

Permanent secretary : Unfortunately, there's nothing we can do. Why don't you lie down too?

Cameraman : I can't go to sleep now *(Pointing to the sky)*
It might be a good idea for me to stay out here.

Permanent secretary : That's right, you're young. You'll be OK out here.
We're going to have a rest. Good night.

Cameraman : Good night.

Reporter : Good night.

Bodyguard : Good night sister.

Under-secretary : Good night.
(The three go slowly into the helicopter)

Cameraman : We're lucky to have something to drink.

Reporter : I think it's helped to reduce the pain.

Cameraman : Would you like another one?

Reporter : I don't think I'll say no tonight.
(Cameraman pours drink into both glasses)

Cameraman : To your health.

Reporter : Thanks.

Cameraman : How long have we known each other?

Reporter : A year. I think it was a few days after I started. But if you ask me when I first met you, I'd say about five years ago.

Cameraman : Really?

Reporter : It's the truth.

Cameraman : Where?
Reporter : On the bus.
Cameraman : What do you mean on the bus? You're no joking, are you? Why don't you tell me...
Reporter : I had a job in the 'Literary world' in those days. I used to take the bus to various debates. That day I was on my way to a meeting again and the bust was jam packed. You know how some men hassle women on crowded busses?
Cameraman : I hope it wasn't me!
Reporter : No, it wasn't. A creep was breathing heavily behind me. I was trying to move towards the window. You suddenly held my shoulders and said "come this way," and by stretching your arms you have placed yourself between the man and me. I still remember how you blushed when I thanked you as I got off.
Cameraman : *(Surprised)* Wow, really!
Reporter : Well, it's true. The nice thing was the sense of belonging to someone in such a crowd. Do you know what I mean?
Cameraman : Yes, I do.
Reporter : My back is really hurting now.
Cameraman : I can only sympathise.
Reporter : *(They keep quiet for a while)*
Reporter : My mother's arms and legs had rheumatism. The doctor advised her to go to the hot springs. We went together. Twice a day she had to go into these vertical tubs, just big enough for one person. They were full of unbearably hot water. If you had to put your hand in, you'd take it out instantly. One day, they forced me to go into one as well. I didn't think I would be able to endure it, but I did... If you didn't move, you felt the heat less. It's the same now, if I don't move, I don't feel the pain so much.
Cameraman : Don't move then.
Reporter : It also hurts when I breathe deeply.
Cameraman : Well, I can't advise you not to breathe...
Cameraman : *(Quiet)*
Cameraman : Do you want some nuts?
Reporter : *(Cameraman passes the plate, she takes from it carefully and eats slowly)*
Reporter : How close the stars seem.
Reporter : We're quite close to God. If we'd tried a little harder, we would've landed on one of those stars.
Cameraman : Hold it! Quiet!
Cameraman : *(Sound of a plane can be heard from distance)*
Reporter : Ah, but it's a plane.
Reporter : So?
Cameraman : I don't think they carry out searches with a plane... So, how long were you two together?
Reporter : Five years. You don't seem surprised?
Cameraman : People at work had told me that you'd been together for a long time. Tell me what exactly went wrong... that is, if it won't upset you.

Reporter : There's nothing to get upset about. Because it's all over. It finished on our anniversary. Only a coincidence, but that's how it ended.

Cameraman : Why did it end?

Reporter : Because he was unfaithful.

Cameraman : Was THAT the reason?

Reporter : I had come to terms with a lot of things. He was married, for instance... He was much older than me. But cheating me, I couldn't live with that.

Cameraman : You know what Napoleon said?
(Mimics Napoleon by putting hand on chest and standing on knees)
Men... Men... Men who wish to be impotent... Sleep with the same woman. At the end you shall become impotent.

Reporter : I can't laugh.

Cameraman : Well, cry then... You silly woman... A lot of men do it. Especially those who have cultivated a broad imagination. You should have turned a blind eye.

Reporter : I couldn't. Anyway, there were other things too... I felt awful every time he left me and go home.

Cameraman : Well, then there's no reason to be sad. Anyway, there're plenty of pebbles on the beach... You know what? He wasn't unfaithful.

Reporter : Yes he was.

Cameraman : You know it damn sure. I think the reason you finished it off was because you couldn't cope with him living with his wife. If we're going to be good friends, then we should be honest *(Laughs)* Did you hear what I just said, "if we're going to be good friends" - so that's my hidden agenda. *(Gets serious)* Don't take life so seriously, please. If people are happy together, they should be able to carry on under all sorts of circumstances.

