

Taboo
by
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FADE IN:

PARK IN FRONT OF THE UNIVERSITY - DAY

There is a University building and a nice place in front of it. Students are sitting on the benches and on the grass.

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Doctor Harry Wallis holds a seminar at a small auditorium. He is an ordinary man of average height, a bit overweight, about forty years old.

HARRY

What conditions a person's behavior? Why do things that are normal and natural for one, like striking someone on his face, are unreal and inadmissible for another? What influences it? How is it possible to explain that? Who wants to answer?

STUDENT - 1

There is an inherited and an educated behavior pattern, meaning congenital and learned reflexes.

STUDENT - 2

There is also the pressure of the social environment but, in my opinion, no explanation suffices. People are very singular and react differently.

REGINA

It is impossible to comprehend the reasons for the way a man acts and foresees things that suddenly come to his mind.

STUDENT - 1

It is definitely true in your case.

Everyone laughs. Regina gives her classmates an offended look.

HARRY

There is a fundamental concept, which is inherent both in people and in animals. That is the fear of death or, even more precise, the instinct for self-preservation.

STUDENT - 2

But a man has nothing to be afraid of nowadays. Life in society is stressful, of course, but there is no immediate danger of death. So, what reason has a man to be afraid?

HARRY

A modern man's fear is preserved as an inside self-control, as a rule. This fear keeps him from breaking the law.

REGINA

It is unbelievable that a man is still conditioned by fear. It is so sad!

HARRY

For wild animals life is even harder. A fox planning to invade a henhouse has to choose between two fears - the presence of dogs, on one hand, and hunger - fear of starvation, on the other. Therefore an animals life depends on the optimal decision.

REGINA

How wonderful, that people don't live in such conditions!

Everyone smiles in the auditorium. Students exchange glances.

HARRY

Actions of a man are conditioned by the expected reactions from society. This is based on the

fear of punishment. (with a smile) It is very effective, and consequently the majority of our fellow citizens are free men, and the minorities, that don't abide society laws, are locked in jail.

STUDENT - 2

And why aren't they afraid? Why don't interdictions and taboos work in their cases?

HARRY

It is an interesting question. Really, why? Though I should stress immediately, that interdictions and taboos are two different concepts. It is like the laws and the constitution.

STUDENT - 1

Sorry, it's not so clear.

REGINA

And I don't understand it either.

HARRY

Public and criminal laws are known practically to everyone, while taboo exists in a man's mind at a sub-conscious level. As to taboo, it's impossible even to know, understand or estimate its correctness.

STUDENT - 1

Then how can we understand where that taboo is, if a man doesn't know about it beforehand and doesn't feel it in any way?

HARRY

Taboo is a categorical, absolute interdiction. A man's brain is like a huge hotel with millions of rooms, some of which are locked, sealed forever and the keys are lost. Inside those rooms sits the taboo!

STUDENT - 1

How can we know which doors are locked in this hotel?

HARRY

Whenever a man has a desire to break a taboo, that is, to enter any forever-sealed room, a tableau lights up in his subconsciousness - "This is forbidden! Stop! Access denied!"

STUDENT - 2

And if it is essential that I enter? It may do me a lot of good. How is it possible to check?

HARRY

(with a smile)

Enter, if you are not afraid to. Though, I don't advise it.

STUDENT - 2

Nevertheless, I have a feeling that it is devilishly interesting inside, to touch, to see or even to realize this thing that is forbidden, that exists inside you.

Students exchange glances. The theme of discussion unexpectedly becomes significant to each listener.

STUDENT - 1

On one hand taboo exists, on the other, it is absent. Then how does this «terra incognita» influence my behavior?

HARRY

(thoughtfully)

You are right. It is really interesting to understand in more detail, but it is rather difficult to research.

STUDENT - 2
(with conviction)
We have to conduct an
experiment.

HARRY
(with a smile)
Any volunteers?

There is laughter in the auditorium.

STUDENT - 2
I meant an experiment with
animals.

STUDENT - 1
But what can you check on
animals?

HARRY
(thoughtfully)
A lot! It should be an unusual
experiment.

STUDENT - 1
But animals react only according
to reflexes.

HARRY
(with enthusiasm)
Perfect! It is exactly what we
need! The purpose of the
experiment should consist of
planting some idea into the
consciousness of animals and
checking whether they remember
it.

STUDENT - 1
Is it really possible to check
such complicated matters on
animals?

HARRY
Of course! If, returning to the
example of the hotel, it is
impossible to enter existing
locked rooms, it is necessary to
create an additional room with a
closed, but unlocked door, with

a sign hanging over it - "Stop!
Entrance forbidden!"

REGINA
(clapping)
A remarkable idea!

STUDENT - 1
Well, and what do you expect
personally - will they be able
to break the taboo and enter the
room?

HARRY
I don't know.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Harry and his wife Pallet are having supper.
The house is in ideal order. Pallet serves the
next dish.

PALLET
Try my new dish, dear. How do
you like it?

Harry eats, but it is visible that he is
preoccupied.

HARRY
I thought to conduct this
experiment on dogs, but after
some speculation I understood
that rats are more suitable.

PALLET
Why are they more suitable? They
are such horrible animals,
disgusting! Brrr.

HARRY
First of all, they have a rapid
birth rate. This means a
continuous updating of the
population. Secondly, they
transfer information among
themselves and to the next
generations. That is extremely
important for our experiment.

PALLET

Are you paying attention to your food?

Pallet draws in her lips. Harry notices and tries to pacify her.

HARRY

Remarkable dish. Thank you, I really haven't eaten anything tastier. How did you prepare it?

PALLET

I got this recipe from a friend of mine recently. It has an unusual taste, doesn't it?

HARRY

Yes, an original dish. By the way, I have a pleasant surprise for you. Next week I can take some days off and we can go to the seaside for a holiday.

PALLET

How charming. Thank you.

HARRY

Are you pleased? The weather is good now. You will rest, swim in the sea while I plan my new experiment. Would you like to go?

PALLET

Gladly, and with great pleasure. The rest by the sea will do us a lot of good. I have to buy a new bathing suit and I'll need some time to pack all the things.

HARRY

Buy everything that you find necessary, my dear. Thanks for the supper. All was very tasty. I shall go and work a little. I have to write a proposal for the Academic Council.

PALLET

Do your work. I won't disturb you.

Harry kisses his wife and goes to his study. Pallet, with a thoughtful face, starts methodically to clear the table.

INT. CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

HARRY

Dear colleagues, allow me to present my new project: «Taboo Establishing». The essence of the experiment consists in the artificial formation of an interdiction in animal heads, in planting some obviously absurd and impracticable idea into their consciousness, and observing the behavior of the experimental group and of the subsequent generation.

Professor Mackenzie, chairman of the Academic Council, addresses the audience, encouraging his colleagues to a discussion.

MACKENZIE

Thank you, Dr. Wallis. Does anybody want to comment on Dr. Wallis' proposal? Please express your opinions.

SCIENTIST - 1

An original topic, I have never heard of such an approach.

SCIENTIST - 2

Yes, it sounds really interesting.

SCIENTIST - 3

Let him dig in, and then we'll wait and see how it turns out.

Professor O'Connor asks to speak.

O'CONNOR

(reaching a microphone)
An unprecedented thing! We must
stop it at once!

SCIENTIST - 1

Why would we prevent a colleague
to research something?

O'CONNOR

This experiment is an insult to
a man, more truly, to mankind as
a whole.

HARRY

(smiles)

Never mind, a man will survive
it, and mankind will too.
Mankind survived worst
experiences throughout history.

Harry laughs at his own answer. He cheerfully
and benevolently looks at the audience.

O'CONNOR

(nervously)

I know your purpose. Your
purpose is religion. "An absurd
and impractical idea" as you
expressed yourself, is implanted
into the consciousness of the
lowest, brainless creatures
while you plan coolly to observe
their reaction. Your hint is
clear.

Harry shrugs his shoulders and looks in
surprise at his opponent.

HARRY

It's not a hint. You, dear
colleague, drew wrong
conclusions.

O'CONNOR

(excited)

What right do you have to model
your experiment on animals,
which have no soul? What result
are you expecting?

HARRY

Sorry, but the project "Taboo Establishment" is not connected to any religion. What gave you such an idea?

O'CONNOR

You want to observe the weakening and expiration of the belief from generation to generation? Is it not the real purpose of your research?

HARRY

Certainly not! Religion is not involved here at all.

O'CONNOR

Colleagues, I have to state publicly, right now, that this experiment is the most immoral thing that I have ever heard of. It is even worse than the experiments involving human cloning.

HARRY

(with irony)

Dear colleagues. Why has dear professor O'Connor decided that religion is the object of my attacks and not some totalitarian models of society or different sects and cult groups? The modern man continues to believe in different mystic "high powers", but I don't see the relevance to my experiment.

O'CONNOR

Your experiment is to play with the Devil! It is a very dangerous game!

The hall hums and breaks into small arguing groups.

HARRY

(nervously)

Dear gentlemen, wrong conclusions were drawn by

mistake. The purposes and goals of the experiment are completely different. I never intended to meddle in religious matters. It is outside the sphere of my interests. I will explain all the details now...

Local conflicts and insulting retorts gain strength in different places. Dr. Wallis looks at the audience with amazement. There is a larger number of "Atheists" among the audience, but the "Religious" are more dynamic and are determined to have an upper hand.

Professor Mackenzie, seeing that it will be impossible to reach an agreement, sharply intervenes.

MACKENZIE

Please, keep your cool, colleagues. In view of the arisen disagreements, the question of Okaying the experiment Dr. Wallis suggested is transferred to the Plenum. The theme of our discussion is exhausted; therefore let me close this assembly. You will be notified about the date of the next Scientific Council session. Good day to all of you.

The excited crowd of supporters spontaneously surrounds Dr. Wallis. They congratulate him for his braveness and shake his hand.

SCIENTIST - 1

Don't give up! You have broad support! Times, when decisions were enforced from above, are over.

SCIENTIST - 2

It's unthinkable! Precedence of Religion over Science! Like in the Middle Ages. We won't allow it. We have to organize a community for Free Scientific Experiences.

HARRY

Please, gentlemen, there is a misunderstanding. I absolutely have no intention of leading the struggle of Science against Religion. My only interest is to research the subject that interests me, nothing more...

Having disengaged himself with difficulty from a group of followers, Dr Wallis enters his Lab.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

HARRY

For the present, nothing is definite about our experiment. There were serious objections in connection with religion. They forwarded the proposal of experiment to the Plenum, so we have to wait for the final decision.

EMPLOYEE - 1

What? What connection has our research to religion? We experiment with animals. Nonsense! What are they thinking about over there?

MARGARET

In my opinion, there is nothing to worry about. Let's not dramatize the situation. They have probably misunderstood the essence of the aim, but eventually they will.

EMPLOYEE - 2

And if they won't?

MARGARET

I am sure they will. Let's wait for the Plenum's decision. For some reason I have a very good feeling about this and I am sure that we will get the green light soon.

HARRY

I do hope, Margaret, that you are right.

EMPLOYEE - 1

These are intrigues, I even know who initiates them. They envy us and don't want us to work normally. A disgrace!

Harry looks at the ceiling meaningfully, shrugs his shoulders and without any comments leaves the laboratory.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Entering his comfortable house, Harry finds his wife Pallet waiting for him at the nicely set table.

HARRY

You won't believe it, my dear, but they withheld the approval of my theme at the Committee. They have organized a loud discussion. Everybody was against everybody else.

PALLET

What happened?

HARRY

Imagine, they accused me of offending religious feelings. What nonsense! Luckily, Professor Mackenzie, you must remember him, the mathematician, that was present at my PhD dissertation, had foresight to stop the madness. Finally, they forwarded my proposal to the Plenum. I have never seen such a madhouse in my life. Really, a scandal!

PALLET

Calm down, my dear. Sit down and have your supper, while it is still hot. Then we'll talk. Everything will be OK. Don't take it so close to heart.

