

Gold Rush

Peter Janků

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A list of characters

MILAN RONEC (33) Narrator and victim of the story. An investigative journalist looking into the circumstances of the intention to mine gold in a city where he went to high school.

EVA BELÁKOVÁ (48) Local activist, later mayor, fighting the intention to mine gold around the city.

JURAJ RIZO (30) Environmental activist fighting against multinational mining companies that leave the country devastated. He is also one of the tragic heroes of the story.

PETER ZEMIN (40) Spokesman, later managing director of the mining company Slovakia Turman Gold, working for a Canadian mining company that is intending to mine gold using the cyanide method. He is a former journalist who knows Milan and media circles. His influence obviously extends to high places in politics.

HELLEN (38) Representative of the Canadian company Turman Gold, who lobbies the public and the mayor to consent to their activities. (Transl note: In the original, the character is attempting to speak in Slovak, which she does so with heavy English accent, sometimes using wrong words.)

MAYOR (65) Mayor of the city where Turman Gold wants to mine gold.

GENERAL (58) Director General of a television station where Milan works. In response to the external pressure, he wants to prevent broadcasting Milan's report about the gold mining.

MODERATOR Hosts a public electoral debate in the city.

MP Member of Parliament who tabled a bill that authorises the cyanide method of gold mining in Slovakia.

MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Tabled an enacted bill that banned the cyanide method of gold mining in the Czech Republic. (Transl. note: In the original, the character speaks in Czech.)

MINISTER OF ECONOMY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

He argued that gold mining was superfluous for the national economy in comparison with the value of the environment; hence, he voted in favour of banning cyanide mining in the Czech Republic.

MINISTER OF ECONOMY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

He is convinced that gold mining is part of economic growth of the state and has no objections to the mining using cyanide.

EDITOR (female character) Presents current news items.

ASSASSIN 1, ASSASSIN 2 Hire assassins.

Milan is narrating the introduction to filming the report. It takes us from the interior of his flat to the culture centre where a public meeting is held.

MILAN (intro) *It was past ten at night; it was snowing outside. I was about to go to bed after microsleep by the TV, when my phone rang. I didn't recognise the number, but after brief thought and some ten rings, I finally picked it up.*

EVA Good evening, well, almost night. Apologies for ringing this late.

MILAN Good evening, who is this?

EVA Ah, I'm sorry. My husband taught at your school. Belák. Do you remember?

MILAN Not quite sure ...

EVA Goldsmith ...

MILAN Yes, he did teach my schoolmates. I was in another specialism. But yes, Belák, I remember. So what's up?

EVA It's about gold. They want to resume mining. Tomorrow there's a public meeting with local residents. There are a few issues that you may find of interest.

MILAN (intro) *The city where I spent four years at the high school is based in a picturesque mountain setting. The history of the city spilled over into the Communist concrete blocks of flats. Yet the Renaissance square in the centre, together with the townhouses, the church-and-castle in one, surrounded by ancient walls, were a proof of its past glory. And that was associated with gold mining. Should anyone wish to mine there again, it makes some sense. It might help the city out of the lethargy, in which it has been slipping slowly but surely for a number of years.*

MILAN Is it that serious that you have to deal with it like this at night?

EVA There's more to it. Please come, we do need your help.

MILAN *(intro)* The boss did not trust topics that we had not properly checked. Though he agreed to this, to my surprise. Public gatherings where sparks fly, are welcome viewer material. He only said:

“Make sure to bring some meat, else I’ll stop it.” In reporting, “meat” means everything authentic that brings direct information.

PETER Something that shocks. Often at any cost.

MILAN Hi, Peter. What are you doing here?

PETER Ah, Milan, hi. Well, working. You, too, I guess.

MILAN I thought I’d be the only journalist here.

PETER You won’t be alone. Quite a crowd here! How have you been?

EVA Good evening. Aren’t we glad you’re here!

MILAN Good evening. Was it you who rang me?

EVA Yes. Eva Beláková.

MILAN This is Peter ...

EVA We know each other with Mr Peter.

MILAN *(intro)* I haven’t seen Peter for a few years, but I knew him as a pretty experienced journalist. He specialised in finance and economy. He was always wherever things got smelly. His presence indicated that there really was something at stake here.

PETER We ought to begin. Would you sit *(directs people to the auditorium)* here.

MILAN Are you no longer with the media?

PETER Didn’t you know?

EVA Meet Peter Zemin, spokesman for the Canadian mining company Turman Gold.

PETER ... of the Slovak branch – Slovakia Turman Gold. Time to start. Would you be seated in the auditorium.

MILAN Peter?

PETER We really must begin ... *(towards the auditorium)* Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our public gathering. Please welcome Mrs Hellen Rustall, who came to us all the way from Canada.

HELLEN Hello and welcome everyone. I’m happy you made it here.

PETER Thank you, Mrs Hellen. May I take a turn. So that you know what Turman Gold is. Turman Gold is a Canadian company and an international investor. This is their first project in Slovakia. They have additional projects in Ireland, Romania and elsewhere. Though, in terms of planning, this is their major project. It is based on gold and silver deposits that are located in Kremnica and were mined ... I believe the first information about mining dates a thousand years back. Turman Gold invested over 5 million Euros. The last detailed geological survey of the deposits in the Šturec area was completed this Autumn. Our project envisages jobs for at least 100 people directly in the operation, and another 100 should be able to find secondary employment. Based on the recent data the company works with, the project lifetime is estimated at 10 years. Naturally, the estimate includes time to open the deposits and then to revitalise the area.

EVA *(news report)* We are on the outskirts of the city, at the site called Šturec. In the 15th century, mined horizons imploded here. Over the coming years, the area was to be mined at a depth of 250 metres using surface mining technology. The company Turman Gold from Canada acquired mining rights to these sites. Series of consultations are now underway with local population and different interest groups. Since we receive very little information, moreover superficial, we are unable to imagine what such mining, such environmental intervention, would mean for the city.

PETER We have gathered here to clarify what this is all about. We will try to answer your questions and incorporate any comments in our intentions. We want to play an open game. Now, your questions, please.

EVA The project talks about 30 million tonnes of excavated rock, some of which will be processed, some will be tailings, but there will always be 30 million tonnes of rock left, whether in the form of tailings or sludge. What do you intend to do with it?

PETER We are currently recalculating geological reserves. They are actually forecast, unconfirmed reserves. In truth, we provide the data in the documentation. Yet it is also true that, when calculating the volume of reserves, those are processed alternatively. Their quantity is given at a certain degree of metallisation of the ore. We have to complete the survey in order to precisely quantify that.

EVA Even if they were somewhat lesser, it will still amount to many times more than in Žiar nad Hronom. And we all know what that dump is about.