Reporter : All circumstances?

Cameraman : Yes of course. But if it doesn't work out, then so be it, what can we do? I finished a marriage after three years, because all the excitement had gone out of it. Life goes on... and it must.

Reporter : *(Listens)* What was that noise?

Cameraman : *(Looks at reporter in a different way)* What's your sign?

Reporter : Mine?

Cameraman : Is there anyone else here?

Reporter : Leo
(Cameraman laughs)

Reporter : Why are you laughing?

Cameraman : Oh nothing, I just remembered something.

Reporter : What?

Cameraman : It's obscene. Would you like me to tell you?

Reporter : No, no!

Cameraman : Well, if you insist that much, I'll have to tell you.

Reporter : *(Blocks her ears with hands. But lifting her arms must have effected the wound so she crumples her face)*
Do you think I've broken something?

Cameraman : I don't think so. If you had, you'd be screaming with pain. In fact the searching crew would accept this as a signal, and they would've found us by now.
(Permanent secretary and behind him under-secretary, holding a device, come out of the helicopter)

Cameraman : Couldn't sleep, permanent secretary?
 Permanent secretary : No.
 Under-secretary : Look at this, it's an unusual thing. It's like a walkie-talkie, but I don't think it is.

Cameraman : Let's see. *(Examines it)* Where did you find it?
 Under-secretary : In the cockpit. It seemed to have its own little niche. I was a bit worried about taking it, but I did anyway.

Cameraman : It looks like some sort of signalling device.
 Permanent secretary : I hope so. But we should be careful, just in case.
 Reporter : It's got a switch too.
 Cameraman : Just think, one finger on this switch and BANG, the helicopter blows up. I bet the permanent secretary would like that.

Permanent secretary : No, no, it's not that bad.
 Cameraman : *(Pushes the switch down. BANG! (A red light begins to blink. Others not frightened)*

Cameraman : I think I've overdone that one, right?
 Under-secretary : A little.
 Cameraman : This is definitely giving a signal of some sort.
 Under-secretary : So why don't we hear anything?
 Cameraman : *(Into the device)*
 Make a sound... Come on, make a sound, a soooooound...
(He lifts the switch back, the light goes off)

Permanent secretary : What are you trying to do?
 Cameraman : I'm not sure... But let's push the switch down again. If it is giving a signal, we're in luck.

Under-secretary : And if it isn't?
 Cameraman : When I was attending the university, I had a classmate. We wouldn't believe in God or religion. But he would apply all the religion's rules. This what he has said when I asked him: *(Imitating him)* If there's another world, then they'll except me for applying the rules. And if there ain't a paradise, then I have nothing to lose". Now let's push this switch down. *(He pushes the switch. The red light starts to blink)* If it's sending out a signal then they'll come and save us.

Permanent secretary : What if it's not?
 Cameraman : Then we're out of luck. Then we'll have to cut up and eat the minister and his bodyguard in the morning.
(Reporter and under-secretary laugh)

Cameraman : Why aren't you laughing, permanent secretary?
 Permanent secretary : I usually laugh at nights young man...
(They all sit down, looking at the device. Suddenly, the projectors of the helicopter come back on, They all get into position. Bodyguard comes out of the helicopter)

Bodyguard : The minister has woken up.
 Cameraman : We can tell.
 Permanent secretary : If he was able he'd bring the sun upon us too.