HARRY

How is it possible to explain?
Serious scientists behave like
children. They construed that
religion is in danger! It is so
silly!

PALLET

Are you serious? And how is
religion involved in all that?

Harry shrugs his shoulders.

HARRY

I don't know! How could they
reach such a conclusion?
Professor O'Connor was so keyed
up, that it was impossible to
stop him. He has declared that
my experiment is the most
immoral thing he has ever heard
of. I don't understand how a
responsible scientist can
seriously say such nonsense!

PALLET

Did he really say so?

HARRY

Yes, exactly so, in those very
words. I thought at the
beginning, that he was joking.
At least it sounded that way.

PALLET

Well, Harry, calm down. You are
so nervous today. They have
upset you. Sit down and have
supper. I have a surprise for
you. (passing a plate to him)
Test it and try guessing which
ingredients it contains. I'm
sure you won't guess!

Harry looks at his wife. (well-balanced,
judicious, always in good form, a real
assistant and friend).

HARRY

You are probably right, as usual. All will return to normal, as it was. Well, let me try your new unusual dish.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Harry, with a smile on his face, leaves his study, holding an official letter in his hands.

HARRY

(to employees)

I have very good news. I have just received an official permit from the Plenum for our experiment. Margaret, you were right. All has ended well.

MARGARET

I expected nothing else.

HARRY

Margaret, please come to my room. We have to discuss our future plans.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

We need a reliable and carefully planned strategy. The slightest mistake can result in the failure of our experiment or the death of the animals.

MARGARET

What kind of animals will we use this time?

HARRY

Rats. Rats are social animals. They are easy to train, they communicate between themselves and transfer information to their offspring. And, of course, animals from the same family are required.

MARGARET

Why is it so important?

HARRY

In the case of a casual selection of rats for an experiment, the law of survival, in an isolated space, starts to work - there is no place for peaceful coexistence.

MARGARET

Why can't they live peacefully, while there is food for all of them? How is it possible to explain?

HARRY

The problem is not in food! A strong male unites with a strong female, and together they kill all the other inhabitants in the cell. That is the law of survival.

MARGARET

What a severe law! But why do they act so cruelly? What is the sense in it?

HARRY

The answer is very simple. In an isolated space their biological need prevails. Only this way can they ensure the safety of their next generation.

MARGARET

What a terrible law: «In order to survive, you have to kill!»

HARRY

We have to accept this law as a fact.

A phone is ringing.

MACKENZIE

Hello, colleague. It's professor Mackenzie speaking. How is your experiment advancing? Are there any problems?

HARRY

Thank you, professor. All is in order, we are preparing for the beginning of the experiment.

MACKENZIE

By the way, Dr. Wallis, my daughter Emily is looking for a subject for her dissertation. Could you do me a personal favor and allow her to observe your experiment. It interests her extremely. I, of course, can't insist, but she asked me very much to talk to you.

Prof. Mackenzie makes a thoughtful pause.

HARRY

Surely, professor, there is no problem. I shall be glad to do you a favor, more correctly, to do your daughter a favor. Let her come to the lab any day, even tomorrow.

MACKENZIE

Thank you for your help. If there are any problems with the project, don't hesitate to come to me. I will always help you. Good-bye, Dr. Wallis.

HARRY

Good-bye, professor.

Harry hangs up.

HARRY

Damn it! We'll have an outsider now, some post-graduate in my lab, to distract the lab assistants, to poke her nose everywhere and ask numerous silly questions. A girl, exactly what we "need" here now.

MARGARET

Don't worry, Dr. Wallis. I'll take care of her. She won't

interfere. Everything will be OK!

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Harry sits at the table with his wife.

HARRY

It is simply horrible! Twisting my hand. Prof. Mackenzie has taken advantage of his official position. To impose his daughter on me at the most inadequate moment, when the preparations for the experiment are at its highest. All employees are extremely busy.

PALLET

Does this girl demand special attention? A post-graduate student is often present at a lab. So what? I don't see anything unusual in it.

HARRY

There is nobody to entertain her. There won't be time even to talk to her. I need to concentrate, to take into account a thousand different things.

PALLET

Then why haven't you refused Prof. Mackenzie, if it is so irritating?

HARRY

Refuse the Chairman of the Scientific Council? Well, my dear, I hope, that you are joking. It is unthinkable in academic circles. A lot depends on Prof. Mackenzie, and then you have to remember his support with this project. Actually, I couldn't act differently.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

The next day Emily, Prof. Mackenzie's daughter, comes to the lab. She is a sociable, attractive girl. She quickly gets acquainted with all employees but doesn't ask any questions. She examines her surroundings, sits near the construction place of the rat cages and concentrates on her thoughts.

In the meantime, the job of constructing the cages proceeds at full speed. The employees build a real world for rats. By the end of the day Dr. Wallis himself approaches Emily.

HARRY

Well, how do you like it here? This is probably your first time in a real lab. Getting used to it?

EMILY

Yes, it's OK. Thank you, Dr. Wallis. Have you decided on the taboo in your experiment?

HARRY

Food, of course. Around one of the food trenches, separated from the others, (points with his finger to the place of the trench in the cage) sensitive elements will be installed. Rats coming to eat will receive a weak discharge of electric current. It will proceed till they understand that food can't be taken from this particular trench. As you can see, all is rather simple.

EMILY

(with disappointment)
In my opinion, it is even too simple!

HARRY

(with irony)
And what would you regard not "too simple"? I hope you know that the basic instinct in an animal is the fear of death and,

consequently, fear of
starvation.

EMILY

(thoughtful)

It seems to me that the main
desire of an animal in a cage is
to get out, to escape to
freedom.

HARRY

Get out to freedom? Believe me,
you are mistaken. It is not
necessary to attribute human
qualities to animals. It is
unconstructive and interferes
with the procedure of the real
experiment.

EMILY

Sorry, but I reason from the
positions of social psychology.
Overcoming of interdictions and
restrictions - one of the main
elements of human nature, is in
some sense the fundament of
progress. (with smile) Have you
never wanted to do something
forbidden?

The employees stop working and gather around.

HARRY

(confused and dry)

I don't understand you, Emily.
What do you want to tell by it?
How can it be used? What,
according to you, should be the
real purpose of our project in
such case?

EMILY

Figuratively speaking, imagine
there is some mad dictator,
which forbids his citizens... to
visit each other, for example.
The punishment is severe. It is
clear, that in time this
interdiction will seep into
flesh and blood of his citizens.

HARRY

(with smile)

You have drawn a "cheerful" picture. Personally, I wouldn't want to live there...

EMILY

The question is how long will the population abide the rule? Will they be able to cross the psychological barrier in time and break the taboo, or will they go on abiding it forever.

HARRY

(with irony)

So do you picture me as the "mad dictator"? Thanks a lot, but believe me, this role does not appeal to me at all.

HARRY

(to employees)

Good-bye, everybody. I won't be in tomorrow. I have taken some days off. I need to think it all through. See you soon. I hope the electrical part of the construction will be ready by my return.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Harry loads the bags into the car and they leave for the short-term rest in a high mood.

INT. CAR - DAY

Leaving behind the turmoil of traffic lights they get onto the country highway. Harry sees ahead some hills and a red colored height lighted by the sun. The smooth, polished road disappears swiveling like a snake into a tunnel. Round, like a pipe, the tunnel pierces through the mountain.

They drive quickly along this Martian road, with lights flashing before their eyes. Suddenly the tunnel ends. They emerge out into the sunlight. The blue sky-sea occupying the

entire space to the horizon fills their eyes, forcing Harry and Pallet to blink in defence against the light attack of wild nature.

HARRY

(thoughtfully)

A tunnel! This tunnel is like a hole dug by an animal.

PALLET

What do you mean?

HARRY

The tunnel, which we just went through, is like a hole, but with an entrance from one side and an exit from the other.

THE BEACH - DAY

Harry draws something in his notebook.

PALLET

Harry, why are you thinking about work all the time? It won't disappear.

HARRY

You see, we can make this experiment more complicated. We can build a tunnel in the cage leading to freedom. It sounds fantastically unreal, though scientific, but there is something intriguing about it.

Harry draws on sand the plan of the cage with a hole - a tunnel.

PALLET

Let's swim. The sea is simply remarkable today, warm and clean.

HARRY

(with enthusiasm)

The tunnel leads from the cage outside. In the rats' imagination it will be a way to freedom. This requires another,

revolutionary decision. It will mean real freedom!

PALLET

I am going for a swim.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Dr. Wallis reads scientific papers on the subject.

HARRY

(writing in the diary)

It can succeed! The approach is certainly problematic and risky, yet it has never been checked, but there is a chance that it will work.

Harry approaches Emily and asks her kindly into his study.

HARRY

In the history of science there are sometimes amusing paradoxes, the ideas, which seemed like Utopia just yesterday, sometimes get a second breath. I have to admit, that after some consideration, your suggestion seemed deserving deeper attention. To put it bluntly, I decided to accept it, despite my initial negative reaction.

EMILY

Super! I'm so glad!

HARRY

To tell you the truth, it wasn't easy. You see, we have no guarantee that such an approach is going to work, it has never been tried before. Nevertheless, such a human-like approach to an interdiction has more perspective and holds more interest to me by several parameters. So, you are my co-author now. There is going to be

a personal reference to your name in the report.

EMILY

Thank you, Dr. Wallis. It is very important for me and for my dissertation.

HARRY

We have to make a hole in the wall of the lab. It's fortunate that the lab occupies the ground floor of the building. A pipe-tunnel will lead from the cage to an experimental field, where the department of botany is culturing something. It is not far, just some meters away. The rats should be able to feel and smell the freedom, the fresh grass, the wind and the rain. All should be real, not some substitute of freedom, like a passage from one cage to another. No deceit! If we have decided on freedom, then freedom it shall be!

EMILY

It sounds simply tremendous! Outrageous! Your experiment gets an absolutely different meaning now.

Harry reads genuine admiration in Emily's eyes and it pleases him a lot.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Harry gathers the employees.

HARRY

I want to introduce another concept of the taboo into our experiment. Previously taboo was food, now taboo is a road to freedom.

EMPLOYEE - 1

An unexpected decision! Why such a sharp turn?

HARRY

First, all research in this field is based on experiments with food, therefore there is no novelty in it, and, secondly, the road to freedom opens quite different horizons in understanding the role of reflexes in animals.

Raul is the youngest science associate in the lab. He is a phlegmatic and cynic young man.

RAUL

(skeptical)

How can it be carried out technically? Where is freedom? I still don't know what real freedom means.

MARGARET

(with a smile)

Marriage will quickly take care of that, Raul.

All the coworkers are smiling.

HARRY

The cage should be transferred near this wall (pointing his finger). We'll open an exit in its side. A pipe, piercing the wall of the building, will connect the cage with the outside world. It will be the road to real freedom - to fields and wood.

MARGARET

Sounds very romantic.

HARRY

The rats can climb from the cage up a steep ramp, which leads to the tunnel. For better observation, we'll draw a red line on the edge of the ramp. It will define the border. Behind

it, on the ramp, begins the forbidden zone. Sensitive sensors will automatically switch on the electric current under the rat that will cross the border.

RAUL

It reminds me of some military operation. Won't there be minefields in our experiment?

Raul laughs. Nobody smiles, including Harry.

HARRY

(seriously)

Of course not, only electric current. The impact of the current will force the jail-breaker to roll back down the ramp across the red line. Then the voltage will be switched off, and the rat, which planned the escape from the... (with smile) artificial Paradise, will learn an evidently painful lesson.

MARGARET

It does not look so romantic now, on the contrary.

RAUL

Are we constructing a modern prison model? A prison, from which it is impossible to escape?

Raul, pleased by his own joke, looks at his coworkers.

HARRY

(seriously)

We simulate a taboo. And we can't foresee whether the next generations of rats will be able to break the taboo and escape. It's for us to find out.

MARGARET

What is your personal opinion?
Will they be able to escape
after we switch off the current?

