



A race against time



Marco Ciaramella

CAST:

Albertina: Vance's wife

Vance: Albertina's husband

Maverick: Vance and Albertina's son

Uber: Personal trainer

Ciano: Police constable

Cordula: Friend of Albertina

Urban: Cordula's husband

Theodora: Maverick's girlfriend

Alden: Rider

Linzi: The person who lives in the same building as Vance and Albertina

Glory: Fake real estate agent

Ivy: Baker

Dean: Stretcher bearer

Shane: Stretcher bearer (without lines in the comedy)

FIRST ACT

The scene takes place in the living room.

The phone rings...

Albertina: Hello? Yes, I'm Mrs. Robinson... Yes, my son is called Maverick... Are you kidding?! Damn! He hung up.

Vance enters the scene.

Vance: Who were you talking to in that excited way?

Albertina: (*Worried*) Maybe it's better if you sit down.

Vance: You're making me worry.

Albertina: A catastrophe has happened.

Vance: Has an accident happened to Maverick?

Albertina: Absolutely not.

Vance: Then nothing serious can have happened.

Albertina: He was kidnapped.

Vance: Was Maverick kidnapped? What are you saying? We are poor people. Do the kidnappers plan to ask for the cobwebs of the ceiling as a ransom?

Albertina: This is not the time to make jokes.

Vance: Let's analyze the facts without losing reason: was the person who phoned a man or a woman?

Albertina: I don't know. The voice was mimicked, it sounded like that of maniacs in horror films. Among other things, I didn't even have time to listen to it for long time.

Vance: What exactly did he tell you?

Albertina: He asked me if I was Mrs. Robinson and if my son was called Maverick, then he told me he was holding him in his power and immediately hung up without granting me the right to reply.

Vance: That's all?

Albertina: Doesn't it enough for you?

Vance: It must have been a stupid joke.

Albertina: Instinct tells me it's not like that. Call your son immediately and check where he is.

Vance: There is no need, he went to train as he does every day. Don't you remember he has to prepare for the end of month marathon?

Albertina: Never once you do something I ask of you! So, I'll take care of it. *(She takes the cell phone and dials a number)*

Vance: It is useless to call him! When he trains, he never takes his cell phone with him.

Albertina: From now on he will have to change his habit and take it with him. In case of need at least he can call someone.

Vance: However, if someone ran over him the phone would be of little use.

Albertina: But if he had a heart attack, a thrombosis, one...

Vance: *(Interrupting her)* An ischemia, a stroke, malaria, the bubonic plague, tuberculosis... Oh! He is twenty and he is excellent health, so don't break my balls! I'm sure it's all right, it was just a stupid joke.

Albertina: I don't think, so go find him!

Vance: I remind you that he walks sixty kilometers a day. I can't go look for him in Mecca.

Albertina: You are really incredible! Even in these moments you only think about joking.

Vance: I'm just trying to play it down.

Albertina: Since you don't take this seriously, I'll go to find him in person. *(She takes the car keys, but her husband stops her)*

Vance: Where are you going? Stop and put down the keys! Maverick usually trains in the woods. To go where he goes, you need a farm tractor, not a car!

Albertina: Then I'll look for one.

Vance: I got the message! I take the mountain bike and go myself.

Albertina: Well said! Every now and then you do something right too.

Vance: Since I'm going to scour about thirty hectares, if you don't see me for Christmas, don't worry, I'll send you a postcard.

Albertina: You will get the Nobel Prize for witticism.

Vance: Instead you, you'll get the one for the biggest pain in the ass. Anyway, now I inflate the bike and go, even though I'm sure he'll be home sooner than me.

Albertina: Let's hope! But I wouldn't be so sure.

Vance: Ah! Uber should arrive in minutes, he must leave the training sheets for Maverick.

Albertina: All right! I'll put them on his desk.

Vance: *(Grumbling)* Today it's bitterly cold, I'll end up getting sick.

Albertina: Are you leaving or not?

Vance: Yes, I'm leaving. But first I have to change my clothes. *(And he leaves the scene)*

Albertina: I, on the other hand, can't do nothing. Now I call Cordula and ask her for advice. *(She takes the cell phone and dials the number)* Hello? It's me, I need to speak to you urgently... Are in the pharmacy again? I'll give you two minutes to come to my house.

