

# The Carp

**Rumen Shomov**

Dialogue with a computer cuckoo  
Sofia 2000

*For the poet Velizar Nikolov who told me the story of the carp (which survived) and the coins. The play contains elements of the old Buddhist legend of lost human divinity.*

## **Main Characters**

**Ignat** – a beggar, former professional manufacturer of virtual dreams – between 45 and 55

**Voices** –

Electronic cuckoo

Apostol

Man from the consular section of a faraway island nation

*At the entrance to the theatre where the usher is tearing tickets and letting people in, Ignat is sitting with his hand outstretched begging. There is an old hat on the ground in front of him with an inscription, "Take pity on an unemployed professional!" He spends most of his time in silence, observing the theatre-goers with his outstretched hand, but from time to time he moves and speaks:*

## **Ignat**

Don't walk on by! Give us some change for a cup of tea! (gets aggressive). You can't see your way to bloody fifty pence!! But you can afford ten, fifteen quid for that stupid play, can't you!! What's the bloody point, that's what I want to know! What do you bloody well expect to see! You don't need me to tell your that Shakespeares are born a little to the left of the map – not here in any case! Everyone here's a one-man Shakespeare, writes his own plays, performs them and watches them by himself, if he can be bothered, that is... There's no bloody point at all in spending your money on the theatre!... Change for a cup of tea, sir! Change for a cup of tea. Tut, tut, tut! They'll never get it through their thick heads! Change for a cup of tea, sir! You haven't got any? Pity. You're not by any chance a kind old former policeman who might get me a visa to emigrate to some decent country?! You're not? What a pity! Change for a cup of tea, miss!

## **Stage decor:**

*A room – a large aquarium with a live carp, as big as possible. On the left – a computer. In the middle, there is an icon of the Virgin Mary hanging on the wall. The floor is covered in magazines, newspapers and computer manuals. The sound of the door opening. Ignat enters. He takes off his overcoat, hangs up his hat and crosses himself in front of the icon.*

## **Ignat**

Another pointless day tumbles down the road to the other world. (takes out the fish food and sprinkles it into the aquarium). So what, who cares if they do tumble and drown, Rover?! Nothing to do with us, is it... Nothing to say for yourself? Well, if that's how you like it, that's OK by me. The main thing is that Spring is on its way, imperceptibly. Why don't I just take a little sleep, or shall I have a little meditate? I think I might just meditate. (assumes a yoga pose and closes his eyes). Unearthly light pour over me, bathe my mind and my soul! Empty me of all thoughts! Give me the divine happiness of eternity! (slowly

inhales and exhales three times, begins to scratch his face and head). I don't know why, but every time I begin to meditate I get this awful itching. (inhales and exhales three times). I have to do sometime! Get a grip on myself! Pull myself together! Pull my socks up.... Why don't I dye my hair blonde, for example!? Or why don't I shave my head.... Or why don't I shave my head first and then dye my hair blonde?... (closes his eyes, inhales and exhales; to the carp) What do you reckon, Rover? (pause) What do you think's best? Silence.... If only you knew some former policeman who'd got contacts in an embassy of one of those decent countries. Then you might be able to fix me up with a visa so that I could emigrate... but you haven't, have you... and you call yourself my household pet? You reckon you're my friend?... Brother, sister, mother, son – everything! Even an enemy I might love to hate! (looks at the computer)... What is it today, is at eating day or an internet day? I think it's an internet day... let's see if I've got any email. (switches on the computer and goes on line).