Bodyguard : He's coming out.
 Permanent secretary : So?
 Under-secretary : *(Gets up. To permanent secretary)*
 You ought to get up too... He'll raise hell again.
 Permanent secretary : *(He's willing to take a risk)* I'm not sure if he's definitely
 coming out.
 Cameraman : *(Mocking)* Pretend you're asleep.
 Permanent secretary : Believe me, I really can't take this any more.
 Cameraman : you got it tough, man.
*(Minister comes out. Bodyguard already standing and
 under-secretary gets up. Permanent secretary
 pretends to be asleep)*
 Under-secretary : Were you able to sleep, minister?
 Minister : *(Grouchy)*
 You guys were coming in and out all the time.
 Under-secretary : We couldn't sleep, minister. We left so we wouldn't
 disturb you.
 Cameraman : *(From where he is sitting down)*
 We're on guard, minister. *(Looks at watch)* It's
 midnight. No one has come.
*(Minister is aware permanent secretary is pretending.
 He gets angry but hides this)*
 Minister : How are you feeling?
 Reporter : If I don't move, it's not so bad.
 Minister : Then don't move.
 Reporter : I'm not.
 Minister : *(Meaning the permanent secretary)*
 It hasn't been five minutes since he's come out - when
 did he fall asleep?
 Permanent secretary : I'm not asleep, minister.
 Minister : No, of course you're not, if you were, you would still be
 inside. You woke me up and then took off... Why were
 your eyes shut?
 Permanent secretary : I'm resting them.
 Minister : Oh, how nice. *(He can't restrain himself any more)*
 Look here, you're not showing me respect. I've noticed
 that you've changed a lot these days.
 Permanent secretary : I've never failed to show you respect, and I wouldn't
 do so in the future.
 Minister : But you didn't get up when I came out.
 Permanent secretary : It's midnight. We're on top of a mountain. Do you
 expect me to show respect by standing up every two
 minutes?
 Minister : No, that's not what I said... But you could've sat up.
 Cameraman : Minister, perhaps you could discuss this another time,
 when we're not around...
 Minister : It doesn't make any difference whether you're around
 or not. In fact, it's even better that you're here. This is
 a man who works for me... His minister comes out...
 Would it not be proper for him to at least pull his legs
 together?
 Permanent secretary : I didn't see you come out. If I had, I would have pulled
 myself together.
 Minister : *(To Bodyguard)* Didn't you tell him?
 Bodyguard : *(Hesitates)* I did, minister.

Minister : *(To permanent secretary)* You're lying.

Permanent secretary : I lied in order to avoid an unpleasant situation.

Minister : No, no let's have an unpleasant situation.

Permanent secretary : Minister, please, there are other people here. There's really no need for all this.

Minister : First you're disrespectful to me, and then you say, let's not have unpleasantness.

Permanent secretary : Let's talk about this later, minister.

Minister : You can't even answer me.

Permanent secretary : *(Gets angry)*
Your behaviour doesn't exactly deserve respect.

Minister : Is that so?

Permanent secretary : Yes, that is so.
(Under-secretary signals to permanent secretary to shut up, but minister sees this)

Minister : You keep out of this!

Under-secretary : I'm keeping out of it, minister.

Minister : Then why are you signalling to him?

Under-secretary : I was signalling to him to shut up, minister.

Minister : And what if he doesn't shut up? He's been a pain in the neck for the past three months now! He's ignored most of my directives. He's been wilfully obstructive, digging up this and that legal obstacle! As a result, he's not doing as he's told.

Permanent secretary : You're being unfair, minister.

Minister : As if I were the permanent secretary and he the minister!

Permanent secretary : It's not true that I've been obstructive. I've simply been trying to prevent you from mistakes.

Minister : I don't make mistakes.

Permanent secretary : Oh no, that's right, you don't make mistakes because you try to get me to make them. I have the drums but you have the sticks

Minister : I see, you've been building up! Is THAT why you haven't been able to obtain the hiring of those 25 newly recruits yet?

Permanent secretary : They will be taken on once the applications have been processed.

Minister : See, you're lying again. Didn't you tell me it wouldn't be a good idea? Didn't you say 'they will become surplus in the very near future'? Huh? Say it!

Permanent secretary : Yes, I did.

Minister : What did I tell you?

Permanent secretary : You said we had to hire them.

Minister : That's not all. What else did I say?

Permanent secretary : I don't remember.

Minister : Didn't I say the party had requested it? Didn't I say that the head of the constituency had specifically asked for it? *(Becoming louder)*
Didn't I say it was a directive from the prime minister?

Permanent secretary : Yes, but the process...

Minister : Screw the process! The process would've been done in a week if you wanted. You're trying to fool me! You think you'll put it off and don't do it. But what's in it for you? Are there others you'd rather take on? Or did you

think you wouldn't be getting anything out of it because I was in charge of this?

Permanent secretary : If I'd pursued my own interests, I would've bought a few mansions by now. I'm an honest man!

Minister : You're a pathetic bureaucrat who tries to hide incompetence behind a facade of honesty, that's all! If you'd been any good, the private sector would have grabbed you a long time ago. You're an incompetent man who has leant on the state all his life. And what's worse, a man who has made it a principle to obstruct the work in hand. Just like all the others. You're aware of the fact that the world is changing. You're hugging your desks, trying desperately anything to stop the change. Because you know very well that if you can't stop it, you'll cease to exist.