HARRY

I don't know. It can't be
predicted beforehand, but it
makes our experiment even more
interesting.

MARGARET

A dangerous experiment! It leads
to some gloomy ideas. For some
reason it even frightens me.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Dr. Wallis finds himself deriving inexplicable
pleasure from discussing any subject with
Emily. It pleases him to look at her, to
observe the way she thinks, knitting her brows,
the way she laughs, slightly throwing her head
back, the way she listens with widely opened
eyes, absorbing words and ideas.

Emily enters Harry's study.

INT. STUDY - DAY

EMILY

May I come in? Are you busy, Dr.
Wallis? Do you have a moment to
hear what I have to say?

HARRY

(smiles)

Of course, it is a democratic
country. We discuss all the
suggestions in this lab
frequently.

EMILY

(with conviction)

I have an important suggestion,
Dr. Wallis.

HARRY

Please, Emily, sit down. I'm
listening attentively. What is
your suggestion?

EMILY

The punishment for crossing the red line should be collective and not individual!

HARRY

What? Are you serious? (with irony) Shall we create a blackout, arrange patrols and take hostages?

EMILY

It's no joke, Dr. Wallis. In case one rat crosses into the forbidden zone, all the rats should get a current, not just the concrete trespasser.

HARRY

(in surprise)

Why? I don't understand your perception of it. How, in that case, will the rats understand the reason for their punishment? How could you invent such a thing? Are you suggesting that we teach the rats the principle of collective responsibility?

EMILY

Exactly! The basic principle of collective responsibility is - both the guilty and the innocent suffer, without exception. Only in this way it is possible to induce the real horror of the unknown, which is the real taboo.

HARRY

But in the modern world the principle of the collective punishment is not only forbidden, but also condemned in every possible way.

EMILY

If only the trespasser is punished, the rats will quickly understand that crossing the red

line is forbidden, but if suddenly, all of them will start receiving a current, in time, they'll find the connection with the reason for the punishment. Then a cult and a taboo will be implanted in their primitive consciousness.

HARRY

Be honest, Emily. How have you thought of this idea?

EMILY

It is simple to explain. This is the way the taboo was formed in the primitive society, under the same laws. Recollect, Dr. Wallis, how our civilization developed. What were the first people afraid of, when they suffered from natural disasters, from droughts, floods and earthquakes? How did they explain it? This is how the cult of the "Higher Forces" and the taboo were founded.

HARRY

But it sounds so severe. Can you imagine the length of time it'll take the rats to see the connection between the crossing of the red line and the punishment?

EMILY

This is not a relevant argument! Faster or slower, the process of training will end. When is not important. In any case, eventually the rats will understand that crossing the red line is forbidden.

HARRY

Sorry, but I don't agree! I can't abide your offer. It contradicts all the acquired previously experience with animals. It is simply impossible

to carry it out, in my opinion.
No, I can't abide it!

Margaret peeps into the study.

MARGARET

I have finished my work for today and I'm going home. Please, don't forget to lock the laboratory before you leave, Dr. Wallis. See you tomorrow. Good-bye, Emily.

At this moment Harry realizes, that all the employees have left the lab long ago.

After the first kiss...

HARRY

(voice over)

What am I doing?

He sees his hands undressing her, sees her hands unbuttoning his shirt, her face and her eyes with extended drugged pupils.

After a stormy love scene in Harry's study...

EMILY

(dressing)

To tell you the truth, I didn't expect such boldness from you. I liked you immediately, the moment I saw you, as soon as I entered the lab. You are such an interesting man and so clever.

HARRY

(dressing, confused)

I didn't expect it either.

EMILY

You must agree, my dear, that you have no rational reason to refuse my suggestion. All depends on open mindedness regarding the experimenter. You have shown me your abilities already. (laughs and kisses him) You must admit that you are as much intrigued to check the

rat's behavior in extreme conditions as I am. This is a novel approach, never done before. You will be a pioneer in the science world!

HARRY

(uncertainly, doubtfully)

Well, let's try it, but I still have grave doubts. Such an approach doesn't quite correspond with canons of science. Besides it is hard to imagine that the rats, with their primitive thinking, will be able to connect the reason with the consequence.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Harry gathers the employees in his study.

HARRY

(to employees)

I have decided to change the electrical circuit in our experiment. Now the wires will circle the entire floor of the cage and all the inhabitants, without exception, will receive voltage discharge the moment an individual rat crosses the red line.

EMPLOYEE - 1

Changes again? But the electrical circuit - it is a lot of work. We have to practically design and calculate the entire electrical division anew.

HARRY

There is no choice. We have to change everything. The rats will receive a collective punishment for each crossing of the border. Not only the trespasser will be exposed to the electrical impact, but also all the other inhabitants of the cage.

EMPLOYEE - 2

The changing of the electrical circuit will require additional time.

RAUL

Besides we'll have to do everything anew.

HARRY

I expect a good job from you. You are professionals, so, do it as quickly as possible. This experiment is very important to me. OK?

EMPLOYEE - 1

Certainly, Dr. Wallis. We understand. Don't worry, we'll try to finish this job quickly.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

HARRY

Excuse me for being late - we have a lot of work. We had to postpone the beginning of the experiment. Using Emily's suggestion requires the reconstruction of the entire electrical system in the cage.

PALLET

Are you having an affair with this post-graduate, the daughter of Prof. Mackenzie, with Emily?

HARRY

What are you talking about? How could you think of such a thing?

PALLET

And what should I think? You are almost never home, you tell me nothing, you are always nervous, irritated. You were never like this before.

HARRY

Such a relationship with Emily never existed and I would never have thought about it. All my time is devoted to work, and you know it. I don't understand how you reached such conclusions.

PALLET

Unfortunately it's no fantasy. I can feel it in my bones! Do you think I'm a fool, who sees nothing?

Pallet sharply interrupts the conversation and, without waiting for his answer, leaves for the bedroom. Harry ceases eating his supper, sighs heavily and follows Pallet.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

The preparatory stage of the experiment is approaching the end. The cage is practically ready, the voltage is connected, and the required number of rats from the same breed is picked by order, marked with an index - "I", meaning the first generation, and a serial number.

HARRY

(looking at the rats)

They are looking forward to the doubtful "pleasure" of receiving the main impact - being trained by the system of collective responsibility, a worldly wise variant of the "Egyptian punishment".

There is a leak of information from his lab about the strange experiment, which has taken a completely fantastic turn. Colleagues begin to stare at Dr. Wallis, when he walks along a corridor, and whisper behind his back. Professor O'Connor, his opponent at the Scientific Council, directly and unambiguously names his experiment the "Devil's intrigues!"

INT. STUDY - DAY

Dr. Wallis gathers all the employees of the lab to his study.

HARRY

I want to make you familiar with the purposes and conduct of our experiment. It is no secret, that people working with animals rather frequently establish an informal relationships with them, favor some, become attached to others, give them tender nicknames and even feed some secretly...

EMPLOYEE - 1

And why is it so bad?

HARRY

It's not bad, but I want to warn you beforehand, that the initial stage of the experiment will be rather painful for your tender feelings.

MARGARET

Will it really be so bad? You frighten me.

HARRY

Yes, it will not be easy! To see the rats receiving the electric discharge, collapsing with a plaintive whimper in a spasm and rolling on the cage floor, is unpleasant, but to see the «shock training» many times in succession, day-after-day, is twice as hard. It can become a heavy burden on the nervous system of the worker.

MARGARET

How horrible!

RAUL

(smiles)

Why are you taking it so bad, Margaret? It's not you who is going to receive the electric current.

Raul laughs.

MARGARET

Stop it, Raul. I don't think it's funny. You are so shallow and unfeeling!

RAUL

(smiles)

Excuse me, but I hold no warm feelings for rats, and I never had.

HARRY

I felt obliged to warn you. It is difficult, but, unfortunately, an obligatory stage of our work. It can't be helped. The implanting of the taboo is a rather painful process.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

The experiment begins. Harry solemnly switches on the large red switch, supplying the voltage to the cage. The employees let the rats into the cage.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Harry returns to his study.

HARRY

(writes down in a diary)

We've started! Today we have let the first generation of rats into the cage. But this is the first time that I'm so worried. I feel a slight discomfort inside of me, even, you could say, a fear of the consequences! It is impossible even to imagine the outcome of this experiment! How will the rats behave?

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

It takes the rats some time to get accustomed to the cage, and then it starts. Some of the

rats cross the red line, step on the invisible gauges and trigger the electricity discharge. With a painful squeak they roll in convulsion down the ramp, and then the charge is disconnected. It goes on time after time, the senseless and stupid squeals, still not understanding the meaning of the red line. They climb up the ramp then fall in convulsion, knocked out by the electric discharge, but soon, having forgotten everything, climb up the ramp again. In all parts at the cage, innocent rats are receiving the electric shock as well. It proceeds endlessly, without interruption.

(The squeaks and convulsions of the rats have to be shown in a merciless manner and in duration of some time!)

INT. STUDY - DAY

Margaret stands in front of Dr. Wallis with hands pressed to her bosom.

MARGARET

Excuse me, Dr. Wallis, but I can't hear it. They squeal in pain. They rush around the cage and don't understand why they are being punished. They shout and groan. I can't see it - my heart is breaking.

HARRY

Calm down Margaret. I understand your feeling. This performance is too hard for your nerves. You can take a fortnight off. Meanwhile the situation will calm down.

MARGARET

Thank you, Dr. Wallis. It is best that I don't see it. I can't sleep afterwards. Good-bye and forgive me, please.

HARRY

Don't mention it, Margaret. Have a good rest.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

Dr. Wallis is at the study, avoiding going near the cage. He can't force himself, in spite of the fact that he is simply obliged to show a personal example to his coworkers. The sight of the trashing hysterical rats exceeds the tolerance of his nervous system.

Emily sits near the cage and looks intently through the glass. She holds a notebook documenting the number of the trespasser and the time of the occurrence.

After a couple of hours the employees can't watch anymore and mainly hear the infinite electric discharges in the cage and the groans of the collectively punished rats.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

It is most important to determine the number of attempts the rats make before they understand that the road to the tunnel leading to freedom is forbidden.

EMILY

I have got a registration of all the attempts.

HARRY

"Stop! The entrance is forbidden!" - has to be rooted in their consciousness, without explanations why it is forbidden, and who has forbidden it. A featureless and categorical interdiction, its violation causes inevitable collective punishment.

EMILY

Yes, the conditions of this game are as follows: "Everybody is participating!" There are no onlookers. It is the basic law of real life - everyone has a role in this game.

HARRY

(joking)

And what about us? Are we participants too? What do you think?

EMILY

What does it have to do with us? We are outsiders. Our role is to conduct the experiment. We direct this performance.

INT. STUDY - MORNING

The employees call one after another to say that they are staying home, due to illness.

EMILY

(with irony)

An epidemic unknown to medicine has attacked your lab, taking all your employees hostages.

HARRY

You don't have to condemn them. I understand them. I myself can't look on it. The squeaks, and convulsions, are not my cup of tea.

INT. LABORATORY - MORNING

Emily approaches Raul.

EMILY

(ironically)

Why have you decided to stay, Raul? Don't you mind the sufferings of the rats?

RAUL

(cynically)

I'm indifferent to everybody - both people and rats. I need money.

Dr. Wallis and Emily behave like conspirators. At the end of the day, after Raul leaves for

home, they madly throw themselves into an embrace, tearing off their clothes and right there, in his study whether on the table, on the sofa, or on the floor, make love groaning in ecstasy.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Pallet sits on a sofa and watches TV. Harry enters.

HARRY

Please forgive me for being late. You can't imagine, what a busy time I have at work now. In the lab...

PALLET

Supper is on the table. I'm going to bed.

Pallet switches off the TV, turns and leaves for the bedroom. Harry follows her with his eyes. He sits down wearily at the table and starts eating.