*The electronic cuckoo gives the signal that he's got a message.*

I knew it, I knew that God was looking over me and protecting me (crosses himself in front of the icon, presses a key and reads). "Dear sir, thank you for your email. On our island of Tingvana...." (to himself). Where did this bloody Tingvana appear from? I've never sent any letters to Tingvana. I haven't even heard of it. (sighing). A couple or three whiskeys and I get overcome by such anti-nostalgic moods that.... (reads) "... on our island of Tingvana, we have a great need for dream programmers". (comments). Sounds good! (reads) "You will be very welcome!"(comments) I'm beginning to like the sound of this Tingvana. Tingvana... (reads) "In order to receive employment in Tingvana, you have to become a citizen of Tingvana," (comments). Well why not? This very moment if I have to! (reads) "In order to become a citizen of Tingvana there is a condition which we hope will not cause a problem...." (comments) So, I'll get married to a Tingvanese, this very moment! It can't be any worse than our country where the state gives you fifty pounds social assistance and then wants one hundred back in tax. I'll accept any Tingvanese condition. (reads) "In order to become a citizen of Tingvana, you have to create fifty jobs for local citizens" (comments). So there's the rub. I reckoned I might get by with just a wedding. Big deal! I'll get one Tingvanese for every key on my keyboard – that's fifty, if not more. No problem. Fifty little Tinguins. (reads) "Every foreigner in Tingvana shall be obliged to guarantee a monthly salary for his local staff equivalent to 50 Tingvans as well as the necessary social insurance contributions. NOTE: 50 Tingvans equal 1000 US dollars...." (whistles). And spring is approaching imperceptibly!....If I had a \$1000 dollars I wouldn't be thinking of getting myself married, I'd find a wife for that Asian fish face (pointing to the aquarium). What do you reckon to that, Rover?! Those Tingvanese take us for real mugs. (goes up to the aquarium). Nothing to say for yourself? (pause) Nothing to say for yourself? You couldn't give a toss!... You're not the one they want \$50,000 dollars from!.... (shouting at the carp) Stupid bloody carp! All you do is eat and say nothing, eat and say nothing!... and meditate. I can't even meditate... my head is so full of problems! But you're all right jack! You're part of eternity! You couldn't give a toss! All you think about is how to outlive me. You know what it says in the encyclopaedia: (quoting) "Reaches one metre in length and can weigh – thirty five kilograms and can live up to forty years." ... That carp is driving me mad.... (goes up to the computer). And those bloody idiots from Tingvana... Tut, tut, tut! When you just imagine that man used to live in Paradise... just imagine that! Not even in Tingvana, but in Paradise! You just lie there... in Paradise, you just look around... Paradise, you lie there and look around and eat pineapples all day long! Pineapples.! That's Paradise! What more do you want?! No taxes... no termination of contracts due to expiry... just pineapples! And, you know what else, you decided to

take a little walk – and God himself, none other, adds a little touch here and there to the world down there next to your left leg.... (to the carp) You might be asking yourself what was man like then if God was still adding touches here and there to the world!... He was God! That's what man was – God! God right next to the Lord God!....And he goes and destroys all the good in Paradise just because of a... what? Because of a bloody snake?... Rubbish! Because of Eve? – Rubbish times two!...Because of a bloody pointless and worthless, worm-ridden, spotty apple!....And do you notice anything? Have a good look around. Just look around! What do you see?! Pineapple?... You could bloody well kill yourself looking and you won't find a single damned pineapple. Use a bloody magnifying glass and you still won't get a whiff of pineapple! Just apples! Wherever you look – stupid bloody, worm-eaten, spotty apples!.... So whose fault is it then that this country with every single day is going to the dogs? That's what I want to know! Government? You reckon? Rubbish! Corrupt civil service? You reckon? Rubbish times two! Not that the civil service isn't corrupt, of course and the government's no bloody snow-white lily. That's not what I mean. The question is, where's the fundamental reason – where's it all go back to? (whispering)... To the apples? .... "What?" you might say, "But apples are good for you. They're full of vitamins!"... So bloody what, a right state of affairs we've got here, vitamins and nothing else!.... So there's only one thing to do about it! Grab our axes and we won't leave a single apple tree standing! We'll cut them all down, to the last branch, the last branch.... That'll be an example to the world. ("The cuckoo" announces the arrival of a new message. Ignat crosses himself quickly in front of the icon). Thank you, Holy Mother of God, for not letting me down! (runs to the computer and goes pale when he reads the message) "Idiot!" (pause) Is that meant for me? (the "cuckoo" cuckoos once again, he reads) "Yes, you!" (pause). Jesus! "Idiot!"?... "Idiot", what! Why didn't I make a run for it years ago when the time was ripe? I was in good shape then.... I could have.... Hold on just a sec!.... (leans over the monitor, looks at it, presses a key and takes another look) No! That's not possible! How can you get an email without a return address?... anonymous email.... And it opened without me clicking on the mouse button?... is it possible for technology to have advanced so much since I began begging?.... No! Not like that – quite categorically! I read all the professional literature!.... I beg, I read, I read and I beg.... I don't let anything pass me by! It's an enigma!.... or (sniffs; the "cuckoo" calls again) "You never did say what your last job was, before they fired you?". - .... Oho, there's absolutely no doubt! This smells of the police. (starts looking all over the place).... Idiot.... The place must be bugged.... To hell with democracy.... To hell with its triumph. Big deal! State security informers are still eavesdropping on peaceful beggars, and they couldn't give a damn, and there's no-one to stop them... (finds something, but it isn't a bugging device) A button? Haven't their microphones gone rusty over all these years?! Haven't their bugging devices stopped working? They couldn't make a decent tractor in all those fifty years, but the bugs.... (thinking). On the other hand, if you think about it, who would want to bug me, and why? I could understand if I was a state prosecutor or a minister or a member of parliament or a businessman... years ago, yes, I could have seen why! That was before "on account of expiry of contract"... (stops looking) And where the hell have they put their damned microphone! I can't find a bloody thing! (thinks).... Perhaps it has something to do with global interests? That would be OK then. But then... who knows? Only a couple of months before I was ...."on account of the expiry of contract"... they said I had a unique talent, and that my way of thinking.... That's exactly what they said.... "Unique talent and original way of thinking...." If it has something to do with global interests it's OK with me to bug me... to bug us... can you imagine, Rover, that someone has been eavesdropping on us!?! (the "cuckoo" calls. Ignat goes over to the computer). "You are not eavesdropped, your rubbish is what is heard" (he looks around) Well, Rover, what do you make of that?! Plenty of cops around here, no