Permanent secretary : What's the point of all this?

Minister : I find all bureaucrats revolting!

Permanent secretary : That's enough! *(Takes out his resignation and gives it to under-secretary)*

Minister : Give that to me. *(He reads half of the resignation and murmurs the rest)* That my annual leave.... on my return... my retirement... yours faithfully... When did you write this?

Permanent secretary : Is that important?

Minister : Yes, it is.

Permanent secretary : I wrote it when you went to the helicopter. Because I have no more patience left. You're doing the same thing not just to me, but to almost all of your employees...

Minister : If you'd written it before I told you I was going to fire you, it might have had some value. Oh, and this reminds me that you haven't used any annual leave. *(Makes fun)* You haven't had leave for two years... And these people will think it's out of a sense of duty. But that's not how it is, is it? Why don't you tell them why you haven't used any annual leave?

Permanent secretary : Have you asked me once during the last two years when I wanted to use my annual leave? No you haven't.

Minister : You mean you would've taken it if I'd asked?

Permanent secretary : Of course.

Minister : No, you wouldn't have. Because you're the permanent secretary! Why couldn't you leave? Because it's not wise to leave your chair unoccupied. You bureaucrats know this very well. The minute there is a vacuum, it's filled. *(Insulting)* These bureaucrats!.. Another reason why they don't go away is because they know we'll realise that everything runs smoothly when they're not around... I won't let you take your annual leave. You know why? Because I'm going to fire you. As soon as we get back. We may consider your request for annual leave once you've started in your new position.

Permanent secretary : You don't even know that you can't dismiss a permanent secretary in a day... So, if this is the moment of truth, let's talk... about everything! We're at

a conference. It's about to end. We get news of the earthquake. You ask your driver how long it would take to get there. The man says "three hours." You think. Three hours travelling, a couple of hours there, then there's the return journey. And we still have to get back to the capital. However you look at it, we're going to miss the meeting. Furthermore, it'll be tiring. Isn't that what you said?

- Minister : Yes, that is correct. So?
 Permanent secretary : Aha! But the most important factor on coming to that decision is because you've learned that the relevant ministers have already left the capital for the earthquake zone. And they are going by helicopter. They will be there long before you. Very likely they'll be arriving with the press. In which case, it's no use to you at all... You might as well not go... But hang on a minute! *(Points to reporter and cameraman)* The news comes that these two are going by helicopter. Bingo! You will now be first at the scene and give interviews. Ah, but there's a snag - the helicopter doesn't have a co-pilot. He'll be there but we don't know when. As he'd said earlier, his hurries and worries is not for the people under the rubble. So, we'll leave without him. As long as you get there before the others... Your only objective in life, minister, is to put on a show.
- Under-secretary : *(Quietly)* Please cut it out, please.
 Permanent secretary : You make the helicopter lift off, putting all our lives at risk. Then we crash on this mountain. The pilot is dead. The reporter is injured. We don't know what's going to happen to us...
- Minister : Are you finished?
 Permanent secretary : No, I'm not. *(Enjoying his outburst)*
 You, minister, are the most self-centred person I have ever met. Yes, thee most self-centred!
(There is shock. Under-secretary makes faces to the permanent secretary indicating that he must stop. Minister is genuinely startled - he did not expect such an outburst)
- Minister : *(Trying not to appear angry)*
 Did you call me self-centred?
 Permanent secretary : Yes.
(The bodyguard had been trying to restrain himself but after this response, he walk towards permanent secretary... It's likely that he will punch and silence him... Cameraman follows the body-guard with his eyes and stands in front of him. The bodyguard's way is thus blocked. While the minister indicates to the bodyguard to move away, the reporter pulls the cameraman's arm to get him away. They are silent for a while. Bodyguard backs off)
- Minister : *(With authority)* Everyone should keep out of this!
(Minister looks at their faces to ensure their agreement. Bodyguard is tense; so are cameraman and the reporter)
- Minister : *(To Bodyguard)* Especially you. *(To all)* It appears that