Vance enters the scene, dressed as a cyclist.

Vance: Then I go.

Albertina: Are you still here? *(Pushing him out)*

As soon as Vance leaves, Albertina receives a phone call. Listen to the interlocutor on the other end of the line for a few moments and...

Albertina: Listen, son of a mangy dog! Tell me what you want and leave my son alone... What should I do? Wait ... Damn! He hung up again.

The doorbell rings and Albertina goes to open the door. Cordula enters the scene.

Cordula: Are you happy? I kept the perfect time. Anyway, what happened so urgent?

Albertina: I'm getting some weird phone calls. Someone says he kidnapped Maverick, but I don't understand what he wants.

Cordula: And do you think I know? I'm not the kidnapper! You have to ask to him.

Albertina: As soon as I try, he hangs up. He even called a minute ago and made me a strange request.

Cordula: Did he ask for money?

Albertina: Not at all! He told me to ask Maverick if he is feeling well.

Cordula: But if he has kidnapped him, why doesn't he personally ask Maverick? However, whatever your son needs, I can supply him... *(Taking several medicines out of the bag)*

Albertina: I know that you are more stocked than the pharmacy. You spend more time there and at the doctor than at your home, but I have no idea what disease my son may suffer from and what drugs he may need.

Albertina: How does this person know that Maverick is not well, since his parents don't know?

Cordula: Before making conjectures, I'd suggest you call my friend Ciano. He is a police constable and can advise you on what to do in these cases.

Albertina: It's a good idea, do you have his phone number?

Cordula: Sure! I have it stored in the phone book. *(Showing her the number on her cell phone)* Call this number and tell him you're a friend of mine. *(Albertina takes note)*

The doorbell rings.

Albertina: You go and open the door while I go to the kitchen to call. Whoever the arrived person is can wait. My son is more important.

Cordula goes to open the door and Vance enters the scene.

Cordula: Don't you have the house keys?

Vance: I went out in a hurry and forgot them. I went back to get my cape because it's raining.

Cordula: Are you going to look for Maverick?

Vance: Wow, how the rumors run! Do you already know that too?

Cordula: The police will soon know too.

Vance: Don't tell me she's calling the police too.

Cordula: For now she's just calling my friend Ciano.

Vance: Are you referring to Ciano Galeazzo? Hadn't he been shot in Italy by order of his father-in-law?

Cordula: How witty you are! Since the canonical hours have not yet elapsed for the police to start searches, Albertina went to call him to ask for advice on what to do in a completely confidential and unofficial way.

Vance: My wife is going altogether too far.

Cordula: I don't think so, the kidnapper called again.

Vance: Did he make an explicit request this time?

Cordula: Yes, he told Albertina to ask Maverick if he is feeling well.

Vance: Ah, really nice blackmail! Don't you understand that this is a joke?!

Cordula: *(After looking at the clock)* I have to go now. It's late, it's time to give my husband a few pills.

Vance: *(Seeing the bag full of medicines)* Anyway if you think they're good for him...

Cordula: I remind you that I almost became a doctor, so I understand these things.

Vance: Considering that this "almost" is equivalent to having attended only two years of faculty...

Cordula: *(Interrupting him)* I also worked as a nurse for a lifetime, so...

Vance: All right! You can poison whoever you want, it's none of my business. In any case, I am sure that so many pills can't be good for health.

Cordula: Dear Dr. Kildare, what do you want to know about medicine?

Vance: Forget it!

Cordula: I'm going now, I'll be back later.

Vance: Aren't you offended?

Cordula goes away annoyed without answering him.

Vance: How susceptible are these women!

Albertina enters the scene.

Albertina: Are you back yet? Did you find Maverick?

Vance: Take it easy! I came to get my cape because it's raining.

Albertina: So many stories for two drops of water!

Vance: It's actually pouring, but what does it matter to you?

Albertina: Luckily I contacted the police, you aren't any help.

Vance: What will the next move be: call the police commissioner?

Albertina: If necessary, why not? For the moment, I'm following to the instructions the constable gave me.

Vance: And what are they?