doubt about that! Eavesdropping, observing, saying nothing and hurling insults as well! ..... You just sit there saying nothing... nothing... "Idiot". I might as well be alone, but.... I must be an "Idiot" if I've been looking after a cop in my own home... and a carp at that... normal people have dogs – woof, woof! Bull Terriers, Rottweilers, Alsatians – if I had a Doberman – then there wouldn't be hide nor hair of a cop! It would sniff out a microphone in a second! Just say "Go get!" and before you can turn around it's already got the bug between the teeth! (long pause while he thinks). Yes! Yes!... There's absolutely no doubt! Why didn't I think of that earlier? I'm under observation because of my anti-nostalgism! What else?! They're too stupid to realise that I'm perfectly capable of sorting out the mess in this factory for virtual dreams they made after they so simply... "On account of the expiry of the contract..." But then who'd ever think of getting me my job back. Those people who fired me have long since been fired themselves and even their firers have been fired....Always, "On account of the expiry of the contract..."... And who could be bothered to eavesdrop on someone just to get him his job back?... Why pretend that you don't know where I used to work, stupid bloody cop!... The fact of the matter is that of all the people who've been fired, I'm the only one left out on the street.... (pause) They got me in their sights...I've known that for ages: any potential imigrant is a potential spy. (to the imaginary microphone). How do they know that however anti-nostalgic I might feel after a couple of glasses of brandy, I will never betray my motherland! Even if I had to come back from the other end of the world....even my life if I had to, for fuck's sake! You love something and you give everything dear and sweet just to look at it on a post card!... All right then cop! I know that everything's in your hands now... I'm right aren't I?! Look, let's talk about this then fair and square, man to man! OK! (short pause) No, don't you worry that I'm going to make you get them my job back. You know how I was fired... "On account of..." I know that it was a prestigious job and it's your people who are in my place now and people put there by your bosses. (to the carp). And that's what they call a market economy.... I want to say something else...you get me an imigrant visa to the USA, I, you know, haven't got any money, I haven't got a wife either...What you get out of it is that when you're supposed to be listening to me, you can go and spend that time with some girl friend or with your wife.... (cups his mouth in his hand and whispers). One less beggar to eavesdrop on.... What do you reckon to that? (pause)... Nothing to say for yourself?.... All right then, I get the point, it's not enough. I'll throw the carp in as well!... According to my encyclopaedia, they're the original breed of magic gold fish!... Don't you believe me? (to the carp) Tell, him Rover! (pause). You don't believe me? But there was this bastard... Sorry, slip of the tongue, a friend of mine... from that communist time you love so much. He once bought three carps for his daughter's birthday. They'd just come back to Bulgaria for a holiday and he wanted to cook something typically Bulgarian for her. They were frozen and he put them on the cooker to thaw and went to do something else. Suddenly, there was this cry from the kitchen, "Daddy, daddy!". So my friend runs into the kitchen to see what was happening. He thought something had happened to his daughter, and what do you know?! One of the carps was moving... It was moving! Carps are a mystic beast – an Asian fish. It had happened before to other people. Nothing strange about that! The little girl started crying and my friend instead of hitting the fish on the head with a hammer, as he should have done, put the thing in the bath. You can manage for a day, two days without a bath. But on top of everything else when you went into the bathroom, the carp would stop swimming and stare at you with this bloody soul-searching look and you couldn't move. How could you kill a thing like that? How could you cook it?!.. They decided to take it to "South Park" and let it free in one of the lakes there. The carp swam two metres into the lake and then stood stock still staring into your eyes and only moved when they left. The next day my friend and his daughter went to look around some ancient monuments and there was this old drinking fountain some-