INT. STUDY - EVENING

EMILY

On the twelfth day of the experiment the statistics of the infringements decrease sharply. From one hundred and twenty currents a day, it lowers to fifty, a more than double decrease. On the thirteenth day fifteen infringements were observed, yesterday there were three and today - zero. The rats stopped crossing the red line.

HARRY

Thank God! Finally they realized! Two weeks have been required to implant this truth into their heads. (smiles) By the way, it happened faster than I thought.

Emily is happy.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

Now we can announce with confidence, that the first stage of experiment is successfully completed. The interdiction is enforced. The red line became a taboo for the rats instead of a conditional symbol of a border. You, Emily, proved to be right, - they have acquired an interdiction.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

At last Dr. Wallis comes out from the study and, for the first time since the beginning of the experiment, approaches the cage to take a close look at the behavior of the rats. All is quiet. The rats are moving about their businesses.

HARRY

On the face of it, the rats behave naturally, but not one of them approaches the red line. They finally understand the lesson we wanted them to learn. We managed to generate a taboo in their primitive consciousness, though at the beginning it seemed that it couldn't be done.

EMILY

It is a big scientific victory. You carried out something nobody had tried.

HARRY

What do you think, Emily? Is it time to phone the employees with the received results and thus, indirectly let them know that it is safe to return to the lab now? There is no more danger of damage to their nerves at the given moment and no more is expected in future. The rats behave ideally.

EMILY

Better wait for the conclusion of the second stage in any case. If, after the control period, there won't be any infringements, it is safe to call back your nervous personnel.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

The following step is an extremely important stage of the experiment. The uniting of the two separated groups of the relatives, that haven't been in any contact during a rather long period of time. There can be an effect of estrangement, of not recognizing their relations. That can result in an inside war with a complete destruction of the weakest party.

EMILY

Why does it happen?

HARRY

That is the law of survival in a limited space - there is a place only for one family in the cage. It is the biological protection of the following generation. In case of a conflict between the two groups, we'll have to give up at the second stage of the experiment.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

A group of rats from the same family is held in a separate cage. They are marked with numbers and an index "II" and transferred into the cage with their siblings.

The rats, marked with the index "I", welcome the new group of siblings into the family as

equal members, after intently and carefully smelling them.

INT. STUDY - DAY

EMILY

(running into the study)

They are united! Peacefully!
Without conflicts!

Dr. Wallis accepts the message with pleasure and a sense of deep gratification. He quickly leaves his study and, accompanied by Emily, approaches the cage.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

HARRY

Is it possible that infinite numbers of voltage treatments, convulsions and groans will be repeated? And those, who understood already long ago the existence of the taboo and the consequences of an attempt to escape to freedom, will suffer again.

EMILY

Now we'll be able to observe whether the veteran residents cooperate with the new arrivals.

HARRY

Whether they can share their knowledge and experience with the newcomers? How are they going to do it?

EMILY

I'm extremely intrigued to see the future development of the events.

HARRY

Everything is possible. No predictions can be made.

EMILY

The experiment is starting to resemble a fascinating journey

into the «terra incognita», where there is always something new and unexpected waiting for us. Look! What is it?

Severe punishment of the newcomers trying to approach the red line starts to take on dramatic proportions. The veteran rats guard the red line and furiously attack and bit each trespasser till they go away.

Nobody pursues the trespasser and nobody looks for revenge. The rats continue to behave in the usual way till the new alarm signal, meaning - a newcomer, approaches the border. A short unequal fight and the newcomer retreats, sometimes blood-stained and limping, away from the border.

HARRY

(highly excited)

It is tremendous! This is an already formed civilization. The veteran rats have started to patrol the border. They don't want to receive painful impacts of a current and consequently conduct a voluntary boundary service. "The trespasser won't pass!" - is now the slogan of the veteran rats. It is simply fantastic! If I didn't see it with my own eyes, I would never have believed it. Tremendous!

Emily documents with a video camera the events that take place in the cage - the entire scene of the potential trespasser's punishment.

EMILY

And, please, note that the rat-guards somehow achieved an absolute result. They completely blocked off the border, the crossing of the red line and, consequently, no electric shock was administered.

HARRY

The new law is established. The bitten and frightened away rats learned on their own skin the

acquired truth, new to them, and didn't approach the red line any more.

Gradually, the newcomer rats stop checking the possibility of an escape to freedom, and life in the cage becomes ordinary again.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

That is a completely novel scientific discovery! Can you imagine the faces of my colleagues?

EMILY

Why are you talking about your colleagues? The whole scientific world will be shaken! This is a discovery of a fundamental character. The civilized behavior of the rats we observed, is not on the basis of the inherent or acquired reflexes, but, as a result of acquired and creatively shared information. The resident rats have not only learned the interdiction, but were able to use the knowledge for self-protection, namely, to convey the acquired information about the taboo to the newcomer rats.

HARRY

Yes, it is a real upheaval in understanding the role of animal reflexes.

EMILY

For research on such a level you can even receive the Nobel Prize. And my dissertation will make waves, too.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

Our subsequent strategy is clear. We'll remove all the

veteran rats gradually from the cage and then we'll wait for the new generation and, a bit later, remove the second generation: the newcomer rats, to which the taboo was enforced.

Emily simply shines with happiness.

EMILY

My first serious scientific work and such tremendous results!

HARRY

Next stage will be strictly experimental, when none of the inhabitants of the cage knows the reason for the interdiction of crossing the red line.

All the excitement calms down and the supervision of the rats becomes routine.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

Have you noticed Raul, our "Last of Mohicans"? Something is very wrong with him. He doesn't approach the cage and has become very nervous. Call him. I want to talk to him.

Emily leaves the study and returns with Raul. Raul is not his usual cynical uncaring self. He has a very frightened and uneasy expression on his face!

HARRY

Raul, what has happened? Did something upset you? Are there any problems? You became very detached, even ceased to come to my study.

Raul doesn't answer and looks at the floor.

HARRY

Well, Raul. Today we'll have to remove the veteran rats from the

cage. We are starting the last stage of our experiment.

RAUL
(looking at the floor)
I won't do it.

HARRY
(with surprise)
What? I don't understand? Why? Why do you refuse to do it?

RAUL
(uncertainly, with a delay)
They watch me.

HARRY
What? I don't understand. Who watches you?

RAUL
The rats!

HARRY
(with irony)
The rats? Do you hear what you are saying, Raul? What do you mean: "They watch you"?

RAUL
They are staring!

Raul cautiously, afraid of being overheard, looks back at the closed door of the study.

Dr. Wallis, with a dissatisfied shrug of his shoulders, looks with surprise on the once carefree guy.

HARRY
Well, calm down, Raul, it is not urgent. Let's wait some time. Meanwhile you can process the statistics.

Raul, without a word, leaves the study.

HARRY
According to all civilized laws, I have to send Raul home. He is obviously not being himself.

Such an impression, that he is overtired. On the other hand, I'm unwilling to lose the last employee.

EMILY

Let's give him a leave of absence.

HARRY

The loss of the last employee will mean that we remain alone. The publicity of the fact, that employees participating in the experiment are observed to acquire mental disturbances, is extremely undesirable.

EMILY

Yes, we have to give him some time off.

HARRY

But how do you like this delirium? The rats are staring at him! It would be funny, if it weren't so sad.

EMILY

I don't see it as funny at all.

HARRY

I understand you. Please, forgive me. I am sorry for Raul too, our sensitive lab assistant. But he seemed so courageous and indifferent at the beginning.

EMILY

It's not that.

HARRY

Then what is it?

Emily looks aside without an answer.

HARRY

(worried)

What happened, Emily? Please tell me, is something wrong?

Emily continues to be silent.

HARRY

(worried)

Why are you silent? What is it? Something to do with the rats? Don't be silent, I want, more correctly, have to know the truth. It is my experiment, I am the coordinator and I'm responsible for everything. Emily, you have to tell me. What happened? What has frightened Raul?

He looks at her but she hesitates with the answer and doesn't look in his eyes.

EMILY

I didn't want to upset you, but they do actually stare. You get an impression that they started to understand more than we meant them to.

HARRY

(nervously)

Impossible! The rats can't be staring at a man. It's nonsense! How have you noticed it? Can you explain it?

EMILY

I'm not sure, may be it's some kind of a mutation or something else. Their sight became, how to explain it, not absent-minded, unfocused, never lingering on one subject, but somehow heavy and quiet. It seems as though they look directly into your eyes. It seems strange and feels unpleasant, so Raul can't be accused of anything, he is not mad, he is right.

HARRY

(sharply)

Let me see it.

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

With a feeling of extreme irritation, he leaves the study, followed by Emily, and approaches the thick glass of the cage.

The rats behave peacefully all around the territory of their artificial world, excluding the forbidden zone behind the red line. Some of them eat something, some go from place to place, meet, smell each other and separate without incidents.

HARRY
(irony)

An Idyll! What can be so terrible here, so unpleasant? Who stares at whom? (seriously) You are overworked. You are strained out. I understand that it wasn't easy.

Suddenly a large rat approaches the transparent wall of the cage, rises on his hind paws and leaning forward onto the glass wall, steadfastly stares strait into the eyes of Dr. Wallis.

Next, as though obeying some order, two more rats join the first one and stand next to it. They all stare at him, intently, without fussing, unblinking, not removing their small shining eyes from him.

HARRY
(whispers)

It is mystical! It simply can't be! I don't believe my own eyes!

Dr. Wallis, looking with amazement at the rats, steps aside, along the transparent wall of the cage. The rats synchronously turn their heads, tracing his movement precisely, continuing to look him straight in the eyes.

HARRY
(whisper)

They are scrutinizing!

Harry nervously turns and walks back into his study. Emily hurries after him.

INT. STUDY - DAY

HARRY

(sharply)

We have to interrupt the experiment immediately.

EMILY

Don't worry so, my dear. Don't take it so close to heart.

HARRY

(cries)

I don't understand it and I don't accept. It..., it is something mystical, like a hallucination.

EMILY

A little bit more patience and breath and we'll bring this unusual experiment to a glorious end!

HARRY

However facts are obstinate thing, they demand respect. It's not a dream, not a myth and I didn't imagine it. I saw it all with my own eyes. I can't ignore it. I need to think...

Harry paces nervously around the study, sits down at the table, and begins to write something, trying to calm down. Then throws down his pencil.

HARRY

(decisively)

We'll have to interrupt the experiment till I understand the reason for our «collective hallucination».

EMILY

(disappointed)

Are you scared? To interrupt an experiment now, at the most interesting moment? Where is your scientific courage? Unquestionably, the rats behave

odd, abnormal even. Frankly speaking, they frighten us by their steadfast stares. They may not want to be separated, or some other reason, but it doesn't justify interrupting the experiment.

HARRY

What are you talking about? The rats stare steadfastly at a man! It is abnormal! It demands some kind of an explanation! How can we proceed with the experiment? Don't you agree that we need to think about everything very thoroughly?

EMILY

No, I don't! We don't have time for it. Actually, all proceeds according to your plan. We have fantastic results. We just have to concentrate on concluding the experiment, without being distracted by side effects.

HARRY

(excitedly)

Sorry, but I can't do it. I can't wander without direction, without reference points. It is unscientific and reckless!

EMILY

(convicted)

Nonsense! You'll become famous and receive the Nobel Prize! Your name will be engraved in gold letters in the history of science. Years later you'll recollect with a smile, that you were on the brink of canceling the experiment because of some stares from rats. (smiles) And I will be proud of you.

Emily approaches Harry and kisses him passionately, unbuttoning his shirt. Harry gives in and is swept into lovemaking on a sofa in the study.

EMILY

I love you. (kisses him and whispers) Being a genius always means hard stress and overload. You must be brave like all great scientists.

HARRY

OK, let's try to go on, although I'm leaving with a very uneasy feeling.

EMILY

Don't worry - everything will be fine.

HARRY

Let's call it a day. It was a very strenuous one. I feel very tired.

EMILY

OK. Let's go.