Albertina: He said not to talk to anyone about this until he gets here.

Vance: Then you've already made a mistake, since you told Cordula everything.

The doorbell rings.

Albertina: I'm going to call her immediately to warn her not to tell anyone what happened, in the meantime, go and open the door. *(And she leaves the scene)*

Vance: Hi Uber, come in!

Uber: Like I told you, I came to bring these. *(Delivering three envelopes: one white, one red and one black)*

Vance: Do you intend to present a quiz? Which envelope do you choose? The white, the red or the black?

Uber: Actually these are all for Maverick. There isn't one in particular that he has to choose.

Vance: I know. My intent was to say a witty joke.

Uber: I remind you that I'm German and I don't appreciate this kind of humor.

Vance: But you can explain to me the reason for these envelopes.

Uber: Each envelope contains a different type of training. For example, far from a race, he must do what is written in the white envelope, in the proximity of the marathons, instead, the one indicated in the red. Finally, the black specifies the sporting practice to be carried out after each competition, to bring the body from exercise to a state of rest in an efficient and advantageous way.

Vance: So, in each of these envelopes are indicated how many kilometers he must do daily, depending on the type of training?

Uber: Exactly! And also the running pace to keep.

Vance: Now I understand why he wanted that expensive contraption he wears on his arm.

Uber: With that he can also check the difference in altitude between the various points in order to recreate the same conditions that he will find in the race for which he trains.

Vance: If it is so functional it will also show him the routes.

Uber: No, I am the one to show him those.

Vance: Then you can tell me where he went running today.

Uber: Of course! Why do you want to know that?

Vance: I have to tell him something urgent and, as you well know, he never takes his phone with him, so I have to reach him personally.

Uber: I warn you, however, that it is complicated to explain. Today's route includes thirty-five kilometers of false plain, which can be done both in one direction and in the other, as it is a ring circuit.

Vance: Can you give me a more precise indication?

Uber: I know that he will pass through Fulking, but I can't tell you when.

Vance: Will he go to Pulking?

Uber: No, I said Fulking, the village which is located five miles northwest of Brighton.

Vance: I know where Brighton is, but I've never heard of this Munking.

Uber: Fulking not Munking!

Vance: Regardless of the name of this place I am sure that if I go to Brighton and ask someone for information, I will be able to find it.

Uber: So if that's all, I'm going.

Vance: Wait up! First I would like to ask you how Maverick understands which training to follow before or after if there is nothing written on the outside of the envelopes.

Uber: Your son knows perfectly the meaning of each color of the envelope, so there is no need to write anything on the outside.

Vance: What reason is there to close them with sealing wax?

Uber: I'll explain it to you in one word: privacy. Each athlete I train has a training program that I keep in a locked archive. If, in my absence, someone tried to force it to see other athletes' programs, he would have to open the envelopes, but in this way the seal would break. If it remains intact, it means that no one has been able to see anything.

Vance: Even if someone took a peek, what harm would it be? Why so much secrecy?

Uber: You have no idea how much rivalry there is between athletes! I don't want to insinuate the doubt that I can have a favorable treatment towards someone in particular so as not to create reasons for disagreement.

Vance: Why don't you impose everyone to do the same training?

Uber: The type of training must be differentiated according to weight, physical structure and muscle mass.

Vance: I get it! However, don't worry, when Maverick comes back I will give these to him, for the moment I put them here.

Vance puts the envelopes on the table.

Uber: Please don't forget them! See you later. *(And he leaves the scene)*

Vance: What an idiot I am! The cape will certainly be in the cellar and finding it in that asylum would be like looking for a needle in a haystack! I guess I have to do without. Come on Vance! Don't think about this bad weather and go find this... what did he say that place is called? I don't remember exactly, however it will come to mind. *(And he leaves the scene)*

The doorbell rings. Albertina enter the scene and goes to open the door.

Albertina: You were faster than lightning!

Cordula: I live two floors above yours, I don't have to take the subway to get here!

Albertina: As I told you on the phone, your friend advised me not to tell anyone about Maverick's possible kidnapping. So you have to keep quiet with your husband too.

Cordula: Don't worry about this, even if you did, after a few minutes he would forget everything.