where in the centre of Hissarya. He kicked over a stone and heard a ringing noise and they bent over to find a golden Roman coin!... A very rare and valuable one. That trait... friend of mine, I mean, and his daughter dug a little deeper and no more than ten centimetres down in a hole beneath the stone they found a horde of gold and silver Roman coins worth \$160,000... (waits, silence) What?! You don't believe me?! That story was in the "Workers' Daily" twenty years ago. You can check it out if you've still got the copies somewhere. If you haven't, you can look in the library... (waits) Look, just don't try and convince me that you haven't got good contacts with some consular section of some embassy and that you can't get me a measly little imigrant visa. Even the most stupid people in this country know that if some foreigner has decided to invest in this country, they look for ex-policemen like you! You think they care about what you used to do and what you still do now?! What they're interested in is getting their business done without any problems. And the only way they can do that is to use the services of your most esteemed company.... (waits, silence). Who cares, anyway?! I'll even give you this wonderful home of mine! I don't doubt you've got the money to do it up and make it into a bijou residence.... A carp and a house, what more do you want?! It's a carp, not a dog, to kick up a din... Who else would give you that? (long pause).... Small apartments are all the rage now! People get poor... Prices soar... If I put my hand on my heart, I've even got attached to this house. All right, it's a bit dilapidated, ... – and you know why... I grew up here. That was my parents fault. I buried them in the cemetery nearby... it wasn't much of a funeral, nothing to write home about. When you bury someone, he doesn't get any more dead... (pause) I don't know why but I felt like an orphan, even before my parents died.... I don't want to say anything bad about them. They were perfectly normal parents...they looked after me, put clothes on my back, fed me... but all the same... even when I was... "on account of expiry of the contract..."... I didn't want protection from anyone – but I felt like a complete orphan.... This is the first thing I've ever asked anyone for in my life... just get me one little visa! Go on, please! (the "cuckoo" coos once again; going over to the computer Ignat crosses himself in front of the icon and then goes up to the keyboard. Reads:) "I can sense your pain!"... What!?! (crosses himself).. Thank God! I found a cop with a delicate soul! You'll get me a visa, won't you?! You won't let me down, will you? Look, I know... I understand very well. I can put myself in your shoes – you don't need me. You don't need me, but just imagine that somewhere in the world, in some God-forsaken Tingvana, someone might need me... what do you reckon? Visa in return for a house and a carp – I reckon that's a good deal! My congratulations!... What do you reckon?! Why don't we shake hands like men?! (the cuckoo coos, Ignat reads) "I am not a cop! (comments) He is not a cop! You can't fool me, can he, Rover?! He writes and speaks. What are you then?! (gets up) In any case, I could put a bloody spanner in the works and make a full confession to the Bulgarian press, that I've put huge amounts of dubious money into the Bulgarian economy and that I've compromised the state! (wait)... Don't you get the picture?!... Or do you just want me to declare straight out that I've been laundering the money of the Ismailovo mafia... You still don't get the picture?... You're really stupid even for a cop! Then you'll really get in trouble with your bosses, since you've supposed to be listening in to me, and they have to read the newspapers to find things out about me and not from you. In the newspapers!! Are you going to sort me out a visa now?!