PARKING LOT - EVENING

Harry and Emily enter the empty university parking lot late in the evening. Their cars are the only two left. Emily kisses him and gets into her car. Harry drives out from the parking lot. Emily is standing near her car. She waves at him and blows him an air kiss. Harry smiles and leaves the parking lot.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Harry enters his house. A chill dinner plate stands on the table. He tastes the meal but leaves it and goes to the bedroom. His wife is already asleep.

That night he dreams a dream.

THE DREAM

He walks slowly along an indefinitely long, dimly lighted dirty corridor scattered with waste. He passes doors on his right and on his left. Each door

has bars and a note, written in some obscure language, hanging on it. These are iron doors, dirty, with rusty handles. Some doors are barred crosswise with rotten wooden poles. There is nobody around. He is alone. He continues to walk along the corridor. Behind some doors there is no noise, behind others he hears wild, sharp cries, howling of animals. He is terrified. He understands that he has to go through some door, but he has to choose correctly, as a mistake will cost him his life. Suddenly he sees a clean, new door, without dirt and rust. He opens it, and there, in the center of the empty room, Emily is lying on the sofa from his study, with closed eyes and smiling in her dream. She is covered with a portiere. He sits near her on the sofa, looking at her with pleasure. She opens her eyes, smiles, clasps his neck with her hands and nestles to him passionately. She is naked. He lies down beside her, kisses and strokes her. She is nestling closer, feeling his love. He is happy, smiles, even closes his eyes for a second, but when he opens them, he suddenly sees a rat's tail. He slowly turns his head and sees a huge rat laying beside him, instead of Emily, a human size rat. The rat stares at him unblinking and draws him to itself with its four paws. He is struck with inhuman disgust, nerves turn highly sensitive, and his hair rises on his head in horror...

And he wakes up.

He wakes up with a shrill and weird cry, covered in cold sweat. His wife becomes

terribly frightened, and he himself shakes, as with a chill.

Harry, fully waking up, examines the bedroom, sees Pallet, sitting on the bed with a white face from fear, but can't come to his senses. He shakes his head from side to side and, without a word, rushes to the bar. He takes a few sips of brandy straight from the bottle, catching his breath with difficulty and then drinks some more. His body shivers.

PALLET

What happened?

HARRY

Bad dream.

PALLET

Something awful is happening to you, and I don't know how to help.

Pallet starts crying.

HARRY

Go to sleep, my dear, everything is OK now. I shall sit in the kitchen for a while. I need to calm down.

PALLET

You frighten me, Harry. Your experiment is driving you out of your mind. I'm pleading with you - stop it.

He sits at the kitchen table, a half empty bottle of brandy in front of him.

HARRY

Of course it is necessary to complete the research: the taboo, the rats and whole this crazy experiment. It is heading for a bad end. My ideological opponent Prof O'Connor was right in naming it "To play with the Devil!"

Harry pours himself a glass of brandy and drinks it. Pallet looks at him in horror.

HARRY

Dr. Wallis, Big science, in general, and all mankind will do well without this tremendous discovery anyway.

Having finished the brandy, he gets up, tries to walk, but is unstable on his feet.

PALLET

Let me help you...

Harry, leaning on his wife, goes to the bathroom.

HARRY

The decision is final. The experiment is suspended halfway. I can't go on with it and I won't.

PALLET

Excellent! It's a right decision! Leave it all and life will return to usual. We had a very good life.

Harry takes a cold shower and leaves for work.

OUT. LABORATORY - MORNING

Dr. Wallis arrives at his work early. He greets the surprised watchman and goes along the corridor to a door with the sign: "Zoology Lab. Manager Dr. Harry Wallis". Proceeding to open the door with his keys, Dr. Wallis realizes that the door to the lab is not locked.

HARRY

(growls)

Who can it be? Probably the cleaning lady, it is her shift. Who else can be here so early?

INT. LABORATORY - MORNING

He opens the door and walks in the lab. The first thing he sees is Emily's corpse hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the lab on a loop of the phone cord.

The overturned chair lies nearby. Everything is silent. Emily's body is slowly swinging in the air.

Harry stares wide-eyed and makes a few uncertain steps in Emily's direction but a black emptiness descends on him and he falls into a deep faint, hitting himself on the stone floor.

INT. LABORATORY - MORNING

He regains consciousness to a sharp smell of liquid ammonia. A doctor in a white dressing gown is knelling over him.

DOCTOR

How do you feel?

HARRY

(looking about)

Thanks. I'm well.

The doctor nods with satisfaction and moves aside. The lab is full of policemen and civilian clerks, who are discussing something in low voices, taking fingerprints and photographs. They had time to take Emily's body off the loop and put her on the floor. Supervising over everything is a sturdy short and resolute middle-aged man, who approaches him.

KINSKY

I'm inspector Mal Kinsky. How do you feel, Dr. Wallis?

HARRY

I'm well.

KINSKY

Are you able to answer my questions?

HARRY

Yes, I am.

KINSKY

What took place here, in your opinion? Who is responsible for the death of Emily Mackenzie?

HARRY

They! (pointing with his hand to the cage) The rats!

Harry, despite the presence of many unfamiliar people, begins to cry bitterly.

KINSKY

(with an ironical smile)

Calm down, Dr. Wallis, I understand your feelings, you are very upset now, but I'm interested in people first of all, not in rats, especially in rats that are absent. The cage is empty.

HARRY

Empty? How can it be? It is impossible!

KINSKY

Well, why would I deceive you? Look for yourself.

The inspector takes Harry's arm, supporting him, as though he is recovering from a bad illness, and leads him to the cage. The rats are not there. The cage is completely empty and silent.

HARRY

(whispering)

It is impossible! They couldn't disappear, evaporate. No, it is impossible!

KINSKY

A young, cheerful, healthy woman has committed suicide in your lab. By the way, somebody may have helped her. It is yet to be discovered. While you, Dr. Wallis, the manager of the lab and the actual head of all the

experiments, accuse absent rats.
Doesn't it sound strange to you?

HARRY

I had a premonition, I told her.
The dream I dreamt at night. It
was essential to stop the
experiment immediately, but she
wanted to continue. It's my
fault, I wasn't quick enough, I
shouldn't have listened to her,
and I had to insist on it.

KINSKY

Are you, Dr. Wallis, feeling the
responsibility for Emily
Mackenzie's death? Why do you
blame yourself?

HARRY

I haven't stopped this dreadful
experiment in time.

KINSKY

(officially)

Dr. Wallis, I'm compelled to
detain you on your possible
connection to the death of Emily
Mackenzie, in suspicion of
violence.

Mal Kinsky nods at a policeman, and Harry
Wallis is handcuffed and, under the surprised
looks of friends, colleagues and students
crowding the corridor, is led to the police
car. He encounters the eyes of Emily's father,
Prof. Mackenzie, standing there among the crowd
with a sad face.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Harry is brought to the police station, more
correct into a small inner prison.

The numerous chambers with thick bars to the
right and the left of the corridor (like in
Harry's dream) are all packed to the limit with
some weird types, with criminals.

Prostitutes, loudly laughing, address the policemen accompanying him, with dirty language.

Harry is looking at his surroundings with a frightened face.

HARRY

(to policemen)

How did I get here? They will kill me. I'm a stranger to them.

The policemen smirk and don't answer. They lock Harry into a small cell occupied by Afro-American man with a merry experienced look.

Harry sits down on a flat bench near the wall, clasps his head with his hands.

CELLMATE

Don't worry so much, my friend. People live in prison also. Nobody will do you harm here! I see that you are a civilized man. Is it your first time? Have you killed someone? Either a wife or a mistress?

HARRY

No, what are you talking about! I didn't kill anyone.

CELLMATE

Right - deny everything! It may help you, though they are experienced dogs and know how to dig out the truth. Who is your interrogator?

HARRY

Mel Kinsky.

CELLMATE

Kinsky - he is a 1st class son of a bitch! I know him. He is like a bulldog, sinks his teeth in and doesn't let go. You need a good lawyer. They can prove anything for a right price. You'll be acquitted. They know what to do!

HARRY

I didn't kill her, she committed suicide!

CELLMATE

There is always trouble where women are involved. My wife was constantly promising to commit suicide, but I was always under the impression that first she'll kill me! (laughs)

HARRY

I don't understand what forced her to do it? Why did she do such a thing? Nothing in her behavior suggested such an awful end.

CELLMATE

Yes, a sad story. Women are dangerous people. You can never really understand them.

Harry gets up and nervously starts pacing the cell. Suddenly he stops and squeezes his head with his hands.

HARRY

Now I understand. They forced her to do it. Nothing else could have happened. But why? What have they gained by her death?

Harry can stand no more. He sits down on the bench weakly.

CELLMATE

Maybe drugs are involved? They don't talk much. You know how these people are?

HARRY

I'm not talking about people. I'm talking about rats!

CELLMATE

(merrily)

Rats? Have you lost your mind?

HARRY

(in horror)

She has turned off the switch!

Cellmate looks at Harry with surprise and shakes his head.

Harry stands up and paces the chamber nervously - three steps forward, three back.

HARRY

It can mean only one thing - after our parting at the parking lot, she returned to the lab and tried to remove the rats by herself...

CELLMATE

(laughs)

If you keep on like that in court, you'll be heading for the Psychiatric Hospital. You can count on that.

HARRY

She cut off the voltage to the cage. The voltage was off, the trespasser wasn't struck by the current any more, the road to freedom was open and... they left.

CELLMATE

You are not so dumb! You found your own «road to freedom»! You'll get some treatment and will be released after one or two years. It's no ball, of course, but much better than a twenty-year imprisonment in jail.

HARRY

Why didn't I grasp it at once, when I had the premonition for the first time, when I saw the unblinking stare of the rats! Where was my head?

CELLMATE

(laughs)

Very good! First class!

Harry sees Emily walking by herself along a deserted corridor.

HARRY'S VISION

(in a slightly slowdown motion)

She enters the lab, switches on the lights, and approaches the cage. The rats aren't asleep; they rise on their hind legs along the glass wall in a long gray line and start staring at her - a concentrated, unblinking, heavy stare of the entire rat population. She struggles, but they win, they succeed in influencing her, to subordinate her will. Emily, with drugged, widely opened eyes, with precise, slightly delayed movements of a robot, begins to carry out the received orders. She approaches the red switch and disconnects the voltage from the cage, then cuts off the phone cord, throws it over the overhanging pole, makes a loop and puts it over her head. That's the end. The rats, all of them, leave the transparent wall of the cage, and one after another, as though nothing happened, cross the red line, climb the ramp and enter the tunnel leading to freedom.

HARRY

(with pity)

She wasn't afraid at all. She simply didn't realize what she was doing. Poor Emily! She was always so impatient.

Cellmate laughs merrily and makes movements with his finger near the head, indicating that Harry has lost his mind.

CELLMATE

You are a real actor, a "professional"! It is a real performance! I have never heard anything funnier.

Harry pays no attention to him.

HARRY

Emily is dead, and we have exchanged places. The rats gained freedom, and I'm locked in a cage.

Guards open the cell and take the cellmate for questioning.

CELLMATE

The performance is over, what a pity! So long, my friend. We may meet again. (laughs and winks at Harry) Keep it on, "Professor".

The cellmate is led away and Harry remains in the cell alone. He paces the cell, sits down on the bench, but gets up immediately, nears the bars and shakes them, retraces his steps, sits down again and closes his eyes.

HARRY

(whispers)

Emily was right. The main goal of someone locked in a cage, is to get out of it.

A guard came.

Guard

You are asked for questioning.

INT. STUDY - EVENING

Mal Kinsky sits in his study with a serious expression of his face.

KINSKY

I advise you to call your lawyer, or we can ask for a free-of-charge public attorney.

HARRY

No lawyer is capable, even if he understands the special essence of this case, of using the true facts as arguments in my defence.

KINSKY

The law demands a representation by an attorney.

HARRY

Any lawyer will start offering a bargain, their strategy is well known. I'm not guilty and such defence doesn't suit me at all!

Kinsky looks at Harry in surprise.