- I must make a statement. Now then, I'm a minister of this country. More than that, I'm a member of parliament. In other words, I'm a politician. Is that right?
- Under-secretary : Yes, minister.
 Cameraman : That's right.
 Reporter : Yes.
 Minister : Isn't that right, permanent secretary?
 Permanent secretary : (Trying hide his anger) None doubts that.
 Minister : We're elected for a parliamentary session. We spend large sums on this election. Larger sums than some bungling idiots could ever imagine. Politics is an investment. If you intend to serve your country then you have to make this investment. If you want to be re-elected, then your overriding objective must be to maintain a high profile. If you can't do that, then you fade away. Can any of you recite to me the names of 15 members of parliament at a stroke? Can you?
- Under-secretary : I wouldn't be able to, minister.
 Minister : Or perhaps, can any of you recite me the names of all the cabinet, starting with the prime minister? Oh nooo, don't try to find the fault at yourself. I can't even do that, even though I'm one of the ministers. Of course, you will be able to name some of them straight away. Have you ever wondered why that might be? The answer is not that difficult. Those who publicise their work and feature constantly in the media engrave their names in the brains of the public. Those who achieve their end are those with initiative who don't rest, who work up a sweat and pull out all the stops and, at the same time, publicise their work and maintain a high profile. In other words, they are the ones who gets re-elected. If one has chosen politics as a vocation, then it is imperative to maintain a high profile. There's no other way.
- Permanent secretary : If that is so, minister, then this accident is a gift to you from God.
 Minister : What do you mean?
 Permanent secretary : Especially once the news is broadcast, you will become even more famous. So that you will have guaranteed your success in the next election.
- Minister : Yes...yes. An unfortunate event has turned into a blessing for me. But is it just for me? What about you lot? Which under-secretary's name is a household name? And don't you think that even the prime minister's body-guards will envy this bodyguard? Which cameraman has had the opportunity to film such an event? Don't you think that our pretty reporter will gain extra fame because she's been injured? Can any of you think of the name of a permanent secretary (*To permanent secretary*) My question is not aimed at you, permanent secretary, because as you are one yourself, you may well know the names of others. But what's going to happen now? The whole country will know the name of MY permanent

secretary. How delightful it is to be a household name. How gratifying to be the focus of the public's attention.

Permanent secretary : Even by risking our lives?

Minister : Why not? Isn't life a hazardous game? Don't you see that we are surrounded by danger on all sides? Who is under a guarantee? Which of us can be absolutely certain that walking in the street we can't be killed by a pot plant falling on our head from a building? Who can guarantee that we shan't be crushed under a truck with faulty breaks? This life is a contest riddled with unspeakable dangers, permanent secretary. This world hold a gigantic cake in its midst. If you want to have a slice, you must work hard and make good use of your time and your opportunities.

Cameraman : Your views are valid for this particular system, minister.

Minister : True... and we live within this particular system. In fact, there is no other system in the world. Well, is there?

Cameraman : The failure of other systems does not prove the rightness of this one.

Minister : Did I say that this system is right? I only said that this was our reality. What's more, if those other systems had been right, they wouldn't have failed. This is the real world in which we live!

Cameraman : Not the real one but the imposed one... The one which is enforced upon us. What can be more precious than human life? I cannot accept that the pilot should have been killed and my colleague injured, all so that you might be re-elected. We might have died too, just like the pilot.

Minister : But we didn't. We're alive. Look how nice this is, we're breathing and having a discussion. I may have acted a little hastily at the beginning. I accept that. But I'm trying to explain something else. You're all going to reap the fruits of fame too from now on.

Permanent secretary : I must say I am having difficulty in discerning just how I personally might benefit from this fame.

Minister : We'll see exactly how it will benefit you all. (*To bodyguard*) You, for example. Have you ever considered the benefits of becoming famous bodyguard? Have you stopped to think that when the prime minister next needs a bodyguard, you'll be the first in line?

Bodyguard : I would never leave you, minister, sir. Even if the president asked for me, I would not leave you.

Minister : Good man!

Bodyguard : I will go where you will go, minister. You ask me to die and I will die, minister.

Minister : You won't eat kebabs with onions from now on, understood?

Bodyguard : Understood, minister, sir.