Albertina: In any case it is better to follow the instructions of the constable. But speaking of your husband, why does he have to take all those drugs?

Cordula: Forget it! It's a long story.

The doorbell rings.

Albertina: Maybe it's your friend, I'm going to open the door.

A very pale man enters the scene with a bag in his hand, limping and walking like a zombie.

Urban: I don't remember which of these thirty-two pills I should take first.

Cordula: *(Taking out the numerous medicines from the bag to put them on the table next to the envelopes left by Uber)* You are really slow in the uptake!

Urban: I don't remember if I have to take the red oval pill or the round blue one before or after the big green one.

Cordula: It's simple! At two in the afternoon there is the round blue, at ten past three the oval red, while at half past four there is the big green together with the little orange one, at five o'clock there are the pink medium and finally at six the white effervescent; all repeated at four-hour intervals.

Urban: Sorry, but I get confused with those of the morning.

Cordula: In the morning we start with the yellow one at nine o' clock, then the brown one at ...

Albertina: *(Abruptly interrupting her friend)* Stop! You explain it to him at home, there is enough time between now and tomorrow.

Urban: Well said! Maybe you can freshen up my memory tomorrow morning.

Cordula: You see that I am not mistaken when I say that he forgets everything. It is for this reason that he takes so many pills.

Albertina: Try writing him somewhere the list of drugs to take with the relative times.

Cordula: It would be useless, because he sees badly, it is no coincidence that he also takes pills for sight.

Albertina: For that it would be enough a pair of glasses.

Cordula: He has them, but he forgets where he puts them. And then, I force him to make an effort to keep his mind working.

Urban: If I weren't always so confused and sleepy, maybe, I would remember things better.

Cordula: You are ungrateful! I make you take all those pills to help you.

Urban: Thank you dear, without you I would be lost. *(The doorbell rings and Urban, like a zombie, goes to open the door)*

Ciano: Hi Urban! *(Noticing the gaze of the man who opened the door)* Don't you recognize me?

Urban: *(Scratching his head trying to remember who the newcomer might be)* You would be...

Ciano: I'm Ciano. It is strange that you do not recognize me, we have eaten many times together at your house.

Urban: Did we only eat at my house? Have I never come to you?

Ciano: Honestly not, but I'm sure it will happen!

Urban: So have I always paid for everything?

Ciano: *(Embarrassed)* But I've always brought wine.

Urban: Ah! Now I remember: you are the one who brings the sub-brand wine that gives me heartburn!

Cordula: What are you saying? You are crazy!

Urban: Absolutely not! *(Turning to his wife)* And you, don't think about getting prescription medicines for schizophrenia too! *(Then he takes the medicine bag and inadvertently puts the envelopes for Maverick in it and he leaves the scene)*

Cordula: You have to excuse him, he says nonsense because of the drugs he takes.

Ciano: Don't worry! I understand the situation.

Albertina: Hi! I am Maverick's mother.

Ciano: *(Shaking her hand)* Nice to meet you!

Albertina: Let's sit down, so we will be more comfortable.

Ciano: I would suggest first of all to call some friends of Maverick's and start the investigation from there.

Cordula: Wouldn't it be better first to have confirmation that he was actually kidnapped?

Ciano: For that we have to wait for further moves by the kidnappers.

Cordula: So why did you come here?

Ciano: First, I need to consult the kidnapped boy's phone book but maybe he has his cell phone with him.

Albertina: You're lucky, when he trains, he always leaves it at home.

Ciano: This, on the one hand, may be good news, but on the other...

Cordula: Why?

Ciano: Because we can't locate him through the phone cells.

Albertina: Let's try to look for the cell phone in one of the pockets of the jacket hanging on the clothes-hook. Ah! It's here. *(And she hands it over to the police constable)*

Ciano: Very well! Now if you bring me a pen and paper, I'll note something.

Cordula: I'll take care of it, since I know where you keep everything.

Ciano: *(He reads the names in the phone book and starts writing)* How strange! There aren't many numbers. Does your child have few friends?

Albertina: Maybe, he is always very busy with training and has little time for friends.

Ciano: Now I will read you the names that are stored here and you will tell me if you know these people.

Albertina: Okay.

Ciano: Theodora.