EVA *(news report)* We are in front of a landfill in Žiar nad Hronom. It is bauxite waste that has been generated over the years of aluminium production in the nearby plant. On the right, you can see the remains of a village that was evicted in response to ecological hazard and the landfill. There were promises that an alternative use of bauxite would be found. But it's been decades that the landfill keeps haunting people. Its volume is 9 million tonnes of waste. The heap that is to be generated from the waste from the gold mining in our region is expected to contain 30 million tonnes. It will thus be over three times larger than this one here. Plus, there will be a crater 250-meters deep.

EVA I can't even imagine what this area will be like and how we can revitalise it.

PETER *(whispers with Hellen)* Mrs Hellen is sorry, but her colleague who was working on the revitalisation project had travel to South America on business, so he is unable to be here. *(They whisper something again.)* We will bring the visualisation of what it will look like after the revitalisation to the next meeting.

JURAJ I am truly sorry, but when someone says that they are not hiding anything, they tend to use evasive, universal answers. Really sorry, but I do have to point this out.

JURAJ *(news report)* This image shows the Rosia Montana site in Romania. If you take the overall view, say, of the city, then the character of the area is comparable to ours. The main mining is located in this area, the distance is roughly comparable to the project we are dealing with. In the case of Rosia Montana, the city is to be demolished. So, it's somewhat worse there. This is an image from the level of the quarry. Here you can actually see how they start to go into the depth. And this, in turn, is a view from the valley, with some of the excavated soil that cannot be mined, the soil, the rocks, which can be seen, as it spoils the appearance of the whole area. And this is a picture of surface quarry. This site is called Rosia Poieni, it is not about gold, but copper mining. And here we see a scale of the depth of the quarry, which is as deep as the intended quarry here. The giant mining machinery, when you realise that man is about the size of this window, or a little bigger. 250 meters is an enormous depth.

PETER *(whispers something to Hellen)* Mrs Hellen says she is sorry, but she cannot assess the situation in other mining projects that are in no way ... *(Hellen pulls Peter close)*, she emphasises: in no way related to Turman Gold. I would just add that it is unnecessary alarm.

JURAJ I would say there are two issues. One is that of surface mining and its impact on the character of the landscape. The second issue is the use of technology to mine gold.

Would you elaborate?

PETER If the rock is solid, it must be somehow separated, that is when the explosive is used.

JURAJ I am asking about this particular case.

PETER Unfortunately, the ore found here has an average gold content of about 2 grams per tonne. It cannot be mined this way. Plus the gold is also fine-grained. Therefore, the cyanide leaching method is the most effective.

MILAN Sorry, Peter, did you say cyanide?

PETER Regarding cyanide, currently 92% of the world's gold production is obtained using cyanide in the mining process.

In any case, when it is used, it will be consistent with the International Cyanide Management Code and in accordance with all environmental practices. *(Hellen pulls him closer and whispers something to him.)*

JURAJ *(news report) Potassium cyanide is a strong poison. Acute toxicity is estimated at 2 – 3.3 mg / kg body weight orally, i.e. about 150 – 250 mg per person weighing 75 kg. Ingestion of potassium cyanide as a substance or concentrated solution at a dose above 2 mg per kg body weight on an empty stomach usually causes the so-called acute poisoning: the first symptoms of poisoning develop, such as nausea, anxiety, dizziness, tightness in chest, irritation of mucous membranes, pharynx and eyes, hot flushes, vomiting, headache and accelerated breathing and shortness of breath. Twitching in muscles, blurred vision, cold sweat, symptoms of shock, sometimes vomiting, rapid loss of consciousness, and coma follow relatively quickly. Breathing is still accelerated, but there is irregular breathing, the so-called Cheyne–Stokes respiration becomes more irregular and shallower with the progressing coma; epileptoid, epilepsy-like seizures often occur at this stage of poisoning. A strong, light pink colour of the skin and mucous membranes is characteristic as the blood is oversaturated with haemoglobin-bound oxygen due to a rapid decrease in its consumption by tissues. Within 3 to 6 minutes irreversible damage to brain cells usually occurs due to hypoxaemia, a lack of oxygen, and death by respiratory and cardiac arrest usually follows within 10 to 30 minutes.*

JURAJ Excuse me, but in this case, the use of cyanide technology is also controversial in light of surface water protection and European directives on surface water protection. What will then happen to waste management?

PETER (*leans away from Hellen*) You will be presented with it next Spring, once all technological studies of the project are refined in detail – with the specifics of the method, of what the plant will look like, what concentrations and quantities will be used, how it will be neutralised, destroyed.

EVA There will certainly be people here driven by nostalgia who might wish to see gold mining resume. Though surely no one envisages it on such a scale and in such circumstances. I don't think the two grams of gold per tonne of rock are worth the destruction of the environment.

JURAJ Why don't you inform the public about the risks the cyanide method entails, and of the hazard that it has already posed in the neighbouring countries, I mean Baia Mare in Romania? This might give the public an idea of the threat Kremnica faces and what might happen in the future because of method.

JURAJ (*news report*) *This is a shot from the Baia Mare site in Romania. It is a view of the top of a sludge pond, a sludge field that was created during gold mining in the area. Similarly to our case, the cyanide technology was used there, too. What happened in 2000 at the Baia Mare sludge pond, that was owned by Aurul enterprise, was that the dam that held the sludge pond ruptured, and the hazardous waste that contained cyanide, ended up in the river and got into the river Tisa and then, in part, Danube. It isn't just these accidents, but there are cases in the United States or South Africa that were affected by local damage. It proves that the method is dangerous and can lead not only to leakage of toxic substances, but also of heavy metals that remain in mining sediments for a long time. It is precisely the case in Romania which shows that, even if the leakage occurs outside the areas concerned, when an accident is caused by human factor – which can happen at any time, the ecological damage knows no borders and will affect a much larger area.*

PETER Mrs Hellen says that only the main investor can fully answer all your questions, and Turman Gold is merely a minor company that carries out rudimentary research and draws basic plans.

EVA Why aren't they here, the representatives of the main investor?

PETER The investor is not here because Mrs Hellen recommended that he not be here, so that people would feel comfortable asking whatever questions they wish.

MILAN Sorry, Peter, but that's absurd. The matters that have been said here are way too serious for the people concerned not to be given relevant information.

PETER I am afraid you will probably not get a more competent or a more precise answer today. You'll have to wait until the next meeting when we present the promised answers. (*Hellen draws him closer.*) Mrs Hellen says she will try to bring a representative of the main investor. Have a nice rest of the day. (*Hellen gets up and leaves hurriedly.*)

MILAN Peter, can I ask you a few more questions on record?

PETER Is that your job, those here? You briefed pretty well ...

MILAN Sorry, what?

PETER I know media methods well. Sorry, got to go ... By the way, if you taped this whole thing, I have to warn you that we weren't informed that it was to be recorded. So even if you want to use some of it in your report, we don't want anything to be published.

MILAN It was a public meeting ...

PETER I won't repeat myself. Take care.