Minister : (*Pretends to get emotional*) Here is a prime example of loyalty, of self-sacrifice. Anyway, where were we? You, under-secretary, have

- you ever thought what may be in store for yourself?
- Under-secretary : I haven't, minister.
- Minister : Well, do.
- Under-secretary : You are able to think better than anyone else, minister.
- Minister : *(Pretends to be angered)*
That's right, that's your excuse for getting me to do everyone else's jobs. *(To cameraman)* He even asks me to sign the time-off forms of the secretaries. You decide for yourself, man! All it is, is an hour off work! So what happens then ? I have no time to deal with important matters of the state, because I am bogged down with small details. You have no idea of my trials, young man. My press officer, for instance. Now, there's an incompetent twit if ever there was one. We pay him a fortune and what does he do in return? He even asks me for advice with the press releases he's supposed to write himself. Am I a press officer, or am the minister? I will review the whole situation when I return and... Anyway, let's not digress. So, even an under-secretary who needs to consult me with time-off forms will be snatched from under my nose. I don't know, but they might even make you a section head at some other ministry... And now, as for you, young man, you and our pretty reporter. I see clearly what will happen once the news is broadcast. I bet you'll become producers overnight. You'll have a large team of cameramen and reporters working for you and you'll make brilliant, astonishing programmes that'll be everyone's envy.
- Cameraman : It extremely difficult to become a producer at our company, minister.
- Minister : Then you'll work for another company, and earn large sums of money.
(Permanent secretary indicates with his hand his disapproval, but minister sees this)
- Minister : *(Irritated)* As to the only person among you who will become nothing... you all know him. Don't be conned by this man's frequent allusions to the planned meeting. The real reason behind his protests is the fact that he has missed his daughter's ceremony. the interests of the state, etc, etc, that's all double-talk. Baloney, that's all baloney! It's all a cover. It's all imposture as you would understand!
- Permanent secretary : I don't want to listen to any more of this. You try everything in order to prove yourself right. Worse than that, you really know how to cover up your mistakes.
(Determined and calm) You...you... you're a charlatan!
- Minister : Who's that barking?
- Permanent secretary : Shame on you!
- Minister : This sort should be poisoned!
(Minister indicates quietly to bodyguard who quickly walks over to permanent secretary and slaps him hard in the face. As permanent secretary falls down, cameraman reaches bodyguard and

grabs his hands just as he is about to attack permanent secretary again. Bodyguard tries hard to free himself but fails)

Reporter : *(Afraid of something might happen to Cameraman, To minister) Tell them to stop, please, please!*
(Cameraman uses all his strength to push bodyguard away. As soon as the Bodyguard falls down, he pulls out his gun. Cameraman is shocked)

Cameraman : Don't!
 Permanent secretary : Stop!
 Reporter : Please!
 Minister : No! Don't you dare!
 Under-secretary : Think of your children!
(Bodyguard finally realises what he is doing and lowers the gun. Minister approaches him)

Minister : That wasn't very gentlemanly, was it son?
 Bodyguard : *(Kisses minister's hand) I...*
 Minister : Put it in its cover. I don't want to see this sort of thing happening again! Go wait over there!
(Bodyguard goes to the farthest corner and waits, feeling guilty. All quiet for a while. As minister walks away, he indicates to under-secretary to come over. The others wait in silence. Reporter pays attention to Cameraman by holding his hand)

Minister : *(So others can't hear)*
 See what this ignorant moron has done! He nearly destroyed us... We've got to repair the damage. Let's see now, what do you think we should do with this lout of a permanent secretary?

Under-secretary : Well, minister... you... I mean...
 Minister : Stop 'ministering' me. Right now, you're the minister, I'm your under-secretary.

Under-secretary : Never minister!
 Minister : Now listen to me! You've just gone through this incident with this lout, what do you do?

Under-secretary : I... I... Nothing... I couldn't do anything.
 Minister : Are you helpless? You're the powerful minister, remember?

Under-secretary : Never, minister!
 Minister : Son... it's just make-believe. Imagine that you were in my shoes, what would you do?