KINSKY

Well. We have the corpse of a young, beautiful woman, who spent most of her time with you. I ignore the metaphysical explanations connected with the rats, it simply is ridiculous, and you, as a scientist, shouldn't refer to phantoms - to accuse nonexistent rats from a completely empty cage for the death of your employee. Nonsense! Therefore, here is my first question: «Did you have an intimate relationship with Emily Mackenzie?»

HARRY

How does it relate to this matter?

Kinsky gets up and starts pacing the office.

KINSKY

A straight connection, Mr. Wallis. Love is a very strong feeling sometimes, with a weak self-control. It is capable of generating unexpected desires and extreme actions. For example, a desire to kill the object of love or a third person

or, as in our case, to provoke a suicide. Passion and self-interest is the basis for any serious crime. Another motive I, at least in my experience, haven't met yet.

HARRY

Why would I wish her dead? I loved Emily.

KINSKY

Yes, I even know that the last time you made love to her, was one hour before her death. The question is, what did you say to her in the parking lot at your parting? Probably something awful, unacceptable to her mind, something, that forced Emily to return to the lab and commit suicide. What did you tell her then? What shocked her so much?

Before Harry's eyes rises the picture of Emily.

HARRY'S VISION

She kisses him at parting and, cheerfully smiling, with an easy and elastic gait hurries to her car. He looks at her, admiring the beautiful, young woman, who loves him so much. And when he starts to leave the parking lot, Emily blows him an air kiss. The last kiss!

His eyes fill with tears.

HARRY

What an idiot I am! How could I lose her so careless and reckless?

The inspector brings Harry a glass of water.

KINSKY

Calm down please, Dr. Wallis, I understand, that it is very difficult for you. I will tell you straight - the fact of your

absence in the lab at the time of Emily's death is established. The watchman has testified, that you didn't return to the lab. Besides, your wife Pallet has specified the time of your arrival home, so in this instance you have an alibi.

Harry nods in satisfaction.

HARRY

I told you at the beginning that Emily's death was a great shock to me, but you wouldn't believe me for some reason.

KINSKY

Next, I would like to know what took place between you and Emily on that fatal evening, what exactly pushed Emily to commit suicide? These important details are still to be found out by the investigation. We need your cooperation Dr. Wallis. Do you agree to help us with the investigation?

HARRY

I am trying to tell you, but you don't want to listen. We conducted an experiment with the rats at the lab and...

KINSKY

By the way, your lab assistant, Raul, who could have clarified a lot of this sad business, has disappeared.

HARRY

What do you mean disappeared?

KINSKY

His parents told us, that Raul returned home that evening extremely excited and nervous. He refused to have dinner, collected some things quickly and left, without having told

his parents a word. His parents are positive, that he is afraid, only thus can they describe such an urgent departure. His hands were shaking and he was inarticulate. They couldn't prevent his departure, regretfully. Well, Mr. Wallis, will we discover one more corpse next, the young man's?

Harry looks at the inspector with surprised eyes.

HARRY

Raul ran away. What has it got to do with me? The guy became hysterical. The rats got to him, he became terrified of them, and as we found out, he had some reason.

KINSKY

I want to be absolutely frank with you. I don't consider you a reckless and cool criminal, Dr. Wallis. You have simply got confused, I can understand that. Your wife, Pallet, has told us, that you shouted loudly in your sleep last night. Believe me, a voluntary confession will relieve your soul. What happened in your love triangle? Why has Emily committed suicide, and why has Raul run away? What took place between all of you last evening? Did you find them together? Have you threatened Raul? I advise you strongly to tell the truth, and I will do my best to ease your situation. I give you my word of honor.

Harry smirks and looks unbelievably at the investigator.

HARRY

All of your assumptions are wrong. You can't solve this case without knowing the details of

the experiment we conducted in my lab. I tell you this with full authority. Beside this, I have nothing else to add.

The inspector gets up in indignation, paces the study, then sits down again and begins to shift the papers nervously.

KINSKY

(threateningly)

Stop playing games, telling me tales about rats. It is not funny! I want to stress to you that, even without your cooperation, we'll find out the truth eventually, but then our conversation will be entirely different. While we are looking for Raul, you'll be detained here.

KINSKY

(to the guard)

Take him away.

A guard leads Harry back to the cell.

Harry is called frequently for more questioning. Mal Kinsky becomes angrier as time goes on. He demands explanations. The case makes no headway.

INT. STUDY - DAY

One day two gentlemen with grayish hair, whose rich and fashionable appearance spelled VIP, join the interrogation.

Mal Kinsky, probably surprised by such a turn of events, becomes fussy. His eyes shift restlessly and he is extremely nervous.

KINSKY

Dr. Wallis, I would like to talk to you about the rats this time.

HARRY

What happened suddenly? You didn't even want to hear about them till now.

Mal Kinsky throws a fast, confused glance at the unfamiliar VIPs.

KINSKY

You see, Dr. Wallis, the situation changed greatly.

ROLAND

(to Kinsky, imperiously)
Let me, inspector.

ROLAND

(to Harry)
You can call me Roland. I would like to have a word with you, Dr. Wallis, aside the protocol. Tell me, please, everything concerning the rats.

HARRY

What do you want to know? Why this sudden interest? You should inquire at the University, at the Zoology department.

ROLAND

You misunderstood me, Dr. Wallis. I had in mind your rats, the rats that you experimented with and then released.

HARRY

(in indignation)
I didn't release them. Why doesn't anybody want to know the truth here? Why do you shift the cards all the time?

ROLAND

Calm down, please, Dr. Wallis. We are here to try to understand what happened in your lab. There is nobody who knows it better than you. I hope to have a frank conversation with you...

HARRY

And who are you actually?

KINSKY

(to Harry)

I ask you not to interrupt Mr. Roland.

Roland glances at Mal Kinsky and, without comment to his remark, continues.

ROLAND

First of all, let me ask you: «Why did you do it?» I can understand young programmers, inventing all kind of computer viruses as a joke, for glory, to prove something to the entire world. But you are not a boy, nor a maniac or madman. What was your reason for doing it? What was the sense or the benefit in creating this bio-psychological weapon, this modern Golem and let it out into the wide world for senseless and bloody madness? What did you want to prove by it?

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

Were you following someone's instructions?

HARRY

What happened? What has happened to the rats?

ROLAND

Concretely speaking, they have occupied some area, something like a farm with close-by territories.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

There is Chaos outside. There are victims among the local workers.

ROLAND

On the whole, we can't find effective means against them, a barrier, if you like. The people there are going mad, starting to shoot one another. The rats

render strong influence on the mentality of men and manipulate their consciousness. This has monstrous consequences. It is impossible to come close to them or to apply force against them - it results in increased losses only.

HARRY

Oh, my God! How horrible!

ROLAND

Now, I hope, it is clear to you why we are here. Earlier nobody knew where the rats came from and didn't connect it to your experiments. But once, completely by accident, after a conversation with some woman that survived, we discovered to our surprise, that the rats are numbered.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

We analyzed the information carefully and eventually came up to your name.

ROLAND

Tell us, Dr. Wallis, about your experiment, how these mutants were formed and how is it possible to fight them?

HARRY

(helpless)

I don't know, believe me, I don't know what to do. I don't know, what happened. We haven't foreseen anything similar to it. I simulated a taboo, but there were side effects. The experiment got out of control, the rats learned to influence the mentality of people somehow. They frightened my lab assistant Raul and have killed Emily.

Harry looks expressively at inspector Kinsky, who pretends, that he is much occupied with his papers.

HARRY

When I understood, that the rats are dangerous, I wanted to stop the experiment, but hadn't had time. You can read my diary - all the problems that arose during the experiment are described there in detail.

ROLAND

Thanks for your advice, Dr. Wallis. We have read your diary already. But, if you didn't have malicious intentions, why did you construct a tunnel connecting the cage to the outside world?

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

Who needed it? Why did you install it?

HARRY

It was Emily's idea. She had offered to connect our project with social psychology - it was the theme of her dissertation. According to her, the foremost desire of a caged animal is to escape to freedom. Therefore I have changed the taboo-food to the taboo-tunnel leading to freedom.

ROLAND

OK, but you were heading the project. All the basic decisions were yours. Do you agree that this experiment is your responsibility entirely, including all consequences?

HARRY

Of course, I agree. The leader is responsible for everything.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

Then explain, please, how a serious scientist allowed the subjects with unpredictable properties to escape during the realization of his experiment?

He looks at Harry questioningly and, not having heard his answer, continues.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

It is obvious to me, that a complete isolation from the outside world is a basic rule of any experiment. How can you explain your decision, if so?

HARRY

It was my mistake. I realize it now. A fatal mistake!

KINSKY

Not a mistake, but a serious crime, taking into account all the consequences. I have to inform you, Dr. Wallis, with an official order under the clause of criminal negligence resulting in human casualties. This serious clause means a rather long term in prison, so you won't return to your scientific activity for a very long time.

The gray-haired men were silent, but didn't leave the place. They observed steadfastly his overturned face. Everything appeared motionless, however, the conversation wasn't over. Kinsky continued nervously to twist a pencil in his hands and to shift papers, as though waiting for something.

ROLAND

However, Dr. Wallis, you can lighten your fate. You have caused Evil, created this mad Frankenstein. Now you have to kill him.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

It is only fair.

ROLAND

I have read your file attentively, talked to your colleagues, friends, to your wife Pallet. Everyone believes you to be a very talented man, with a very original mind.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

As a scientist, as a man injured by his own deeds, you are simply obliged to correct the mistake, to finish adequately this mad experiment, to liquidate the Evil.

ROLAND

We are sure, that nobody can do it but you.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

And, in case of your success, our dear inspector, Mr. Kinsky, will agree to regard your actions, as unintentional ones, with all the consequences following from it. Mr. Kinsky, do you agree to my offer?

He looks expressively at the inspector and receives his hasty nod.

KINSKY

Of course, I agree. No objections.

HARRY

(fast)

In that case I agree too!

ROLAND

(to Harry)

Very well, it is simply wonderful, that you understand correctly your duty to science and humanity. In this case, we are releasing you from the investigation for a while, and mister Kinsky will hold back the

accusations till we complete the given task.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

(to Harry)

And he will serve you the order in case of an adverse result. Don't have any doubts on this account.

HARRY

Freedom on loan or, more correctly, conditional freedom, is better than prison anyway.

ROLAND

That's all, you are free, more correctly, - we release you on our responsibility.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

(threateningly)

Although don't think of running. You can't escape - we'll find you even under the ground!

HARRY

Can I visit my home and meet my wife?

ROLAND and ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

(simultaneously)

No!

ROLAND

You see, Dr. Wallis, for the outside world you are still in prison.

HARRY

I shall do everything in my power to get out of here. I shall apply all my efforts. I want to warn you honestly beforehand - I don't have the slightest idea how to solve the problem with the rats.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

Never mind, you will certainly think of something, you are the

scientist. But you must promise not to inform anyone of your release till the end of the operation.

Harry nods.

Sun light blinds him, the street noise deafens him, the colors and the variety of every day life stuns him. He stands still after leaving the police station, looking around, but his companions quickly and efficiently get him into a waiting car.

They drive through the city, along streets familiar to Harry and he greedily looks around, enjoying the sight of green trees, of people rushing on business, having a drink in the noisy and cheerful crowd near the shops and open cafes.

HARRY

These people don't realize at all how fortunate they are!

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

If our operation is completed safely, you will feel thankful too.

ROLAND

All depends on you. I want you to understand this clearly.

The car approaches the experimental field of the University. A temporary barrier partitions off the road. Soldiers in khaki uniform patrol the area closed off by poles with barbed wire, on which, vibrating in a wind, are hanging signs with the frightening round badges of radioactive danger.

HARRY

(with a smile)

Have the rats started to radiate? This is the last straw!

ROLAND

And would you like correspondents from all around the world to rush here? Or do

you prefer everything, happening in the zone, broadcasted? Or filling the newspapers with scandalous headings, like: "War of the worlds", "Rats or people - the struggle for survival", to start a real panic?