MILAN Peter!

EVA Well, folks, you had an opportunity to experience it first-hand. I just wonder what our mayor has to say. Why is he silent?!

MAYOR I would ask you, lady, to control your emotions. As for the preliminary position of the city, I can only say what I have already said during the negotiations with the Turman Gold representative. Assurances must be given that life in this city does not deteriorate. The risks, as we have heard, are enormous. Nobody has told us, as yet, how the investor intends to pre-empt them. We will receive a detailed letter of intent and we'll discuss it with you again. It is premature to say now whether or not the mining will get a green light.

EVA Are you saying that you are considering mining as an option? You can't be serious!

MAYOR The future of our city and especially its people is at stake. It's not every day, not even every year or a decade that an opportunity arises to revive in the city what its glory arose from. We've got to be responsible, though we'll certainly not gamble.

EVA What you're saying is already a gamble with public opinion. Mining here must be avoided at all cost. Do rest assured that we will keep an eye on that.

PRIMATOR I would only be repeating myself. *(leaves)*

EVA Well, this is how we live here. We need your help, because those leaders here are dead-easy to grill.

MILAN I'll do what I can. The issues are thought-provoking.

JURAJ Astonishing. This is how they try it everywhere. Twist public opinion, give a rain check, and the cities end up in ruins with the surrounding landscape turning into moon land.

EVA This is Juraj Rizo. He represents an environmental protection group that has been long involved in the matter.

MILAN Nice to meet you. Would you give me an on-record interview? I will also need some illustration images.

JURAJ Sure, we've got plenty.

MILAN *(intro) I quickly found some accommodation in the city and sent my boss a stern text message: "Got the meat. Will be chunky.. Staying till tomorrow." I looked at the photos and material Juraj gave me. In the second plan, however, I was thinking of Peter and his attitude at the meeting. I couldn't work it out. He was one of those journalists who always scored high. I would've never guessed he would cross the barricade and become a spokesman. Moreover, with a multinational company with dubious intentions. It's just a step towards losing any boundaries and equanimity, and to becoming a more ardent adversary of the media than any ordinary government official or company executive who cowardly hide behind their spokesmen. Just because such a journalistic defector sees, in the pursuit of truth and justice by the media, only dubious tactics aimed to discredit someone at all cost.*

HELLEN No need to stress what a fiasco that was. An improvised fiasco.

PETER Mrs Hellen ...

HELLEN Mrs Hellen, Mrs Hellen ... I don't fly and travel thousands of miles only to be ridiculed here in Slovakia – whatever that is. It was supposed to be a short, clear meeting. A ride of duty, not this.

PETER I did everything to prevent much talk about it. The posters were only displayed on the notice board at the city hall.

HELLEN And what was that eco-terrorist doing there? He's already been sniffing about in Canada ...

PETER You mean Juraj Rizo?

HELLEN Juraj Rizo, that's the guy ...

PETER He sniffs everywhere, the country's full of him. Though I have already taken some steps.

HELLEN And the media, the camera ... Outrageous!

PETER It will be OK.

HELLEN It won't be OK. It's rotten already. I know them, the predators. Remember, we are a minor company and a lot of negative news can cost us dearly on the index. The share price needs good news about us and the investors. We can't take any risk. No doubt. IS that understood?

PETER Yes.

HELLEN 5 million in investment is 5 million.

PETER Got it.

HELLEN And responsibility for a failed investment is not funny.

PETER But ...

HELLEN We're not going to play hide-and-seek. We've got no other option if we aren't to mess up the investment. Is that clear?

PETER As a spokesperson, I will do my best. Though there are limits.

HELLEN What limits? What are the limits?

PETER Financial, personnel?!

HELLEN Be specific.

PETER I need more resources and a more senior position. Plus shares on revenues.

HELLEN Well, well ... You haven't done anything yet and you're already setting conditions?

PETER I wouldn't call it that. Since we're in it together, we've got to do it properly.

HELLEN What do you mean, together and properly?

PETER Managing Director of the Slovak Turman Gold and silent partner.

Plus 10% share on revenues. And external expenditures covered. They will be required.

HELLEN (*longer silence*) You Slovak arsehole. Then you better guarantee to me that all this here will be OK.

PETER I will do all I can. In our power. Mrs Hellen ...

HELLEN Mr Peter?!

MILAN *(intro)* I was about to go to sleep when my text message beeped, saying Eva and Juraj were in a pub nearby. Would I like to join them for a chat. My head was spinning with scattered thoughts, so I didn't have think twice. A walk through the nocturnal city reminded me of our student days under Communism, when we used to escape from the dorm to venture out to the city. Fresh mountain air that poured into the square and streets from the surrounding mountains was mixed with the scent of freedom we already felt in those days.

JURAJ I ordered you beer.

MILAN Beer would do. Still working?

EVA I didn't even get around to thank you for coming. We all seemed to be more at ease with the camera since you were there.

JURAJ They didn't expect that.

MILAN It's my duty. You were right, there's plenty of serious stuff in it. I've got to sort it out in my mind so that I don't ask you nonsense on camera.

EVA You know, not that long ago, the city council developed a vision for the city as part of strategic urban development plan. The vision says, among other points, that we want the city to be attractive, beautiful, clean, ecological, enjoyable for residents and visitors alike. What Turman Gold is coming up with hardly fits that vision.

JURAJ In the long run, I think that in an area where this city is located, with its significant potential for tourism, such open-pit mining might bring quite a radical change in the overall appearance of the landscape. We know from other cases of open-pit mining that these changes tend to be long-term, that it has nothing to do with some short-term part-intervention in the landscape. These are long-term and often irreversible changes. I don't know whether the decision-makers are fully aware of it and whether it's worth the potential profit.

MILAN By the way, how much of that potential profit would go to the city or the state?

JURAJ The state gets 5%. The city gets peanuts.

MILAN You can't be serious.

EVA So, for the sake of the five percent, the state will have the area eradicated.

MILAN It doesn't make any sense then and has be stopped.

JURAJ That's why we're here. *(Juraj's phone rings.)* Hello! Mute ... Hello? For the second time today, undisclosed number.

EVA They use to ring from the third world countries, and you end up paying fortune in phone bill.

JURAJ Oh well, let them call.

EVA All this is now in the hands of the city council and the mayor who can stop the mining intentions at the city level.

MILAN How about the others? Are they with you?

EVA All they need is to win the councillors and the mayor. Thus, virtually no one knew about the public meeting. That's why I rang you at the last minute. They have to prove that people were informed, but not so much that it would cause a major stir. Thanks to you, they won't be able to do that behind the back of the public.

JURAJ We can expect them to start brainwashing people, telling them about the many benefits it is to bring to the city, including new jobs, even that they can turn the pit after mining into a leisure and recreation zone with a swimming pool and lake.

EVA Though, judging by what the mayor was saying and the face he put on, we just can't be sure.