Under-secretary : *(Determined) If I were minister. (Returns to previous frame of mind) Never would I dare to be a minister, sir!*
 Minister : *(Gets angry) Of course you can't. Are you a man to be a minister? It's it that easy to be minister. Can anyone be a minister?*

Under-secretary : That's exactly what I was trying to say sir.
 Minister : *(Calm) Son, son... Now, I'm ordering you. You shall be the minister for maritime affairs. Now. Just for a moment. Think, now. Think about what should be done with this lout and tell me out loud. OK?*

Under-secretary : Understood, minister. *(Thinks)*. I understand the order, minister, but I could never show such disrespect. Ask me to die and I will throw myself from those cliffs. But I could never do what you've

- Minister : just asked me, minister.
 (Begins to laugh) I like that, it's good that you know your limits. I give you full marks for not daring to play such a game, even though it was just a game. This way, I trust you even more.
- Under-secretary : Thank you, minister. May God preserve you as a leader of the nation. I pray that you will become prime minister some day soon, as indeed you deserve to, minister.
- Minister : (Pleased, but...) Well, I can't really disagree with that. Am I not as good as him? But remember what they say: walls have ears. If the prime minister were to get wind of what you just said, he would pull the rug under me. Do you understand?
- Under-secretary : I do, minister.
- Minister : So you keep quiet on this. Now then, do you know how I'm going to deal with this situation about the permanent secretary?
- Under-secretary : I am sure you will deal with it in the best way possible, minister.
- Minister : Listen to me carefully. I'll make it up with him.
- Under-secretary : (Surprised) Fine, minister.
- Minister : Of course, you are going to help.
- Under-secretary : I'm at your service, minister.
- Minister : I see that you weren't expecting this.
- Under-secretary : I'd be lying if I said I am not surprised, minister. But I'm certain that your superior power of reasoning has come up with the best solution.
- Minister : It has.
- Under-secretary : Please don't leave me wondering any longer minister.
- Minister : This lout is going to achieve a certain fame as a result of this accident - a fame that he hasn't deserved but that has come to his feet. And when they find us, if he begins to squeal to the newspapers, magazines, radio and television, we would lose everything that we have gained. Don't you agree?
- Under-secretary : You... you are a mighty man minister, really mighty.
- Minister : So, isn't it time we became bosom friends with this lout?
- Under-secretary : It is high time, minister.
- Minister : It's not only time, it's about to be too late. Look at him, sitting there with that sulk. He may well be contemplating the revelations he'll be making to the media tomorrow. See how he stares down at the ground... What's that saying? He who stares down... Pains the heart.
- Under-secretary : No, no! You can't even get that right! The horse that stares down has a mighty kick.
- Under-secretary : Please allow me to take that down.
- Minister : For God's sake! Now, I'm going to make myself scarce by apparently needing to relieve myself. You'll go to him immediately. And you'll say to him, 'the minister is very sorry that he hasn't been able to congratulate you on your son's thing.'
- Under-secretary : But it's not his son's thing, it's his daughter's.

Minister : Whatever... you'll say that I'm sorry I won't be able to attend his daughter's wedding. OK?

Under-secretary : His daughter isn't getting married, minister.

Minister : Well, what was it then? It was something about his daughter.

Under-secretary : She wouldn't think about getting married, she's still a student.

Minister : Oh, cut the crap! What was it about the daughter? Was she engaged or something?

Under-secretary : She's won a prize in an international art competition. It's the presentation ceremony, minister.

Minister : Gee! What can the minister for maritime affairs have to do with painting, art? This lout is bad news from the beginning to the end. Why the hell isn't he permanent secretary at the ministry of culture, instead of torturing me with his presence?

Under-secretary : His connection with art is through his daughter, sir.

Minister : Anyway... you'll tell him, that the minister has said 'I've been extremely rude to my permanent secretary,' or words to that effect. And when we're back at the office, remind me to fire the bodyguard!

Under-secretary : Understood, minister.

Minister : *(Gets up)* Go and tell him as soon as I go away. I expect everything to be hunky dory when I'm back. *(Calls the bodyguard with his hand)*

Under-secretary : Yes, sir!
(While the Under-secretary walks over to Permanent secretary, the Bodyguard comes to the Minister. Just then sound of a helicopter can be heard from distance. Reporter hears it first and tells others to be quiet. The others also listen)

Reporter : Can you hear it

Cameraman : Look, look!

Under-secretary : There it is.

Permanent secretary : It's coming.

Reporter : What if they miss us again?

Cameraman : It's flying directly at us.

Under-secretary : I'll be reunited with my kids.

Bodyguard : We're here... we're here!

Cameraman : They've located us, I think.

Bodyguard : Heeey!

Under-secretary : Let's boost the fire.

Reporter : It really hurts.
(As the others wave and shout, under-secretary rekindles the fire)

Cameraman : There's no need for that, there's enough light here.