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

It seems to me that was the best decision. It makes clear that the forbidden zone is closed, and there can't be anything interesting there. That was the ideal choice and your irony, Dr. Wallis, is misplaced.

The soldiers at the barrier check the documents presented by Harry's gray-haired companions. The car slowly drives into the closed area, which occupies a rather large field divided into accurate parts, in the center of which stands a one-storied wooden construction, like a warehouse.

ROLAND

(pointing)

In the warehouse, at the center of the restricted area, there are stored bags with a collection of seeds. These will provide the rats with a meal for a long period. Besides, there is water, for the workers to wash up after work. By the way, there is a minimal danger in moving the rats into another place. It gives us a certain advantage - the rats are located in an inner zone.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

But we can't completely exclude the possibility of the rats moving to another place too. In this sense, our situation is explosive.

Inside the restricted area there is the inner zone, one more line of barbed wire circles a

small territory with a warehouse premise in the center of it.

ROLAND

The reason for the outside markers is in not letting any outsiders in. The inner markers serve the purpose that nobody gets out. It is clear, that I mean the rats.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

Although, if for some reason, the rats decide to leave, we still have no means to keep them inside the inner zone.

Watchtowers, built on the four corners, are supplied with powerful optical systems transmitting images onto monitors at the commanding quarters. The military unit, equipped with an armed troop carrier, is parked nearby. It is subjected to the commanding captain Hall fearless and smart.

The Headquarters are located at the border of the inner zone and are supplied with all the modern communication facilities. TV sets and computer monitors are tracing everything that occurs on the territory occupied by the rats.

INT. HEADQUARTERS - DAY

ROLAND

Let me introduce you, Dr. Wallis, to Captain Hall, the commanding officer of the military division.

HARRY

Pleased to meet you, captain Hall. Everything here is arranged in such serious order as for a real war.

CAPTAIN HALL

This is a mockery of a war. Laughable! If I had my way, I would have destroyed those creatures in fifteen minutes.

The captain looks expressively at Roland, who didn't allow him to do.

HARRY

God forbid! Fifteen minutes is all that will take you to shoot each other and us along at the same time.

INT. ROLAND'S STUDY - DAY

HARRY

Now tell me quietly and in full detail, what has actually taken place here.

Roland approaches the safe standing in a corner, and gets out from there a rather thick folder with papers and places it on the table.

ROLAND

You can familiarize yourself with these documents later, meanwhile I can brief you on the following sequence of events and facts.

ROLAND

(voice over, we see all he tells)

A group of emigrants worked on the experimental fields - Thai workers worked under the supervision of a young woman, Mrs. Crow, a science assistant at the University. On the way to work, the Thai workers entered the warehouse holding their tools: shovels and rakes for working the soil. While Mrs. Crow waited for them outside the warehouse, she suddenly heard noises and cries. Having looked through a window of the temporary premises, she saw the workers engaged in a weird fight. They were fighting to the death with iron poles and shovel edges.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

The fallen were finished off. As a result of this fight nobody stayed alive!

HARRY

What did Mrs. Crow do?

ROLAND

She escaped from there in horror and immediately informed the police about the incident. According to her, it looked like a mental derangement. You see, prior to that there were absolutely normal relations among the group, moreover, on the way to the warehouse they were cheerful, talked in their own language, and laughed. There was no forewarning of the oncoming conflict.

HARRY

Unconvincing! How could she know - she didn't understand their language. A conflict could have arisen suddenly, spontaneously!

ROLAND

In the police nobody believed the explanations of Mrs. Crow, however they decided to check it up anyway. They sent a patrol car with two policemen to the place of the incident. They approached the warehouse, but didn't even enter it. It was not clear what happened there, but both policemen were killed.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

The monitors showed them on the ground, lying one near the other with guns in their hands.

Roland's colleague points to one of the TV screens on the wall of the room. On the screen was a static picture of a police car with two policemen lying near it.

ROLAND

They haven't succeeded in delivering a message, although the portable radio transmitter in the car was switched on. The experts heard two simultaneous gunshots and had a suspicion that the policemen shot each other, like at a duel. An amazing tale!

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

The Police commanders were shocked. At last Mrs. Crow's story was considered with due gravity and a suspicion that something was seriously wrong.

ROLAND

By the assumption of the police, an unknown psycho-physiological substance, which makes people loose their mind, leaked from some lab at the University. They had decided that the experiment had to do with the Army and something went wrong. As usually, everything connected to similar researches is secret, that's why they informed us.

HARRY

By the way, forgive my curiosity, but who are you? With whom am I actually doing business?

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

(severe)

A State organization with high authority! I hope you are satisfied with my answer.

HARRY

(confused)

Yes, quite.

ROLAND

May I continue?

HARRY

Of course! Excuse me for interrupting.

ROLAND

So, we investigated this business thoroughly and repeatedly questioned Mrs. Crow. She has told us everything she saw and heard at the time of the actual event. Then, for the first time, she mentioned a rat, which she noticed near the warehouse, and she had a vague recollection, that there were numbers drawn on its back. We have enquired at the University, got access to your lab, read your report and all fell into place.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

These are your rats, Dr. Wallis. We have no doubt about it.

ROLAND

Anyway, the area has been sealed off. Army control-posts have been installed on all the roads leading to this area. The corpses of the six Thai workers together with the corpses of the two policemen are still lying there on the ground.

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

We have absolutely no idea what to do with them.

ROLAND

Now the situation is stable, but this is only an apparent calmness. First, we can't come to terms with such a situation, and, second, if the rats decide suddenly to go to another place, how are we going to stop them?

ROLAND'S COLLEAGUE

One thing is obvious, entering the zone occupied by the rats is

dangerous, it can lead to tragic consequences, but we have to destroy them, the faster the better. I hope, you agree with me.

ROLAND

That's briefly what we know. All the details can be found in the folder.

HARRY

Mrs. Crow succeeded in getting out alive from there, how do you think it happened and why?

ROLAND

I don't know, they may have no influence on women, only on men. By the way, it is an idea! How didn't I think of it before?

Roland looks at Dr. Wallis with respect. Harry makes a gloomy face.

HARRY

The rats react only to aggression. The workers probably wanted to kill and eat them. In Thailand it is customary, and Mrs. Crow simply was frightened and had escaped. She had no wish to attack the rats therefore she survived.

CAPTAIN HALL

In my opinion, an air bomb of five hundred kg will solve all the problems in one shot. Who understands these Tai-workers, who knows what they were thinking about? And there are a lot of nut cases in the police. They may have been drunk or using drugs.

HARRY

Anyway, you can't know where the pilot will drop this bomb. He may hit the University. What then? Who will take the

responsibility? A rash decision
may have catastrophic
consequences.

Roland angrily waves the young captain away.

ROLAND

You don't have to explain
anything to him, it is
unnecessary, Dr. Wallis. Solders
don't have to understand. Their
duty is to carry out orders.
Tell me instead, how would it be
possible to enter the inner zone
and carry out the corpses?

Captain Hall looks offended at Roland and
leaves the study demonstratively, slamming the
door.

ROLAND

Don't pay attention to our
captain. He is a supporter of
extreme actions. He's still
young and hot-blooded. So, do
you think it is possible to
carry out the corpses from the
inner zone? Somehow silently,
accurately, avoiding a direct
contact with the rats.

HARRY

I categorically advise not to do
so. The thing is, rats eat
corpses, therefore if they
decide, that you are taking away
their food, the consequences
will be severe.

ROLAND

So what shall we do? We have to
solve this problem somehow.

HARRY

I don't know. Let's not worsen
the situation in the meantime. I
need to think.

Everybody drifts to his place. Dr. Wallis goes
outside the Head office to take a look at the
field, the sky and the sunset. He sits down on

the grass outside with a smile on his lips, thoughtfully looks at the warehouse, and then, with a big effort, returns to the house. He reads the report from beginning to end. Imperceptible to himself, he falls asleep.

INT. HARRY'S ROOM - MORNING

A big noise wakes Harry up. At first he doesn't understand the meaning of it, but having look out the window, he becomes dumbfounded.

An armed vehicle, easily compressing the barbed wire, enters the inner zone and quickly approaches the warehouse.

HARRY
(with horror)
They have gone mad!

Harry rushes into the next room and wakes Roland. Roland quickly rises and hurries to the Head office accompanied by Harry.

INT. HEAD OFFICE - MORNING

Roland calls someone on the phone, and then sharply replaces the receiver.

ROLAND
(loudly)
The brat, a new leader appeared, a warlord, the son of a bitch, looking for glory. Captain Hall decided to attack the rats single handedly. Without an order, without my permission! I will take him to court. He will face the tribunal.

ROLAND
(to Harry, in a low voice)
Is it possible that our captain will succeed? He will shoot all the rats and return a hero. Shouldn't we wait awhile?

HARRY
(excited)
Prepare the anti-tank cannon. Now everything will start

rolling, you'll see. Quickly,
Roland! Do it now, while we
still have time!

Roland's colleague quickly enters the Head office. They discuss the situation silently. Afterwards Roland thoughtfully looks at the receding battle machine, then at Dr. Wallis and hesitatingly lifts the receiver of the intercom.

ROLAND

Call the assistant of Captain Hall. (Pause) Prepare for the possible destruction of the armed vehicle. (Shouts) Yes, you understood me correctly! Prepare the anti-tank cannon. Is it clear? (Pause) This is an order. I know that captain Hall is there. You don't have to explain obvious things to me. (Pause) I am not interested in your opinion. You simply don't understand the situation! Carry out the orders! I am the one giving orders here and I will take full responsibility.

At this moment the armed vehicle approaches the police car standing near the warehouse. The monitors show the armed vehicle, almost reaching the warehouse, interrupting its smooth progress, suddenly undecidedly. The armed vehicle stops, retraces, then turns around and moves to the Head quarters with increasing speed. It starts shooting. The long outburst of heavy gunfire crosses the light, temporary building of the Head quarters. The sound of broken glass from windows and TV sets hangs in the air. Groans of wounded soldiers break from the Head quarters. Roland's colleague seizes his throat and falls to the floor, blood pouring from his mouth.

HARRY

Shoot him! Shoot, while he hasn't broken through, otherwise he'll shoot everyone down. He is not a man any more. He is a

robot! He doesn't realize what he is doing!

The first shell misses the vehicle by a few inches. The armed vehicle continues shooting, persistently moving forward. The second shell hits it precisely. The metal vehicle, which almost succeeds in reaching the Head quarters, falls on its side. A rich, black smoke rises out of it.

Roland stares at his colleague and his lips and hands are shaking. Roland's colleague after short convulsions, lay calmly on the floor, and, judging by everything, is dead. Roland looks around.

Some monitors and TV sets are on fire, bullet holes pierced the walls of the building. Groans of the wounded operators are rising from the floor.

Harry pours Roland a glass of water and hears his teeth chatter on the glass. From this moment on Dr. Wallis becomes the indisputable leader, the true commander of all the actions.

The Captain's assistant quickly enters the room. He sees the corpse of Roland's colleague on the floor and turns pale, almost unable to speak.

CAPTAIN'S ASSISTANT
(to Roland)

Your order was carried out. The armed vehicle is destroyed. Captain Hall is killed, apparently. What are your further orders?

The Captain's assistant looks at his demoralized commanding chief attentively. Roland cannot speak.

HARRY

(to Captain's assistant)

You have to pull out Captain Hall from the burning vehicle and call the hospital's first aid attendants to assist the wounded men.

CAPTAIN'S ASSISTANT
(to Harry)

Yes, Sir.

NEAR THE HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

A bit later, the bloody body of the young captain Hall is pulled out from the armed vehicle.

He is dead. They put him on the grass close to his victims: Roland's colleague and a soldier with a fatal breast wound.

CAPTAIN'S ASSISTANT
Those are our losses, not
considering the wounded.

ROLAND
(to Captain's assistant)
It's so terrible! Such a silly
and senseless death!