Albertina: She should be his girlfriend.

Ciano: Should she be? Is she his girlfriend or not?

Albertina: You know how today's young people think, in order to escape responsibility, they deny their emotional relationships even in the face of evidence.

Cordula: *(Intervening in the speech)* Introducing a woman to the family as one's girlfriend is too compromising and prevents other acquaintances. It is better to pass her off as a friend, you know what I mean?!

Ciano: So let's call this girl, maybe she could help us. *(After dialing the number)* Hello, Miss Smellie? I'm the police constable Brownbear, I have some questions for you... don't worry, nothing serious has happened for the moment, but I should speak to you urgently. Could you come to Mr. Robinson's house as soon as possible?... No, I'm sorry, I can't anticipate anything. I'll wait for you, goodbye. *(After hanging up)* Now we must hope that the girl can give us useful information.

Cordula: What do you mean?

Ciano: She might know if your child has had any quarrels or if he is in debt to someone. If so, we may start our investigation from there.

Cordula: So you too are convinced that Maverick was kidnapped?

Ciano: We must not discard any hypothesis.

The doorbell rings and Cordula goes to open the door.

Urban: *(Entering the house staggering, he turns to his wife)* You should go get me my medicine.

Cordula: Have you finished them all yet?

Urban: I've never had those.

Cordula: Which are you referring to?

Urban: I mean the ones the doctor prescribed for me.

Cordula: You are raving!

Urban: I tell you that I can't find those. *(Dozing off)*

Cordula: I take him away, so I give him some vitamin.

Ciano: Are you really sure you bought him all the medicines? Can't you have forgotten something?

Cordula: I might forget to eat not to buy medicine.

Urban: *(Who just woke up)* That's true! Maybe I'm a little confused. Please take me home, my legs are soft, I don't think I can go there alone.

Cordula: *(After taking him by the arm)* Come on, let's go! *(Turning proudly to the other two)* I'm sure I'll find something for him to reinvigorate him.

Urban: *(Recovered from torpor)* Thank God! It's a life that doesn't move anymore!

SECOND ACT

Same scenography as the first act.

Ciano: *(Talking on his cell phone)* I'll be right there. *(Then turning to Albertina)* I have a business to attend to, I will be back very soon, so if Miss Smellie comes, tell her to wait.

Albertina: Of course! *(Accompanying him to the door. Then she sits down at the table and starts checking her son's phone)* I never realized he had so few contacts, even on social media.

Vance enters the scene.

Vance: What tiredness!

Albertina: Did you find him?

Vance: Unfortunately, the only thing I found is a great bad weather.

Albertina: Where did you go to look for him?

Vance: Where Uber told me, however, my bike got stuck in the mud and I just couldn't go on.

Albertina: That's all? Can't you tell me more?

Vance: That's not all, I went where Maverick had to go and I waited for hours, but he didn't show up.

Albertina: And what would this place be?

Vance: *(Scratching his head)* Pulking... Munking... Junking, in short, I don't remember the name well.

Albertina: If you don't even remember the name, how can you be sure this was the right place? You are really incapable!

Vance: I have been in the rain for hours, I have sweated beyond belief, I have sunk in the mud, I risk pneumonia and you tell me that I am incapable. You are really ungrateful!

Albertina: What do we do now? Until Theodora comes, we are at a standstill.

Vance: What does she have to do with this story?

Albertina: The policeman wants to talk to her to find out if she knows something we are not aware of.

The doorbell rings.

Vance: I'm going to open.

Alden: *(Dressed as a Cyclist)* Hello! I have a delivery to make and I need a signature.

Vance: From your clothing, you don't seem like a postman to me.

Meanwhile, Urban arrives who, pushing the man to the threshold, enters the house staggering.

Urban: Where is Cordula?

Vance: She's not here, however wait a minute and sit down. I finish with this gentleman and then see if I can help you. *(Then turning to the man in the doorway)* So what were you saying?

Alden: I am what was once a pony express.

Urban: And where did you leave the horse?

Albertina: I go over there to call Cordula to come and pick him up right away.

Urban: Where did you put the bottle? You two look like Coppi and Bartali to me.

Alden: Which bottle are you referring to?