Minister : *(Quietly to under-secretary)* The whole country is talking about us right now. This accident was almost a blessing. *(Shouts)* I told you they would find us.

Under-secretary : Absolutely minister, you're right.

Bodyguard : You were right minister.
(The helicopter can be heard directly above them. Everyone is stretching/opening up their arms. They're yelling in exact form as if praying for rain. But what's that, the sound of helicopter fades away)

Cameraman : The pilots must be blind.
 Minister : Where the hell are you going?
 Bodyguard : We're here!
 Under-secretary : Come back!
 Cameraman : I can't believe this!
 Bodyguard : Now we're screwed!
(The helicopter sound approaches again and becomes fixed. Everyone smiles, because it gets nearer)
 Minister : There!
 Under-secretary : It's coming back!
 Cameraman : Hey, hey... It's coming! It's coming!
 Reporter : I hope it doesn't go away again.
 Permanent secretary : They've definitely found us.
 Bodyguard : Heey!
 Minister : *(To Bodyguard)* Stop bellowing!
(Obviously the helicopter is above them. Our heroes are trying to hold their hair in place while looking up)
 Voice : *(From a loudspeaker)*
 Minister, we've located you. There is no need to worry. Very shortly, you will be picked up.
 Under-secretary : Oh God, my God.
 Permanent secretary : Thank God.
 Reporter : We'll be saved.
 Minister : Be quiet, I can't hear.
 Voice : We can't land because there isn't enough room.
 Under-secretary : In that case, we haven't been saved.
 Permanent secretary : How are they going to rescue us?
 Cameraman : Be patient.
 Minister : Quiet, I can't hear a thing!
 Voice : We're lowering a rope ladder, catch it.
 Cameraman : Oh now I get it.
 Permanent secretary : How are we going to use it?
 Under-secretary : That'll be easy, once we get hold of it.
 Bodyguard : How are we going to take the pilot up?
 Minister : We're going to bury him here, you idiot! Just shut up, all of you!
 Voice : There is room for one person only aboard this helicopter. Attention please... There is room for one person only aboard this helicopter. We will be taking only one person up. In about half an hour, we will be back in a larger helicopter and we will take the rest of you.
 Cameraman : Shame on you.
 Under-secretary : That's no good.
 Permanent secretary : That's incompetent.
 Bodyguard : The minister will go.
 Cameraman : Let's make a draw *(Mocking)* Those whose names have been called will throw themselves off the cliff. The last person standing will go.
 Minister : *(Even him)*
 This is no time for horsing around.
 Voice : Come on, where's that rope?
 Voices : Here is one end! Come on, undo it. They're waiting. Are you ready?

All of them : Yes, yeees, yeees!
Voice : I wasn't talking to you. You guys, don't forget the hook...
Cameraman : They're bullshitting us.
Voice : We're dropping the rope ladder now... Remember, one person only. Good luck.
(A rope ladder and a hook are thrown down. Everyone runs away as if trying to run from an avalanche)
Voice : Don't be frightened. Get a hold of the ladder. Do you hear me?
Cameraman : We can hear you.
Under-secretary : How can we not hear you?
(The others try to signal that they understood as well)
Voice : OK.
(Bodyguard runs and gets hold of the ladder, minister runs towards it)
Cameraman : I can't believe this! He knows that she is injured!
Permanent secretary : Coward!
Under-secretary : *(Even him)*
Selfish bastard!
Reporter : What a low life scum bag!
(Minister's conduct must annoy the audience too. They too must think that he is going and give up on him)
Cameraman : *(To Reporter)*
You're going!
(Runs angrily towards the minister)
Minister : *(Holding the ladder with one hand and beckoning the reporter with the other)*
Come on young lady, you're first. Run along now!
Under-secretary : *(Applauds)*
Bravo, minister! Bravo!
Bodyguard : *(Gets tears)*
His heart is made of gold!
Cameraman : Well, he even surprised me!
Reporter : *(Walks, bewildered)* I'll be darn...
Permanent secretary : He must be cooking something... but what?
(Reporter is holding the ladder and is about to climb)
Minister : *(Grabs the reporter's arm and shouts to cameraman)*
Come on! Hurry up, record this!
(Cameraman has no option but to take his camera and film... As the reporter climbs up, minister pretends to help her and at the same time poses for the camera. When he sees that filming is over, he takes out the cassette and places it under Reporter's arm)
Minister : Make sure this makes it to the last news!

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