HARRY
(to Captain's assistant)
Evacuate the wounded and restore
the wired wall to the inner
zone. And no more amateur
performances - you can see the
consequences of those.

The Captain's assistant salutes Harry and leaves.

ROLAND
(to Harry)
He wanted to advance to major by
means of one successful attack,
but it has backfired. He has
scorned an order, killed my
colleague and, as a result, was
killed himself. What an awful
and unnecessary death! What will
I report to my superiors now?

HARRY
People aren't able to cope with
rats. It is clear as daylight.
We'll have to look for answers
elsewhere.

ROLAND

What do you mean? Where?

HARRY

I thought about the fauna - natural predators, for natural enemies of rats.

ROLAND

And who are enemies of rats?

HARRY

Some animals, as a matter of fact, different kinds of predators, trained dogs for instance. But something still bothers me.

ROLAND

Why? Let's use the dogs and let them bite the rats to death. An excellent idea, in my opinion! Why are you hesitating?

HARRY

Because the rats overcome the predators! Imagine a duel between the rat and wolf or dog. No predator will sustain the rat's stare. They either will find inner forces to escape or will be killed. I know what I'm talking about. I experienced the rat's stare on myself once.

ROLAND

So what do we do then? How can we solve this problem?

HARRY

The rats have learned to influence the intelligence. As to how they do it is absolutely unimportant. However, it is important that if they can influence a man's will, they can cope with dogs or wolves easily. The rats will first succumb them to their will and then kill and

eat them! I have no doubt about it.

ROLAND

How horrible! It turns out to be an insoluble task. How can we beat them?

HARRY

I feel that the answer is somewhere close, but it's eluding me.

ROLAND

Think hard, Dr. Wallis. Look for an answer. I won't disturb you.

OUTSIDE ZONE - DAY

Dr. Wallis wanders around the field. During one of his walks, something stirred in the grass.

HARRY

Snakes! We need snakes! That's the answer!

Harry quickly returns to the Head quarters.

INT. HEADQUARTERS - DAY

HARRY

We need snakes! Preferably cobras! They are senior to the rats, are poisonous and have a hypnotic stare. They hypnotize an enemy by their stare too. It will be interesting to see who comes out the winner. Will the rats be able to influence someone with no intelligence whatsoever, someone having only death in the eyes? That's a rare case, where the sillier the opponent, the better their chances of survival! When there is no intelligence - there is nothing to overtake! In short, I need about ten hungry cobras.

ROLAND

Where can I find cobras for you?

HARRY

Wherever you want, but I can give you their address. I have some connections at the local Zoo.

ROLAND

They are poisonous! Won't they bite all of us?

HARRY

Don't worry, Roland, - snakes don't attack people so simply. This is the moment when I have understood how we can win the war. Call the local Zoo. Everything will be fine from now on.

INT. HEAD QUARTERS - DAY

HARRY

(solemnly)

The first zoological war in the world enters its crucial phase. Cobras belonging to the class of reptile are going to measure forces with rats - warm-blooded, from the class of rodents. My freedom, your career, Roland, and may be destiny of all mankind depends on the outcome of this fight - the strongest one will conquer the world anyway.

ROLAND

Are you sure, that the cobras will slither in the direction they should?

HARRY

The snakes feel the smallest change of temperature at a great distance. At the center of the zone there are well-fed, appetizing rats, which radiate warmth, attractive to the hungry cobras. That, in snake language, unequivocally means - food.

They'll slither toward them. I have no doubt about it.

ROLAND

I hope you are right, because I worry. I hate snakes, scorpions and other scum.

HARRY

Don't worry, you simply have to get used to them.

ROLAND

Thank you, but I don't want to get used to them. I can't even look at them. How can we operate with such an army? They'll creep in all directions. What shall we do then?

HARRY

(with irony)

In front of this very special army I don't have to make ardent speeches, blacken the enemy. I don't have to appeal to patriotism or to inspire them. It is not necessary even to show a personal example, to lead the attack shouting "Hurrah!"

ROLAND

Thank you for the small favors.

HARRY

It will be a silent war, naturally, without application of technical means. We only have to open the boxes containing the cobras. And that is all!

ROLAND

(smiles)

And what, in such a case, is required from you?

HARRY

I have to plan the military campaign correctly. This is most important! (Pointing to himself with a smile) I am the

strategist and the "military leader", who will observe the development of the operation and the destruction of the surrounded enemy on TV. There is nobody to give orders to anyone.

EXT. OUTER ZONE - DAY

The serpent-handlers settle down on the border of the inner zone with the fatal weapon, the cobras in special boxes, and wait for a signal from Harry.

On Harry's signal they open the boxes, and the cobras, finding themselves free, disappear into the rich growth of grass.

INT. HEAD QUARTERS - DAY

Dr. Wallis and Roland watch the monitor continuously. It shows the shed, with the bordering territory. The resolution of the optical system enabled seeing each square centimeter.

Some minutes later, a cobra reaches the whereabouts of the opponent. It crawls out into a place in front of the shed and suddenly is confronted by a large rat.

Dr. Wallis and Roland look intensely at the screen of the TV set.

HARRY

The fight of the giants begins. It will be a struggle of equals, where everyone considers oneself to be the strongest initially and is not going to give up.

ROLAND

I'm awfully worried.

HARRY

Well, cobra, don't let me down. I have put high stakes on you! Practically, the outcome of this «fight without rules» means my freedom and life!

EXT. INNER ZONE - DAY

The opponents freeze in place. They stare at each other with a hypnotic sight. The Cobras take an attacking position, spreading the hood and half rising above the ground. It rocks slightly, sticking out the doubled red tongue and preparing to strike. The rat faces it quietly, bares its sharp teeth, without the slightest fear.

It is not visible on the monitor, but Dr. Wallis feels, almost sees physically, a reddish aura of translucent intensity surrounding the rat. It grows, extends in the cobra's direction, shivering and flickering from its resistance. Another moment and the cobra is enveloped. Now they are one, limited by the rat's space of power sphere. In an extrasensory sense, the rat already swallowed the cobra.

But in reality, something strange begins to happen to the aggressive stance of the cobra. Suddenly, shaking from side to side in growing amplitude, it seems to be moving as if going to lose balance and fall to the ground. Suddenly, from an absolutely inconvenient angle, from sideways, the cobra makes a lightning lunge and the rat lies convulsing on the ground then finely begins to tremble and stills, tightly pressed by poisonous teeth.

INT. HEAD QUARTERS - DAY

HARRY

That's all! We have won this zoological war. A couple of days and we can begin to retrieve the cobras. The rats won't be there any more. The basic instinct of a cobra proved unshakable against outside influence, the primitive consciousness won in the struggle of minds.

ROLAND

Seeing the cobra's behavior, I understood finally why you eliminated the choice of certain predators for killing the rats.

It is clear now, that all of them would become easy prey.

HARRY

If it were possible to kiss the cobra, I would have done it.

The happily smiling Roland can't constrain his pleasure.

ROLAND

Thank you very much, Dr. Wallis. You have created Evil, but also found a way to destroy it. The Golem is extinguished. The honor and the glory are yours!

HARRY

I'm happy too.

ROLAND

I don't want to take any risks - therefore we'll wait for the whole week.

INNER ZONE - DAY

Dr. Wallis personally approaches the warehouse, surveys the vicinities and waves from there with a white flag - all is clear, the rats are gone.

Serpent-handlers begin seeking out the cobras. The rest is work for the army and the civil services. The bodies of the dead policemen and workers are carried out. The military division dismantles and takes out the equipment and watchtowers, removes poles and the prickly barbed wire.

INT. ROLAND'S STUDY - DAY

Roland speaks on the phone.

ROLAND

I want to report the successful end of the operation - the rats are destroyed! (pause) Yes, it is an absolute guarantee. (pause) Thank you, sir. It is a great honor to me.

Roland can hardly contain his happiness.

ROLAND

I am submitted for the award!

HARRY

My congratulations.

ROLAND

Thank you for everything, Dr. Wallis. Thank you on the behalf of the service and myself personally.

A car approaches. Roland and Dr. Wallis are sitting in the back.

INT. CAR - DAY

ROLAND

I heard about you, everyone said that you are a capable man, but the thing you accomplished here, is simply fantastic. Thank you a lot.

HARRY

This mission was important to me as well.

Roland shifted in his place and unexpectedly ordered the driver to stop the car.

ROLAND

Let's take a short walk. I want to celebrate your success, Dr. Wallis. Let's go in, it is a remarkable restaurant. Not on official business, but as a friend, a companion let me invite you for a meal in your honor, so that we have something pleasant to recall.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

ROLAND

I want to raise a glass with champagne in praise of your talent and your excellent mind.

Accept my sincere admiration,
Dr. Wallis.

HARRY

Thank you.

Roland stands up.

ROLAND

I want to recall my colleague
and captain Hall, who lost their
lives for no reason. May they
rest in peace!

The pretty drunk partners of recent battles
went out into the street supporting each other.

HARRY

I want to come back to my home
and meet my wife so much!

ROLAND

(in a drunken voice)

And now, a last visit to our
dear inspector. Now we have to
fill out all the official forms
of your release, you see, I have
got you against a receipt
(laughs).

They walk one block more and stop in front of
the entrance to the police station.

ROLAND

(in a drunken voice)

Take yourself in hand, Dr.
Wallis. Try to look sober.
(laughs) We are about to enter
the police station. They don't
like drunks there. Complete
self-control, please.

HARRY

OK.

They come in and Roland shows his documents to
a policeman on duty.

ROLAND

Inform inspector Mall Kinsky,
that Dr. Wallis and I are

waiting for him in his study. I arranged our visit in advance.

INT. KINSKY'S STUDY - DAY

Walking along a corridor with a large number of closed doors on the right and on the left, still slightly rocking after the drinks consumed in the restaurant, they enter the familiar empty study of the inspector Mall Kinsky. They wait there, but nobody comes.

ROLAND

(with drunken irritation)

Where is he? Why do I have to wait for him? Who does he think he is, this Mall Kinsky? I can see many flaws in this investigation department, an absence of discipline. We made an appointment in advance! What a disgrace! Wait a minute, Dr. Wallis, I shall go and fetch him.

Harry remains alone in the study. Some minutes later, two policemen come in and silently stand beside the door. Harry looks at them attentively and sits down on the chair in a worry.

Mall Kinsky enters through a side door, sits down at the table and begins to shift his papers as usual.

KINSKY

Good day, Dr. Wallis. I heard already about your victory over these awful rats. Congratulations on the successful end of your experiment. It'll be taken into account.

HARRY

(in a fallen voice)

What will be taken into account?

Harry looks back at the study door, behind which his friend-patron Roland just had disappeared.

KINSKY

I mean your success in destroying the dangerous consequences of your experiment, the correction of the mistake, so to tell. I'm sure, that the court will take it into account.

HARRY

What court? You have told me, that in case of success I'll be released. You promised me.

KINSKY

What are you talking about Dr. Wallis? The Law is always the Law!

HARRY

And where is Roland? He can confirm that! He has given me his word. He promised.

KINSKY

Roland can't contradict the Law. And, in general, who is Roland? I don't know any Roland. Here is your official indictment. Please, sign it.

HARRY

(shouts)

But that's unfair!

Harry is rushing to the inspector.

HARRY

(shouts)

You promised!

The policemen intercept him on the way, tumble him down onto the floor, quickly and deftly put handcuffs onto the hands behind his back and, without any explanations, drag him back along the familiar long corridor into the hated cell.

Harry is shaking his head from side to side and groans. He is desperately crying monotonously in a mad, animal voice.

HARRY
(groaning)
I don't want, I can't...

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Pallet stares at the window for a long time then she sits down at the table and starts to cry.

INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

Harry sits in the cell in prison clothes. He sits on the bench motionlessly, covering his face with his hands.

The camera retreats. The iron door with the bars is visible, then a number of doors, then we see a lot of identical prison doors on several floors.

FADE OUT: