

THE NAVIGATOR

A radio-play

by **Lasha Bughadze**

Main voices:

Rostom
The Navigator in Rostom's car
Jakeli
Clara

Secondary voices:

Otar, the Director
Emzar, Head of Department
Akba
Rostom's father
The Navigator in Jakeli' car

The scenes are in: the lift in Rostom's office block,
the Director's office, the Department Head's office,
Clara's office, Rostom's car, the house of Rostom's father,
the canteen, the corridor on the 11th floor,
Jakeli's office, Jakeli's car.

1. IN THE LIFT

ROSTOM AND AKBA

ROSTOM: Eleventh, right?

AKBA: Yes.

ROSTOM: Shall I push the button for you?

AKBA: If it's not a problem.

(PAUSE.)

ROSTOM: I like our new lift. It's even got a mirror...

AKBA: Where?

ROSTOM: Exactly behind you. (PAUSE.) Isn't it great?

AKBA: Right.

ROSTOM: I wonder if it slims or fattens. (HE LAUGHS.)

AKBA: What?

ROSTOM: The mirror.

AKBA: No idea. I don't like looking into it.

ROSTOM: The one on our floor makes you slimmer. I look like a skeleton. (HE LAUGHS. PAUSE.) How much do you weigh?

AKBA: No idea.

(A LONGER PAUSE.)

ROSTOM: They should've changed the old one years back. Every time I stepped in, I feared for my life. Remember how it used to rattle? Once there was a rat inside – the door opened and out it rushed! (HE LAUGHS.) Since then I always wait before stepping into the lift. (PAUSE) However, I'm sorry for poor old Amiran... He actually was part of it. Remember his stool? I wonder how he managed to squeeze it in. (PAUSE.) Was here in the Soviet times,

he was. (HE LAUGHS. PAUSE. NERVOUSLY.) Don't you think we're moving too slow?

AKBA: I believe we haven't even budged.

ROSTOM: Are we stuck? (PAUSE.) I must've pushed the wrong buttons. (HE LAUGHS. PAUSE.) Eleventh for you, right?

AKBA: Let me press the button...

ROSTOM: No, no! Here we go. We're moving. (PAUSE.) That's the trouble with these modern lifts – you never know whether you're moving or standing still.

2. THE DIRECTOR' OFFICE

THE DIRECTOR AND ROSTOM

DIRECTOR: Rostom, you look pale to me.

ROSTOM: (MEEKLY) I'm sorry...

DIRECTOR: Don't apologise. You need to take care of yourself. Are you getting healthy food?

ROSTOM: I try.

DIRECTOR: You're single if I'm not mistaken.

ROSTOM: I am, at the moment.

DIRECTOR: Why's that? And your age?

ROSTOM: I'm forty-four.

DIRECTOR: That's a lot. Do you by any chance like men?

ROSTOM: No, I don't.

DIRECTOR: Some do nowadays...

ROSTOM: It's unacceptable to me...

DIRECTOR: What do you think of our new lift?

ROSTOM: It's wonderful! I was hugely impressed.

DIRECTOR: You're going to like the car too.

ROSTOM: What car?

DIRECTOR: You'll be driving to the regions.

ROSTOM: Me?

DIRECTOR: That's right. Haven't you been notified? You're to monitor the construction sites.

ROSTOM: (WORRIED) Is that the final decision?

DIRECTOR: Are you unhappy about it?

ROSTOM: No, not really... It's just that at my age it's rather difficult to change one's style. I'm more used to the office work.

DIRECTOR: You know how I liked sugar? I used to take at least four spoonfuls in my tea, but now I'm adding saccharin because of my diabetes. It was hard, but eventually I got accustomed to it.

ROSTOM: Will I have a driver?

DIRECTOR: I'm afraid that's additional expense. You're going to drive yourself.

ROSTOM: I haven't driven for over ten years... I don't know the roads...

DIRECTOR: The car's equipped with a navigator. You won't have problems communicating with it.

ROSTOM: And how often do I have to leave the city?

DIRECTOR: Emzar, the Department Head will fill you in on the details.

3. THE OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

THE DEPARTMENT HEAD AND ROSTOM

ROSTOM: Is it once a month? Twice a month? I need to know exactly.

HEAD: I can't be more precise now, but I think you'll have plenty of work in the first months.

ROSTOM: I need more clarity. My dad's sick and I just can't leave him for long – he might break his leg or something. If I'm told I'll travel on Mondays, I'll feel better. Why me of all people?

HEAD: You are trusted. We've got problems on location. The work is too slow while we have to complete all four constructions. Otherwise we're in big trouble.

ROSTOM: Am I designated to supervise the construction sites? Come on, tell me directly. I won't be offended.

HEAD: No, you're supposed to check the work progress and hasten them up a bit.

ROSTOM: Do I look like a bouncer or what? I can't scare a mouse even if I wanted. (HE LAUGHS BITTERLY.)

HEAD: But you're known to be honest and straightforward. You can make people do what you want in your soft but determined way. Are you fishing for compliments? I've got other things on my hands.

ROSTOM: What regions are they?