(the cuckoo coos) "No... Why?..." (the cuckoo) "Go into dialpad and switch on the sound, the email got audio". (Ignat does what he has to on the computer)

Electronic voice: Is that your last hope, to get out of this place?

Ignat (thinks, weighs things up)

There is one other hope! If you were doing your job properly, you would have noticed by now that whenever I make a penny or two more than I need for my bread and specialised books, I buy a lottery ticket. When I win the jackpot, you won't see my feet for the dust, a whole bloody stack of money... as far as my bloody eyes can see!

(cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

It'll never happen

**Ignat**

Who the hell do you think you are? Who the hell are you? You reckon you know everything about my private life, and about my karma?... Are you a cop? Are you the Virgin Mary? The Holy Ghost, or the baby Jesus? (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

A little to the right!

**Ignat**

What?! (the carp is to the right. Ignat walks around the aquarium and can not take his eyes off it)... Bastard cop! Are you taking the piss out of me? There's nothing to the left – only the carp. (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

Right first time!

**Ignat**

You must be out of your mind! (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

I know. You don't believe me. You lot from the Eastern Bloc still have a long way to go!

**Ignat**

That's a fine bloody mess.... We've got the CIA involved now!...

**Electronic voice**

You're rather strange – you probe the past, where there's nothing you can do about it, nothing can be changed, you can't turn the clock back, you can't even think about the future. And you don't even know if that future will ever come. You do everything you can not to live in the present. They've made artificial people of you. An embarrassment to nature.

**Ignat**

... You lot in the CIA did everything you damned well could to help us, didn't you? Up until 1989, you constantly bombarded us with radio programmes saying that everyone had the right to choose where he wanted to live.... Now you are silent...if you are a CIA agent, you could at least get me a working visa for Tingvana without those conditions – I don't beg you to get me a visa for America. (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

How could you make such a mess of your life? And end up on the streets, begging? Just because they kicked you out of that wretched job of yours, where you had power over other people just like you?

**Ignat**

Are the CIA really interested in that? (no reply) If I tell you will you get me a visa? (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

I'll think about it...

**Ignat**

If that's all you can say – you won't get another word out of me! (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

Who said it was up to me?

**Ignat**

Will you get me a visa or won't you? (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

I'm not absolutely sure that I can promise...

**Ignat**

Why don't I dye my hair blonde!? I might just shave my head? But why the hell should I care... if you're a cop or a CIA agent! I've got nothing to lose! A beggar can do no more than to lose his chains, isn't that what some intellectual once said? The worst thing that might happen is for to end up in someone's files or reports... or God knows where...it'll still be better than nowhere at all.... I don't give a damn!... But you could still try and get me a visa, couldn't you?! (no reply). I know it's not up to you, but you will do everything in your power (no reply)... All right, all right then! I trust you! You're a man of your word, I can see that!?! (no reply; whispers)... Apostol.... (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

He was the one with the carps, the one you called a bastard, and then you corrected yourself and said "friend"!?

**Ignat**

That's the one.

**Electronic voice**

What did Apostol do to you? (long pause)

**Ignat**

Nothing!... We grew up together.... (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

Yes and so!?! (pause)

**Ignat**

You know, first cigarettes, girls.... Everything else... and then completely unexpectedly when he was nineteen, he went abroad... (long pause)... I went to stay with him.... And we really did bump into each other on the stairs – at the place I used to work and where I continued to work for fifteen years .... And then one day, another surprise! Apostol was a vet, he'd studied that in Germany but then he was given a really responsible job – he was appointed my direct boss! He hadn't even finished unpacking his bags from Germany .... What joy! I thought to myself, it doesn't matter that he's a vet, he's intelligent and erudite – and I'd feel stronger in my new job with his support. For the first time in my life I'd agreed to become one of the bosses. But it wasn't long before I got a message on my computer – "Come and see me immediately!" .... I'd just begun to develop the project of my life. It was approved and praised by him personally – “a drop of painful past in the ochre shades of ember-glowing dreams and a quiet, moon-unstained lustre of the conception of day.” ... he said I should have written him a report on my views on the development of the department. And if I didn't have any new ideas he would get someone else