MILAN You should run for the office. (*Brief silence.*) Did I say something wrong?

JURAJ The topic is on the table, and people have to choose whether they want to have a huge crater and heaps of cyanide waste in the tailings pond just a stone's throw from the city, that will be waiting there like a timed bomb until the dams "accidentally" burst and the city becomes a ghost town. No money or jobs are worth it. In a situation like that it is one's duty to stand up to it.

EVA You mean me?

MILAN Why not?! The elections are coming up.

JURAJ We'll help.

EVA Well then, cheers; and here's to the city.

MILAN (*intro*) *I eventually had mixed feelings from that meeting. Perhaps I went too far as a journalist and I got too partisan. If, for instance, Peter found out, it could ruin the entire report and my presence there would do a disservice. On the other hand, I felt like one of the city residents who had walked its streets for four years and is, after all, entitled to add his personal voice against something that threatens the city and its nature. Though the mayoral elections, that was probably a bit over the top.*

MAYOR I shouldn't be talking to you in person like this, especially not after the meeting.

HELLEN If I'm not mistaken, a mayor ordinarily receives his residents.

MAYOR Indeed.

HELLEN We've bought a house, so it's as if we were at home already. Besides, we're not seeing each other for the first and, I hope, not for the last time.

MAYOR What's your point, Mrs Hellen? I pictured it all differently. People are getting worried and cyanide has not been mentioned on your part.

HELLEN But I can't guarantee that, and I'm not saying it'll really be cyanide. Given the nature of the rock you got here, it is the most efficient and nowadays the safest BAT.

MAYOR BAT?

HELLEN Best available technology, eco-friendly.

MAYOR How about all that the ecologist was saying? How am I to take that? What happened in Romania. I read about that place, Baia Mare. It was a disaster.

HELLEN They suck our blood. Annoying like a swarm of mosquitoes. Ecoterrorists. To them, everything is a disaster.

MAYOR Can you offer a 100% guarantee that this won't happen here?

HELLEN How do you mean 100%?

PRIMATOR 100%, not a centesimal or thousandth point less.

HELLEN If you want to hear 100%, I can say 100%. Even aircrafts are made with the idea that they are 100% safe, and yet flight disasters happen. Human factor is unpredictable.

PRIMATOR So you see.

HELLEN As a mayor, you should rather be calculating the benefits that it will bring you.

JURAJ *(news report)* If cyanide is ingested in a large volume of diluted solution or on a full stomach, the course of poisoning usually slows down and can last for more than an hour. On the contrary, when ingesting or inhaling large doses of highly concentrated cyanide, the so-called peracute poisoning, when the sequence of these symptoms is much faster and more dramatic, unconsciousness usually occurs within seconds, a maximum within a minute, coma arrives very quickly, and death follows within minutes, usually within ten minutes of ingesting the poison. An extreme form of the course is the so-called superacute poisoning, which usually only occurs after inhalation of highly

concentrated hydrogen cyanide; then unconsciousness and coma occur almost immediately after inhaling the poison, and the failure of the functions of the vital centres in the central nervous system occurs within one minute. It is called an apoplectic form of cyanide poisoning that results in death within tens of seconds to minutes; in victims thus affected, it is usually impossible to reverse death even by immediate administration of antidotes and resuscitation.

HELLEN Forget about the unfortunate public meeting and about the disasters. Where would civilisation get, if it only saw disasters everywhere. I meant to say that, if you count on us, we will count on you. And your support to us means our support to you. Elections are approaching and there's no point in postponing the decisions we can make today.

MAYOR It still has to be approved by the council.

HELLEN You and your signature, Mayor, are the pinnacle. Once we know that is coming, we can take care of the foreplay.

MAYOR I'll wait for the environmental impact report.

HELLEN Sure.

MAYOR In any case, no promises on my part.

HELLEN Sure.

MAYOR I shall have to excuse myself, I have another meeting to go to.

HELLEN Sure. Goodbye. By the way, you will finalise the details with Peter Zemina.

MILAN *(intro) We managed to get Eva and Juraj on camera in the morning, so I still had time to visit the places where we used to meet as students. Kesel – a clearing deep in the mountains, where the king and queen of our school fictional monarchy were elected, or where democrats and monarchists fought each other for the flag or matriculation. Traditions that lasted for years, and the junior years were espousing them as something sacrosanct. It was all forbidden, of course, and took place on the weekends. Yet, it was often also at night that we left the dor. Instead of sleeping, we spent a few hours by the bonfire. I couldn't miss visiting the church that was part of the walled castle. It was just reconstructed, though I managed to get inside. I sat down and delved into prayer and contemplation of all that came to mind and mingled with current, less pleasant thoughts.*

PETER I saw you enter.

MILAN You gave me a fright ...

PETER I thought those praying don't get frightened.

MILAN Everyone gets frightened when someone speaks at them out of the blue from behind their back. What are you doing here?

PETER You wanted an interview, didn't you?

MILAN I did.

PETER Well then, let's talk.

MILAN Hold on, what kind of game is this? I need an interview with you as a spokesman.

PETER How about we just talk?

MILAN Given the circumstances, we have nothing to talk about.

PETER You've changed.

MILAN What do you mean?

PETER You're not a journalist anymore. Yesterday you seemed to be one of them. Eco-terrorists. Get thinking, man. To buy into the emotions of those who feed on the work of others by seeing a problem everywhere, that's what I call journalistic amateurism

MILAN What they came up with were plain facts, and you were unable to answer them.

PETER Even if I give you the facts that support this investment, you won't take them anyway, because you're convinced that we're going to contaminate it here and turn the city into a deterrent example of the work of multinationals. Manipulative and simplistic, don't you think?

MILAN These people have lived here for generations and are entitled, first and foremost, to live in sound environment.

PETER Have you at all tried to think about what this city owes to being here? You resemble this upset journalist who turned up in one of the mining towns. She asked the mayor about who gave the green light to opening the mines in such a beautiful town.

MILAN You're being sarcastic.

PETER Without the mines and gold, this city would never be here, nor the generations you're talking about. We just want to continue what the earlier generations of miners did. The ore is there to be mined. Every geologist will tell you so. It's pointless in itself, unless it ends up in the hands that bring it to the light of the world for its profit.

MILAN At all cost?

PETER Ringing alarm bell again?

MILAN Those accidents in Romania and elsewhere in the world, ghost towns ... I didn't invent that. Plus there's a difference between the ore being mined naturally and being mined using poisons like cyanide.

PETER As I say, there's no point in convincing you.

MILAN Well, how about you tell me on camera what you just said.

PETER So you can edit it as it suits you? I can already tell what the report will be about. Don't you think I'll leave it at that.

MILAN What do you mean?

PETER I have to protect the name of the company from tendentious journalists.

MILAN It is my responsibility to offer you space to speak up, which you refused, and you have no right to prevent me from using footage from a public meeting.

PETER As you wish, we'll see who wins. *(leaves)*

MILAN Are you threatening me?

PETER While we're here in church, have you ever thought why the Bible commands man to subdue the nature? We do nothing but that.

MILAN The only difference is whether you conquer it as a gardener, or you treat it like a racketeer. Whether you care for the nature, or you only care about squeezing out as much as possible, even at the cost destruction.

PETER *(retrieves a dictaphone from his pocket, rewinds briefly and starts playing)*
... like a racketeer. Whether you care for the nature, or you only care about squeezing out as much as possible, even at the cost of destruction.

MILAN Did you tape it?

PETER Proof of your "impartiality".

MILAN Arsehole.

PETER Don't blaspheme, we're in church. See, at least we've got something to talk about.

MILAN *(intro)* I blamed myself for getting caught like a kid. On the other hand, I didn't say anything I wouldn't stand by. Besides, there are times when it becomes a matter of principle and a journalist must side with truth and justice. That's exactly what I felt. Had it all been OK, he would have never attempted to blackmail me using my words. They obviously needed to cover it up. Clearly, they did care. Plenty. Though, he was wrong if he expected me to back down now and stop it all. Associations started to

emerge in my mind. They reached far beyond the limits of my high-school town. I found out that, coincidentally, the Parliament meanwhile debated gold mining using the cyanide method. And the approval of the method was to be directly incorporated into the mining act through the parliamentary bill.

MILAN (*news report*) Minister, does Slovakia's economic growth depend on gold mining, moreover using a disputed method that presents environmental hazard?

MINISTER OF ECONOMY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC Look, mining is part of national economy, but I don't think it is in any way significant for its growth. Though it does provide jobs along with some economic output. So, mining does have its share in economic growth.

MINISTER OF ECONOMY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC It was the period from 1999 to 2000. First, the Government, upon my proposal, adopted a resolution that it was not in the interest the Czech national policy on raw material to either explore or directly mine gold deposits. Some time later, the Parliament even adopted an amendment to the relevant law directly banning the cyanide leaching method.

MILAN Would you then you agree that mining companies in Slovakia should also be allowed to use the method of gold cyanidation?

MINISTER OF ECONOMY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC It is a standard method applied worldwide, I don't see a problem there.

MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC The cyanide leaching method is one of the least reliable. At the same time, it presents a major environmental hazard. There is an example – the incident at the Baia Mare mine in Romania, where rivers on the Romanian territory along with the Tisza and Danube in Hungary became quite contaminated. It was a disaster beyond national borders. There were similar cases elsewhere in the world. It all happened when attempts to resume gold mining in some areas in the Czech Republic were culminating. Municipalities were strictly against it, which was one of the additional ways to obscure and possibly eliminate such mining. I have to say that it then received wide all-party support at the Chamber of Deputies, and the proposal was adopted. My predecessor and I rejected all permit applications for geological exploration that have to precede mining.

MILAN (*intro*) *I found it incomprehensible that the representatives of the countries that formed a common state just a few years ago had a totally opposite view legalised here. I*

no longer took it as a coincidence that, when the intention of gold mining by Turman Gold was to be approved, a bill legalising gold mining using cyanide was making its way to our Parliament.

MILAN Sir, you are legislator who directly authorises the method of cyanide leaching in gold mining. It was banned in the Czech Republic in 2000.

MP As far as I know, the Czech Republic is the only country within the region to explicitly ban the method.

MILAN Why did you table the bill?

MP As Members of the Parliament we do not think it is right for us to directly identify in law a specific method of mining we would ban or restrict in any way, as the amendments tabled by some of our colleagues said that, on the one hand, we would ban the method and, on the other hand, we would then allow exceptions.

MILAN So you want to legalise right away?!

MP Certainly. And, also after the agreement with the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic as the sponsor of the bill, I tabled an amendment which generally states what methods should be used in the extraction of minerals; that is, which do not have environmental impact and meet all regulations and ordinances valid in the Slovak Republic.

MILAN Do you believe that the cyanide method has no environmental impact?

MP I am saying that I have adopted the proposal by the Ministry of Economy and I have no reason not to trust experts greater than me.

MINISTER OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

(news report) Gold mining in our country is superfluous, plus its ecological hazard would be unduly high. In the densely populated region of Central Europe, I consider this to be a hazard the Slovak officials should not allow.

EVA *I would say it is the fruit of labour of the so-called geological and mining lobby. That's how I call these people. They are simply miners who, naturally, want to achieve such legislative changes for the sake of profit and money.*

MILAN There is talk of a mining lobby; did it affect your decision-making?

MP Well, I would be quite unhappy if it were taken like this, looking at some MPs as at bad guys who comply with some mining lobby, as you call it, and at the others as good

guys who satisfy the environmentalist lobby. To me, it is an utterly pragmatic matter in that the law does not exclude any method, including cyanidation.

MILAN Thank you for the interview, sir.

MP You're welcome.

MILAN May I ask you one more question, off record?

MP Go ahead.

MILAN Isn't it curious that this bill is being presented while a Canadian mining company is trying to make its way to Slovakia, and the only manner to mine gold here is apparently the cyanide method?

MP Listen ... Sorry, what's your name? I didn't catch it in that rush.

MILAN Milan Ronec.

MP Listen, Mr Ronec, if you want to do serious journalism, would you kindly forget such speculations. Which channel is to broadcast this?

MILAN *(intro) I had plenty of material and context. I just couldn't believe that Peter's connections would reach to such high places that the legislation would be amended because of their interests. Still, my naïveté sobered up shortly after I left the Parliament. As I was leaving, none other than Peter was arriving.*

MILAN What are you doing here?

PETER Well, you have no right to ask me such questions.

MILAN You won't believe it, but I just wanted to ring you.

PETER You know what, let me be, I'm quite in a hurry.

MILAN I just needed to know whether you lobbied the Ministry and the MPs in any way to explicitly allow the cyanidation method in the bill that is currently going to the Parliament?!

PETER Are you taping this?

MILAN Frankly, I am.

PETER So listen. We do not lobby; we explain our project everywhere. We merely explained it at the Ministry and to the MPs. We've been working on the project for a number of years. Based on our experience with projects elsewhere in Europe where the situation is similar, we are convinced that this project can be implemented in a way that it would only benefit the people.

MILAN So are you going to carry on?

PETER Certainly.

MILAN Can I use this statement in my report?

PETER I'd say that's no longer your problem.

MILAN *(intro) Before I was to get to work, my boss rang me saying that the General needed to talk to me, and it was pressing. It was clear to me that it would be the stuff I was filming. But why does the CEO want to deal with it directly? My boss has always been assertive enough to tell me directly what was and what wasn't OK. I respected his opinion because of his experience. Now, however, he had nothing against it, even when I took longer to work on it, or when I travelled out to the Czech Republic. The only prerequisite was that it was our item and that we would bring it out. That was also the deal with Eva and Juraj. That they wouldn't yet contact any other media on this matter. Perhaps it was a mistake.*

GENERAL Have a seat. Coffee?

MILAN No thank you, I don't drink coffee.

GENERAL How about some mineral water then.

MILAN Thank you, but ...

GENERAL All right then, let's get to the point. First of all, I'd like to tell you that I am happy with your work and that your themes, and the way you address them, earn us fine reputation. Not to mention the competitions in which you score high almost every year.

MILAN Thank you, it's my job and I like it.

GENERAL Let me ask, how many reports do you do in a year?

MILAN It depends ... twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five? Something like that ...

GENERAL That's quite something, isn't it?

MILAN I guess so, given you have to do it in-depth.

GENERAL And what would happen if, of the thirty-five you mentioned, one did not materialise?

MILAN That probably wouldn't work ...

GENERAL Come on. We're colleagues. I guess we shouldn't discuss things in terms of what works and what doesn't. You do know who is ultimately responsible for everything that comes out of here, don't you?!

MILAN Is this about the gold mining and the cyanide?

GENERAL All right, then. How about a straight talk. That's the point indeed, and we won't broadcast it. (*Milan is silent.*) Is there something you don't understand?

MILAN I've never experienced anyone banning my report.

GENERAL So that you get me right: no one banned your report. Have you edited it yet?

MILAN Not yet.

GENERAL You see. Nobody banned the report. Except that the topic has to mature.

MILAN I'm sorry. My respondents entrusted me that it would be us to bring out the topic. What will I look like to them?

GENERAL I wouldn't say that you have the trust of all respondents. Here I have a complaint from the other party. They accuse you of a conflict of interest. And that's no joke. Remember, we have to protect our staff from possible consequences. Because we know the job. It is emotions that are always on the side of those troubled or complaining.

MILAN Can I explain?

GENERAL Or a bill that has not yet been adopted. Do you know how many such bills get adopted ?! If we were to devote a report to every single one, then you wouldn't have thirty-five reports, but dozens more.

MILAN They adopted a completely different bill in the Czech Republic.

GENERAL What do I have to do with the Czech Republic? You are here, in Slovakia. You don't want me to start doubting your expertise. And the trust of your respondents ...

MILAN But that's censorship.

GENERAL Censorship? What censorship are you talking about? Do you know how many topics I got through while working at the BBC? Say, two or three out of forty. Would you call that censorship? Editorial work, proper editorial work.

MILAN It's about the environment and cyanide. We cannot allow accidents such as those in Romania and elsewhere to happen here. After all, Slovakia is the country with probably the largest groundwater reserves in Central Europe. All it takes is one such accident and we are bound to face an enormous environmental disaster.

GENERAL I understand, I do. The question is whether we are the ones to be responsible for this, or we leave it to those competent.

MILAN In such cases, public scrutiny is imperative.

GENERAL You're being difficult. I expected you to appreciate the trust you had from us and to reciprocate it accordingly. After all, our trust in you is also expressed in the fairly decent salary you receive from us. And if we agree, then ...

MILAN What do you mean?

GENERAL You will explain this to your confidential respondents and we will give you a raise.

MILAN And if I don't agree?

GENERAL It would be silly of you not to.

MILAN I'm sorry, but, given the circumstances, I can't imagine working here any longer.

GENERAL As you wish. (*Milan is leaving.*) Though my offer is I still on.

MILAN (*intro*) *I felt like a cold shower. After I closed door at the CEO, what I just experienced felt surreal. What is all this about? There were tons of similar complaints and entreaties to stop a report before it was broadcast. The other party always tries to intimidate a journalist in some way, and do everything possible to prevent their issue from getting into the media. I didn't think Peter had the leverage to go that far in this case. Unless it was all fixed in the highest echelons. The timing of the bill and the intentions of the mining company, 5 million Euros already invested, channelled who knows where. The whole thing made sense and the circle closed. That's why Peter was so self-assured at the meeting. If not me, someone else has to get it out. Eva and Juraj were disappointed when I told them. Yet, I was proud when I told them that I was resigning because of that. All it took was to wait till the evening news, and everything was different in an instant.*

EDITOR (*news item*) *Today, in protest against the intended gold mining, Slovak environmental activist Juraj Rizo tied himself to a mining engine owned by the Canadian company Turman Gold. First, though, he displayed there a banner that says: "Let's stop the cyanide gold rush." He claims to be doing it to thwart the intentions of a multinational company that wants to resume gold mining in the area, while using a highly toxic poison cyanide.*

PETER *All our intended activities are in line with the laws of the Slovak Republic.*

EDITOR *Is it true that you will be mining using cyanide?*

PETER *I repeat, all our intended activities are in accordance with the laws of the Slovak Republic.*

EDITOR *The activist was detained by the police. Slovak Turkman Gold filed a complaint for the crime of property damage.*

PETER *Our company has already invested nearly 5 million Euros and any such action can impair our investment. We will check whether the machine was damaged. We must also safeguard the reputation of our company that acts exclusively in accordance with the laws of the Slovak Republic.*

JURAJ *(when taken away by the police) We are against this intention. We are against cyanide in nature.*

EDITOR *The locals, however, stand by the activist.*

EVA *We are firmly against this hazardous intention, which the mining lobby is trying to sweep under the carpet in face of the public and seeks to push it through it in the highest places. If cyanide is used for mining here, then the city, which was until now the pride of Slovakia, might become a ghost town.*

EDITOR *The decision on whether gold will be mined again in Slovakia is due in the coming weeks. If proven guilty, Juraj Rizo faces an unconditional sentence of one to three years in prison.*

MILAN *(intro) It was an opening report in almost every medium.*

No one expected Juraj to take things in his own hands like this. My boss rang me that the General had called him saying we had a green light to go out with it, and that I should forget about the meeting. And whether I would be able to edit it for the evening news tomorrow. I felt like playing hurt, but I cared a lot about that topic. Sure, I'll make it, I said. And, one more thing. I was to bring from the notary a solemn declaration that I wasn't in conflict of interest in connection with this report. Just in case. I swallowed and bit my tongue so as not to jump on my boss. I calmed down when he told me shortly afterwards that he, too, this time offered his resignation because of me. The karma caught up with the General, he said. The report was broadcast the next evening.

MILAN *(news report) A few days ago, the Canadian company Turman Gold, through its subsidiary – Slovak Turman Gold, presented a project to resume gold mining in central Slovakia.*

PETER *The project is based on the gold and silver deposits in this area. According to my information, they were mined over a thousand years ago.*

MILAN *The presentation of the project focused primarily on economic benefits. Nonetheless, the company failed to inform the public about the adverse effects of the project.*

EVA *We are on the outskirts of Kremnica, in a locality called Šturec. In the coming years, surface mining technology should be used to mine at a depth of 250 meters. The project envisaged about 30 million tonnes of excavated rock. Some will be processed, some will be tailings. But 30 million tonnes will always remain as leftover. Imagine the landfill in Žiar nad Hronom, which we all know: it contains 9 million tonnes. We will thus create a landfill over three times larger than that. Just imagine. Plus a crater 250 meters deep.*

MILAN *The impact of such projects can be quite vividly documented on the experience of Romania.*

JURAJ *For example, a site called Rosia Poieni was not about gold, but about copper mining, and the crater after mining is huge. Its depth is comparable to that which the project presented by Turman Gold would bring. There, the city is to be destroyed as a result of the mining, so it turned out to be the worst-case scenario. It is abysmal that everything in the Slovak project is as it was in Romania.*

EVA *I really can't imagine what the landscape will be like here and how our city turns out.*

MILAN *According to the local population, there is a mining lobby in Slovakia, which is quietly trying to enforce its intentions even in the highest places. The mining bill, which is scheduled to be debated in the Parliament in the coming days, contains a permission to mine using the cyanide method, which is mentioned in the Turman Gold intention. The permission has silently passed through the MPs from of the government party.*

MP *Well, I would be quite unhappy if it were taken like this, seeing some MPs as the bad guys who complied with a mining lobby, as you called it, and some as the good guys who gratified the environmentalist lobby.*

PETER *We do not lobby, we explain our project everywhere. By the same token, we merely explained it at the Ministry and to the MPs.*

MILAN *(his phone rings, he picks up) Hello?*

PETER Don't you think you won the war having won this battle now. I'll be after you, mate.

MILAN Peter? Are you gone mad?

PETER I'll be finding out things about you, your parents, your friends, everything. You're sniffing about things that needn't interest you at all. Do you have any idea what 5 million means? And what is the responsibility for 5 million?

MILAN Peter, hold on ... Don't take it personally.

PETER You bet I take it personally.

MILAN You, too, used to be a journalist. It is my responsibility ...

PETER Your responsibility is to provide objective information, not to sniff about things and keep fabricating all sorts of associations. Mining lobby? If you haven't yet experienced a mining lobby, but you are about to, pal. You'll end up in court and jail, you bastard.

MILAN Are you threatening me?

PETER Call it whatever you will. I'm just saying that, if you can sniff about our stuff, my stuff, I'll do the same about you. You can bet your life I'll come up with something. I know media tactics well. You're done with. You won't let out a squeal anymore.

MILAN Hold on, Peter, how about we meet and clarify things. *(Peter hangs up. The line is busy.)*

MILAN *(intro)* I tried to ring him back, but he didn't answer.

During the call, I instinctively managed to record it, so I got to tape the end of the conversation.

PETER If you haven't yet experienced a mining lobby, but you are about to, pal. You'll end up in court and jail, bastard.

MILAN Are you threatening me?

PETER Call it whatever you will. I'm just saying that, if you can sniff about our stuff, my stuff, I'll do the same about you. You can bet your life I'll come up with something. I know media tactics well. You're done with. You won't let out a squeal anymore.

MILAN *(intro)* My boss was trying to convince me to file a criminal complaint, when the report on Turman Gold and its plans proved to have a crashing impact. The bill that would have permitted the cyanide method directly with the state blessing was withdrawn

from the Parliament. And so there was nothing left but to push it through the mayor and the councillors. Nevertheless, the mayor and the councillors refused to debate the plans and withdrew the item on the resumption of gold mining from the agenda of the municipal council on the grounds that they would leave it to the new council. And so the mining company had no choice but to wait for the new elections and start convincing afresh the city residents. In the end, I did not file the criminal complaint, but we agreed I would continue to monitor the case.

MODERATOR Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the electoral debate. We are honoured to have with us both candidates for the mayor. Please welcome Mr Petr Zemin and Mrs Eva Beláková. Somewhat symbolically, in these candidates, the mining past seems to compete with the ecological future of our city. My first question is for you, Mr Zemin.

You are the managing director of Slovak Turman Gold. Are you ready to leave this post, if elected?

PETER The interest of this city has always been my top priority. I thus take the resignation as a must. We have always dealt with everything within the scope of law. It won't be different once I am elected.

MODERATOR Mrs Beláková, you have risen in popularity by resisting the intentions of the company currently represented by Mr Zemin. Do you have other than environmental points in your electoral agenda?

EVA Sorry, but I consider the ecological future of this city of utmost importance. All else stems from that. Because if the intentions of this company materialise, in a few years this city will be likely to be mere rubble and ruins.

PETER I'm sorry, but I've got to respond to this ...

MODERATOR Please, don't interrupt.

EVA In terms of the legality of the conduct of this company and, of course, Mr Zemin, I have to point out a single grave fact: It is the very candidacy of this gentleman for mayor, which every discerning person has to discern as bearing ulterior motives. He is running to promote the intentions of Turman Gold from the post of mayor.

PETER (*to the Moderator*) You should keep an eye on the timer and give each of us equal slot to comment.

MODERATOR Sure, you got it.

PETER It is sad that someone builds their candidacy on slandering and dismissing someone else's work. It is regrettable if people fall for such candidates. Nothing, I repeat, nothing illegal has been proved to Turman Gold. Everything we did was done in line with law. The fact that I am running is logical is only the result of my efforts to do as much as possible for this city.

EVA A crater 250-metres deep and a sludge pond with hazardous waste, three times larger than in Žiar nad Hronom ...

MODERATOR Please, don't interrupt.

PETER To pick up on my fellow candidate, allow me to present you the plan to develop a recreation area with a swimming pool and cascading gardens, which should be implemented without any financial input from the city. Yes, the 250-metre crater is the foundation. But we would still have to excavate it to create the intended profile of the recreation zone. Thus, after bringing in jobs and financial benefits from the mined gold, there will also be this amazing park, to be enjoyed by everyone. (*shows the visualisation*)

EVA Only that you somehow didn't manage to fit in the heap of thirty million tonnes of waste.

MODERATOR Would you kindly refrain from interrupting. What do you think is wrong with the project, Mrs Beláková? It does look quite good.

EVA What you see is part of a campaign in every city where this mining company is trying to establish itself. I can show you photos I received from the environmental activist Juraj Rizo. He is currently visiting the sites of all the Turman Gold projects to map the actual state of the landscape. I emphasise that we are talking about the devastated landscape they are leaving behind. This, for instance, is the original visualisation of the project in Romania. Brilliant computer graphics, indeed. And here, this photo about what it looks like ten years after all mining work ended.

PETER I just want to point out that this Juraj Rizo, who my opponent is referring to, has been prosecuted for property damage, specifically – our property. Ladies and gentlemen, at least you can see for yourselves that, in their effort to question the intentions of gold mining, these people are willing to breach the law.

MODERATOR Would you like to respond to those photos?

PETER I consider them dubious considering their author of those photos. Besides, the project they present, no longer belongs to Turman Gold.

EVA Indeed. Because the instant they sucked the country of the last Euro, before revitalising the area, they sell their subsidiary to a third party. That, of course, does nothing to remedy the wounds and the landscape remains totally destroyed.

MODERATOR This is a serious charge.

PETER We have grown accustomed to serious accusations from this lady and her companions who keep butchering our plans in the media.

MODERATOR Would tell us about the project and its outcome in Romania?

PETER This is a purely business matter and our company cannot be held responsible for contractual responsibilities of other parties. They have to be enforced by the municipality. If I am elected mayor, there is a clear guarantee and assurance that the city will not leave the matter of land reclamation unaddressed.

MODERATOR Mrs Beláková, would you like to respond?

EVA The optimal environmental solution is not to revitalise anything, but to reject the very plan. This city doesn't need it. I am the pledge that, if elected, such a plan won't be adopted within the coming four years.

MODERATOR And now, it's time for Q&A.

MILAN Hello. My name is Milan Ronec. I would like to ask Mr Zemin. We found out that about ten candidates for councillors mysteriously applied for permanent residence in the city just two months before the elections. Even more curiously, the address of their permanent residence coincides with that of Slovakia Turman Gold. What's more, they all are part of your election team, Mr Zemin.

MODERATOR Would you respond to that?

PETER We act in line with the laws of this country. They don't prevent anyone from applying for permanent residence anywhere as long as the legal terms are met. And the right to stand for office is nevertheless a constitutional right of every citizen of this country.

EVA May I respond. This is likely to be electoral fraud intended to create a council, with the mayor and the majority enforcing the plans of the mining company.

PETER This is a false accusation.

EVA Nobody knows these people at all. But we know you and your intentions all too well. People, let's not give into to deceit.

PETER I refuse to discuss this any further.

MODERATOR Please respect me and respond when I invite you. Happy with the answer?

MILAN I just want to point out that the attorney general's office is already on the case.

PETER This is interference in free local elections, and I, too, will turn to law enforcement authorities. *(gets up and leaves)*

MODERATOR Mr Zemin, Mr Zemin ...

Juraj Rizo is sitting tied to a chair, blindfolded.

JURAJ What are you doing?

ASSASSIN 1 If cyanide is ingested in a large volume of diluted solution or on a full stomach, the course of poisoning usually slows down and can last for more than an hour.

JURAJ You have no right. You hear?!

ASSASSIN 2 Well, well, someone is suddenly claiming their rights!

ASSASSIN 1 Conversely, when ingesting or inhaling large doses of highly concentrated cyanide, the so-called peracute poisoning, when the sequence of these symptoms is much faster and more dramatic, unconsciousness usually occurs within seconds, a maximum within a minute, coma arrives very quickly, and death follows within minutes, usually within ten minutes of ingesting the poison.

JURAJ What's that supposed to mean?

ASSASSIN 2 Can't you tell?

ASSASSIN 1 An extreme form of the course is the so-called superacute poisoning, which usually only occurs after inhalation of highly concentrated hydrogen cyanide; then unconsciousness and coma occur almost immediately after inhaling the poison, and the failure of the functions of the vital centres in the central nervous system occurs within one minute.

JURAJ I didn't do any harm to anyone. Don't do this, please. I just wanted to help ...

ASSASSIN 2 So you helped yourself.

JURAJ Please, no ... *(crying)*

ASSASSIN 1 It is a so-called apoplectic form of cyanide poisoning that results in death within tens of seconds to minutes.

JURAJ No, please, no ... *(He is defending himself. Assassin 1 forces his mouth open, and Assassin 2 inserts a vial of cyanide into his mouth. Assassin 1 grinds his jaw.)*

ASSASSIN 1 In victims affected in this way, it is usually impossible to reverse death even by immediate administration of antidotes. *(Juraj suffocates and dies.)*

Election night after counting the votes. In the background: celebration, music, cheerful mood, sparkling wine.

EVA I'm glad you came. Eventually it worked out. A few weeks ago, I had no idea that now...

MILAN You earned people's trust, make sure you keep it. Congratulations.

EVA Thank you. Luckily, people didn't fall for the Turman Gold tactics. That is largely due to the media coverage and you.

MILAN Juraj opened it all with his action. Had it not been for him, I might have no longer been a journalist. Speaking of whom, where is he?

EVA Only he knows. He last sent me those pictures from Romania. I guess he mentioned that he was going to look at a Turman Gold project in Ireland.

MILAN Who knows what they'll come up with now.

EVA Hopefully, there will be peace for the next four years. This will be one of the first points I want to submit to the council for approval. Rejection of the Turman Gold plan or of any other mining company to mine gold. (*Milan's phone rings.*) Feel free to take it.

MILAN Secret number. I don't take those.

EVA You know, this city has already experienced its mining glory, now we have to build on what the glory has brought it. I will only do what has long been approved by my predecessors. We wish the city attractive, nice, clean, ecological, pleasant for residents and visitors alike, so that people come here to enjoy this glory.

MILAN That's a politician speaking in you, Eva. It means that, from now on, public scrutiny also applies to you. And I'm uncompromising.

EVA That's clear to me. I trust we'll only be meeting over good news.

MILAN (*intro*) *With a sense of a job well done, and some satisfaction, I lay down in front of TV at home. I was already getting into my usual TV microsleep when I was interrupted by a shocking news.*

EDITOR (*news item*) *Earlier today, Slovak environmental activist Juraj Rizo was found dead in the sludge waste pit of a Turman Gold exploration bore in their mining area in Northern Ireland. According to our sources, police are investigating the incident as an accident. Turman Gold also planned gold mining in Slovakia.*

PETER *We're sorry about what happened. According to our information, the incident happened on the site with a strict ban on unauthorised entry.*

EDITOR *Juraj Rizo was also known in the media. Last time he drew attention by protesting against the aforementioned gold mining in Slovakia.*

PETER *I must emphasise that this incident has nothing to do with Turman Gold's investment in Slovakia.*

MILAN *(his phone rings)* Eva ...

EVA *(crying)* That can't be ...

Audible sound of door opening. A masked figure of Assassin 1 with a gun equipped with a silencer enters the flat.

MILAN Hold on, Eva, got to hang up, but I'll call you right back. Who are you, what are you doing here?

Milan is trying to dial a number on his cell phone, probably the police. A shot. Milan falls to the ground. Assassin 1 is leaving.

EDITOR *(news item)* And now let's move on to the latest from the stock exchange. The value of gold on world markets is breaking the records. Currently, one ounce of gold, which represents 31,103 grams, is selling for 1,505 US dollars. To offset the growing devaluation, specialists advise investing in gold. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund call for a return to value of gold and its global reserves to cover all world's currencies in order to guarantee global economic stability.

The End