Urban: Forget it! You are too young to understand this joke.

Alden: I only came to deliver this missive.

Urban: And I came for Miss England, but I don't see any pretty girls in this room!

Vance: Pay no attention to what he says and explain better who would send me this sealed envelope.

Urban: Someone who didn't even have the money for the postage stamp, otherwise he used the post office.

Alden: You're wrong, you spend much more with us than with the postal service.

Urban: Then it is someone who is really stupid.

Alden: Instead, I would say that the sender wanted to make sure this envelope arrived quickly at its destination. (*Handing the letter to Vance*)

Vance: (*Observing the letter*) How strange! There is no sender.

Alden: If you are Mr. Robinson I am not interested in knowing anything else.

Urban: If there is nothing to pay, take it, otherwise send it back to the sender.

Alden: Don't worry, it's free port.

Urban: So you came by boat not by bicycle!

Vance: Do you want to shut up for a second? It seems to me an anomalous thing and I would like to understand better.

Alden: There is little to understand, you just have to take this letter, that's all. Besides, I can't help you. I was only told the time of delivery.

Urban: Who commissioned it?

Alden: I don't know. The order was placed online and the envelope was left at the company in the container located at the entrance. Clearly after the payment had been made.

Urban: But the person who is at the counter to collect sees who has deposited the letter and money.

Alden: I assume you don't know how online payment works.

Urban: If it was a medicine, I knew it, for the rest...

Alden: Our services can be paid for by bank transfers, credit cards, VISA, MASTERCARD, POST PAY and so on.

Vance: I get it! You have been very exhaustive. Sorry if we have wasted your precious time.

Alden: So if you sign me, I would go.

Vance: *(After signing the receipt)* Goodbye!

Alden: Goodbye to you!

Urban: Go slow, if you fall, do you know how many medicines you have to take?!

Alden: Thanks you, I shall treasure your advice. *(And he leaves the scene)*

Urban: What are you waiting for? Don't you open it?

Vance: It's better to wait for Albertina, she should be back here in a minute. You, what did you want?

Urban: I don't remember which pill I have to take at this time.

Vance: Ah! Now, however, move away from the table for a second. Where are those envelopes? I don't see them anymore.

Urban: What is it today? The day of the envelopes?

Vance: What do you mean?

Urban: Between those you receive and those you lose...

Vance: I have not lost anything, maybe my wife will have put them somewhere.

Urban: They disappear to you, they appear to me, there must be spirits.

Albertina: *(Entering the scene, she interrupts the conversation between the two)* Urban, I spoke to Cordula, she said to wait for her here, in a few minutes she is coming to get you. *(Then turning to her husband)* What did the person who came first want?

Vance: He was a rider and he delivered this to us.

The doorbell rings.

Albertina: I'm going to open the door.

Cordula: *(Walking towards her husband)* What did you forget this time?

Urban: What nonsense! If I remembered I didn't come looking for you.

Cordula: I take him home, so I explain everything to him again. *(Dragging him)*

Urban: Vance, before going, I wanted to finish the speech because I don't remember...

At that precise moment Theodora enters the scene and interrupts Urban.

Theodora: May I? Hello everyone! I came right away as I was asked.

Cordula: You'll finish the speech another time, now go home. I'll join you in a minute.

Urban: But...

Cordula: Don't break my balls! I have to stay with them to face an important problem, meanwhile you go.

Urban: Why can't I stay too?

Cordula: Because now you have to go and do aerosol.

Urban: I don't have a cough.

Cordula: You have to do it in prevention.

Urban: If you say so! So I'm going. See you later! *(And he leaves the scene)*

Cordula: Where is Ciano?

Albertina: He absented himself, but he assured me that he will be back soon.

Cordula: If he told you so, he will surely arrive shortly. He is always very punctual, at least when he has to come and eat...

Albertina: *(Turning to Theodora)* Meanwhile, make yourself comfortable.

Theodora: Thank you. *(And she sits down)*

Cordula: I wait for Ciano, then I go. I have to go to the pharmacy before it closes.

Vance: Do you need to stock up?

Cordula: Not this time, the pharmacist must have accidentally put some prescriptions in the bag of my medications and I wanted to bring them back.

The doorbell rings.