to do my job. He was completely unrecognisable, his eyes were glazed and impenetrable. He reeked of Calvados.... "You must be joking?" I said. "What do you know about dreams?! Virtual ones at that?!" ... but he wasn't joking... I began to work on my project during the night. During the day, exhausted and angry, I wrote that damned report on the development of the department. Even though I had it on good authority that the department was already doomed, since certain deciding factors had vested interested in importing virtual dreams, rather than locally manufactured. – Importing foreign dreams, ones people here have never heard of, can you imagine that?! Is there anything more ridiculous than that?... Only because, someone ... (pause). Just as I expected, he said I hadn't got any "new ideas" and Apostol asked me to resign. Me!! Who'd been working there for the past fifteen years... and you know what, he replaced me with one of his drinking buddies. Even the most uneducated factory worker would have pissed himself laughing at those "new ideas" of that new "comrade".... Anyhow, I would bump into Apostol sometimes in the evenings in the night-clubs where we always used to go. He went from table to table with a bottle of apple brandy whispering to everyone: "Hey guys, come and work for us... it's great! I've got my own office...." I carried on with my own project – I didn't expect any particular success, but they gave me a standing ovation when I presented it. That sort of helped my and I hoped that the storm had passed. But... it was becoming as clear as the day is long that Apostol was in the wrong place. So the virtual dream factory was ruined just enough so that his bosses could make their own claims for privatisation. They didn't need any more idiots and they put a new director in his place. Now he was a man of experience. Apostol, frightened of the changes, and for once only moderately drunk, called me into his office and said, "I know you've been to see the new director eight times to rat on me....!".... I hadn't actually, but I could have, make no mistake, but there wasn't any real point to it.... The new director knew all about his veterinary capabilities... and we both ended up with the same sentence - "released on account of expiry of contractual period..." (cuckoo).

### **Electronic voice**

Didn't you say that your project had got a standing ovation?

### **Ignat**

Neither proven skills nor a good project had any meaning whatsoever....Times had changed and The dream factory had turned into a money factory – there was no need for my presence there any longer... nothing had any more meaning except money and that only if it could be easily earned. For that reason the factory had to have only dead competition... (cuckoo).

### **Electronic voice**

Is that when you decided to cut down the apple yard? (silence) (cuckoo) Is that when you grabbed the axe, I said?

### **Ignat**

You want to catch me out, is that it? I don't care who you are or what you are, whether you're a stupid bloody policeman, CIA agent, Sultan's eunuch... whatever you are!?  
(cuckoo)

### **Electronic voice**

Your virtual dream!

### **Ignat**

But I killed him... isn't that what you wanted to hear? (cuckoo)

## **Electronic voice**

Apostol?

### **Ignat**

Yes, Apostol! I killed him! I didn't touch any apple yard! I didn't harm a single tree! It was Apostol I chopped down with my little axe! Yes, with these two hands! Damned, bloody, terribly red apples! (pause)... He had called me to his office to apologise. But it wasn't an apology I got, but a threat from the pub he called an office.... After the dream factory he got sent to a new office.... In the circus! Yes in the circus! To complete the whole cover-up and be completely untouchable, they needed a real circus so that no-one could lay a finger on them for at least another hundred years... But that wasn't enough... I hit him with my axe, not in the back of the head, but right in the face! I wanted to teach him a lesson! He needed to be taught a lesson!... Someone who had let a carp free in the pond in South Park so that his daughter wouldn't be upset should not have turned into.... Where did he get that damned passion for "offices?!" ( to the icon)... Why is it always like that? The violated always become the violator?! (he looks around the for microphone he couldn't find before). You got nothing to say? Nothing to say? Why don't you say something? Why don't you get someone to come round and arrest me for murder?... "My virtual dream?"... or whoever you are?... All right... I confess!.... I confess.... I didn't chop him down with my axe.... You can have that one on me. – I poisoned him with caustic soda. He died in such agony.... (looking for the microphone).... No reaction? For God's sake, that bloody electronic cuckoo's gone silent! All right then, I confess.... I had nothing to do with his murder! Absolutely nothing!... They found him in a thicket next to the railway line just after Vakarel... He was unrecognisable, his throat had been cut.... It took them seven days to identify the body.... A whole bloody week!... those people of his had got him involved with drug trafficking... (crying).... Poor Apostol! Poor, poor, poor Apostol! Apostol's dead!.... Hey, carp!.... Rover!.... Did you hear that, Apostol's dead!?... Nothing to say for yourself, cop?! ... It's the truth, cross my heart!... There you are! (crosses himself) Apostol's dead! I'm in your hands now! If you don't get me a visa, I'll tell everyone that your people got him mixed up in drugs trafficking! And that they're the ones who killed him! Apostol's dead! (cuckoo)

*Ignat goes over to the computer and clicks with the mouse:*

### **Voice**

It took me ages to find your email address, Ignat... I didn't even think you had one... I told you you'd be sorry! Fuck you!.... And you've started begging! Just because you're too stubborn to do anything else! You want to prove something? But... let's not beat around the bush... I want you to know that I'm still your friend... Despite everything! I've found you a little island – I know you want to get away. If you knew how much apple brandy I drank with their consul. If I puke up all at one the Black Sea'll overflow. I got him some nice little business deals... he's got this undercover private operation – a whole bloody shipload of hats from Taiwan – he sold them at twice the price in Constanza! But their visas....you wouldn't believe their immigration conditions – monstrous! All on account of you! Even though you almost killed me in the apple yard! You weren't right you know. And why did you have to go and take it out on the trees, what had they got to do with it? Apples are full of vitamins – nothing wrong with them. (laughter). You'll be the death of me, you know, Ignat! (singing), "The Virgin Mary suffered from St.Ignatius to Christmas..." (laughter). That song was written with you in mind, but Christmas is coming late this year... and it'll be over before you notice!... I almost forgot – the island's called

Tingvana! It doesn't matter what ocean it's in! Just remember the name – Tingvana...  
Your friend Apostol..."

**Ignat (excited)**

Tingvana... that's not possible!? That's great, that just great, Apostol! You're a bloody marvel. That's what real friends are for! Just give me a moment to get my bags packed and I'll be there in a jiffy. (gets a bag out, puts his hat and coat into it, then gets a pile of computer books and magazines and stuffs them in as well).

In a jiffy! I'll put everything behind me now, just like you said. You were exactly right! If we look at things seriously, I've never been angry with you, well not a lot, you know...you can fuck that virtual dream factory! That's what I said! And to hell with all those tales about you being killed and all... not that I didn't want to... well, if I ever did lose my temper with you, then it was to teach you a lesson! But don't think that you could just go on treating me so awfully! I know, I know, I understand! It wasn't easy for you in that "friendly" country you spent so long in! I bet those bastards in the Stasi treated you badly!... I'm sure they did! I don't doubt it in the least! (silent, listens) Apostol! Apostol, can you hear me?! (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

He can't hear you!

**Ignat** (*rushing up to his computer*)

Aha! So I can only speak to you and without clicking on the mouse button...  
with you – my household cop, my CIA spy, my virtual dream or God know's what...

(*he begins to pack his bag more seriously.... "cuckoo"*)

**Electronic voice**

"That's right! And don't make me try and explain how it works! With your level of computer literacy now, and then... "on account of expiry of contract". You wouldn't understand and, if you really want to know, I'm not a cop! And I'm not from the CIA either!"

**Ignat**

Well, if you're not a cop and you're not from the CIA, what are you? (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

I already told you... by the way the dried flies you gave me today were much nicer... yesterday's were horrible.

(Ignat crosses himself in front of the icon; the cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

Pure snobbery!

**Ignat**

... What?! (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

What you just did, in front of the icon! (pause)

**Ignat**

You can't prove to me that you're my carp! (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

I don't intend to! You're the crowning glory of nature, everything else is just food for your stomach or just dead matter, isn't that right? Don't come with that "orphan" stuff... you're nothing but a predator!