HEAD: The conflict zones...

ROSTOM: (IN HORROR) The what?

HEAD: I'm joking. (HE LAUGHS. PAUSE.) But quite near them, actually.

ROSTOM: Are you joking again?

HEAD: A new residential and recreational zone is being built at the border with Abkhazia, complete with swimming pools, swings, kids and their nannies... I'll be direct: we're doing it just to spite our neighbours. (HE LAUGHS.)

ROSTOM: Are you sending me to fight the Russians?

HEAD: The workers, not the Russians!

ROSTOM: Is that the only region?

HEAD: No, we've got three other locations in the Caucasus.

ROSTOM: (IRONICALLY) With luck all in the conflict areas...

HEAD: It's part of a gigantic project.

ROSTOM: I don't believe it! Are you all out of your minds? What responsibility are you giving me? I haven't ridden anything but trolley buses in the last ten years.

HEAD: Don't worry. There are others and you can take turns.

ROSTOM: I don't even remember the driving rules!

HEAD: You can first try driving in the city, adapt so to say.

ROSTOM: Are you going to save me if I get lost?

HEAD: You won't. You'll have a navigator.

4. CLARA'S OFFICE

CLARA AND ROSTOM

ROSTOM: I've been terrified of being lost since childhood. I used to cling to Mum's dress till I was 13. (HE TAKES A SIP OF HIS COFFEE.) I was late in maturing. (HE PUTS THE CUP ON THE SAUCER.) Wonderful coffee. (PAUSE.) As usual. (PAUSE.) I like your office. I like being here.

(PAUSE.)

CLARA: Take a tissue. Your lip's smudged.

ROSTOM: Oh, sorry... (PAUSE.) What am I supposed to do while I drive? You know me. If I don't talk to someone, I get mad. Hate to keep quiet. (HE TAKES ANOTHER SIP. PAUSE.) Everyone needs someone to talk to. And I'm not an exception. (HE TAKES ANOTHER SIP. PAUSE.) Aren't you sorry for poor old Amiran?

CLARA: No. I used to take stairs.

ROSTOM: (AMAZED) You did? True, I've never seen you in the lift.

CLARA: The stench was unbearable in there.

ROSTOM: He lived there, so...

CLARA: Religious posters, a thermal flask, newspapers, his slippers... It was awful! It was everything but a lift!

(PAUSE.)

ROSTOM: (WARMLY, SLIGHTLY WORRIED) You seem a little bit irritable. Want to go to the canteen?

CLARA: No, thanks. I've got things to do.

ROSTOM: I wish they'd let you travel with me...

CLARA: Why?

ROSTOM: (AGITATED) Are you serious? I like coming to work only because of you. Didn't you know? There you are. Finally, I found the courage to tell you. (HE LAUGHS.) Oh, my! I've blushed.

CLARA: (IN THE SAME INDIFFERENT TONE) If not for me, you'd resign?

ROSTOM: I would. (PAUSE.) Don't you believe me? (PAUSE.) I don't care if you don't. (HE SIPS HIS COFFEE.) You're mean today.

(A LONG PAUSE.)

CLARA: (IN LOW VOISE, STERNLY) Listen, Rostom. I don't you to come to my office.

ROSTOM: (NEARLY CHOKING ON HIS COFFEE) What did you say?

CLARA: I don't like these coffee drinking sessions. (PAUSE. SHE SOFTENS HER TONE.) You're a good, honest man, but I don't like your attention. I'd better tell you now not to hurt you later. We can be friends, but that's all I can offer. (PAUSE.) I'm sorry.

5. IN THE CAR

ROSTOM AND NAVIGATOR

NAVIGATOR: Turn right in twenty meters. Turn right.

ROSTOM: (IRRITATED) I heard you, I'm not deaf!

(PAUSE.)

NAVIGATOR: A roundabout in ten meters. (PAUSE.) A roundabout in ten meters.

ROSTOM: All right.

(PAUSE.)

NAVIGATOR: Turn right.

ROSTOM: (SHOUTING) There's no turn here! I know my city better than you. I've been brought up here...

(PAUSE.)

NAVIGATOR: You have made a mistake. You have passed the destination.

ROSTOM: No mistake.

NAVIGATOR: Turn around and approach the required turn again.

ROSTOM: I can't turn around here!

NAVIGATOR: You have made a mistake. You have passed the destination.

ROSTOM: (WEARILY) It's driving me mad...

NAVIGATOR: Turn around and approach the required turn again.

ROSTOM: No!

(PAUSE.)

NAVIGATOR: A left turn in fifty meters.

ROSTOM: (IRONICALLY) And collide with the car coming my way? Are you trying to kill me?

NAVIGATOR: Turn left.

ROSTOM: I'm going to switch this...

NAVIGATOR: Turn around and approach the required turn again.

ROSTOM: I'll swear at you! (PAUSE. GRUMBLING) Where is this stupid woman taking me?

NAVIGATOR: Turn around.

(ROSTOM IGNORES THE INSTRUCTION. PAUSE.)

Turn around.

ROSTOM: You aren't going to beat me, honey...