**Ignat**

If I was a predator, like you say, I would have had that bloody Asian (pointing to the carp) in my frying pan long ago!... (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

Asian?! And what did you Europeans come up with? "L'enfer, c'est les autres". Isn't that right?! And so you came up with, "Five to my knife!" That's been the whole of your history, more or less... Have you any idea what it's like to be stuck all alone in a bloody aquarium? Watching the world go round through a pane of glass? It's a good job, they thought up the internet!..

**Ignat**

Look here now, cop! I asked you, man to man, to get me an imigrant visa, but you refused... All I want now is you to leave me in peace! I've got my bags to pack! (cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

You hoped that I like your friend's carp might turn into a magic gold fish! But you were wrong, weren't you?!

**Ignat**

There's no proof that there's any connection between letting the carp go and finding those gold coins...or that at the moment I'm not chatting to some mad cop from the CIA, pretending to be a cop.(cuckoo)

**Electronic voice**

Proof, who needs proof if you believe!

**Ignat**

If that's the way you feel, farewell! My beloved carp, Rover,... I am going to Tingvana, and you can stay here and make the most of it! You can keep the aquarium. Even if I do sell it I'll have to find some more money to pay for the journey – I'll beg for it. Unless that is ... (to the audience)... there's a generous cop who might like to be so kind as to sponsor me a ticket to Tingvana?... No, there isn't, well I'll have to do... Apostol...

(goes to the computer, at the some moment he hears "cuckoo") Now what do you want? All right, I realised you're a carp and not a cop! (waits for a moment, no reply, gets up and clicks the mouse button – another voice email, with an accent)

**Voice**

Dear Sir, we were looking forward to receiving your email, but alas, we had no reply from you whether the conditions for commencing work in Tingvana island were suitable for you. Since we found your proposal interesting and another eminent gentleman has since intervned on your behalf, our council of elders has met and has decided to make a singular gesture to you... to issue you a visa... to enter Tingvana... but without right of exit.! This is a great honour for you and we congratulate you! We look forward to receiving you! Please note: Despite the duly issued visa, it is possible that you will be denied entry to Tingvana if your body weight is less than 40kg, so please eat abundantly.

**Ignat**

(drops the suitcase and its contents spills out onto the floor). To hell with you, Apostol! (long pause) All right then, all right! I told a lie! I'm not God! I'm not! If you can hear me, cop... or carp, call me, for God's sake, please! (long pause) Please! (cuckoo).

## **Voice**

Once – a long time ago, when all people were gods, they abused their divinity so much that the Lord of all the gods decided to take it away from them and to hide it somewhere where they would never find it. The question was where? The Lord of all the gods called the gods whom he commanded and they began to wonder: One of them suggested, "Let's bury it in the ground", the Lord of the gods said, "No, we can't", "Men will dig in the ground and they will find it". Then another god said, "Then we shall cast their divinity into the deepest place on earth, at the bottom of the ocean!", "No, we can't" replied the Lord of the gods, "Sooner or later, men will explore the depths of the ocean and they will find it!" Suddenly the Lord of the gods exclaimed, "We shall hide man's divinity in the deepest of places – within man himself – that is the only place he will not look for it!"

## **Ignat**

Isn't that just what I said – man was a god along with God himself! (pause) When is St. Ignatius' day! How many days left until Christmas? Is it still a long way off? Rover, how many days left until Christmas? Perhaps, we're still on the seventh day? Perhaps, God is still resting after the creation of the world? Perhaps, he'll wake up soon? What do you think, Rover? Will God wake up soon? (Ignat assumes a meditation pose, closes his eyes). Unearthly light, enlighten me... Bathe my mind and my soul! Free me from all temptations, purify me from dust! Give me the divine joy of eternity, return to me the God-given equality with the grass, fish, birds... Return to me the lost gift of seeing signs from space, in the way I was born. Let me be a part of it, let me take its energy, turn it into love... at least... until you wake up after the seventh day or...or... until the expiry of the contractual period!

*Ignat crosses himself in front of the icon. He turns off the computer. He takes his coat, hat and exits. Fade to dark. When he exits a spotlight illuminates only the icon and a second later another illuminates the carp.*

End

Translation David Mossop