Ciano: *(Entering with firm step)* Here I am. *(Then turning to Theodora)* You must be Miss Smellie.

Vance: In name and in fact.

Albertina glares at her husband, while Theodora pretends not to have heard and immediately stands up to greet the policeman.

Theodora: Yes, I am.

Ciano: So let's get straight to the point: How long have you been Maverick's girlfriend?

Theodora: For about six months.

Ciano: Can you tell me the kind of friendships your boyfriend has?

Theodora: Basically those related to foot races, which are reduced to two or three people.

Ciano: And can you tell me if Maverick has ever had any discussions with these people?

Theodora: I'm sure he never argued with any of them. Indeed, with one in particular he has a lot of complicity, because he shares his passion for marathons.

Ciano: What is his relationship with the other two?

Theodora: They are his most loyal fans. They come to support him during competitions.

Ciano: Before starting your relationship with Maverick, were you engaged to one of these friends?

Theodora: I wouldn't really call it an engagement.

Ciano: So I try to formulate the question better: have you ever had sex with one of these Maverick friends?

Theodora *(Embarrassed, having to answer in front of Maverick's parents)* Do I really have to answer?

Ciano: I would say it is indispensable.

Theodora: Yes, but the relationship ended immediately.

Ciano: As I expected, something is emerging...

Theodora: Can I now know the reason for these questions? Did something happen to Maverick? Is he in trouble?

Albertina: We don't know for sure yet, that's why the constable wanted to summon you.

Ciano: You must know that the boy has been missing for a while and that veiled threats have been received from the family.

Theodora: What do you mean when you talk about veiled threats?

Ciano: I can't tell you that, but if you tell us the names of his friends, especially the one you had that short relationship with, it would help a lot.

Cordula: *(After looking at the clock)* I would like to stay, but the pharmacy is closing, so I really have to go.

Ciano: See you later, so I can inform you about everything.

Theodora: Excuse me, you don't want to tell me anything and can you tell her everything?

Ciano: She is my collaborator.

Theodora: Why? Do she works in the police too?

Ciano: No, but I know her very well and I know I can trust her. Not only that, she also has a good intuition and, in these cases, it could help.

Theodora: If this is so...

Cordula: So I'm going, see you later!

Theodora: The names you want to know are: Neil Griffiths, Rayner Fisher and Fulk Matthews with whom I was in a relationship for just one week.

Ciano: That might be enough.

Theodora: For what?

Albertina: For a blackmail, we think Maverick was kidnapped.

Ciano: Madam, this was not to be said.

Albertina: I couldn't resist anymore! And then, knowing the gravity of the situation, perhaps she could add some details that she may have omitted out of shame.

Ciano: Okay, but leave it to me!

Albertina: Excuse me it was an uncontrolled impulse.

Theodora: I assure you, none of these boys could have kidnapped Maverick, simply because they would have no reason to.

Ciano: Let the police judge this. *(Taking out of his pocket the sheet of paper on which he had written down the names he took from Maverick's phone book)* The names in the phone book are the same ones you provided, so for the moment we don't need your help anymore.

Theodora: Before I leave, however, I would like to point out one thing: Fulk has never shown jealousy of Maverick, so I'm sure he's not the kidnapper. In any case, I will remain available, but I would be grateful if you would update me on any developments.

Vance: We will keep you informed, don't worry!

Theodora: I'm counting on it! See you later.

Ciano: In the meantime, I'm going to go to those three boys' houses to ask them a few questions.

Vance: *(Before Ciano leaves, he takes the sealed envelope delivered by the rider)* Before you go, I'd like to show you this...

Ciano: Let's see what it is... alas, bad news.

Albertina: Is my son dead?

Ciano: I said bad news, not catastrophic.

Vance: Did they cut off his ear?

Ciano: Absolutely not! Nothing like that is written there, unfortunately, however, this is proof that your wife were right.

Albertina: *(Turning to Vance)* I told you I had a presentiment that something serious had happened.

Vance: Are we really sure that this is not a macabre joke?

Albertina: Do you still persist with the joke? You are really crock!

Ciano: In fact, we can't discard this hypothesis either. There are many crazy people around who enjoy themselves in this perverse way. But we cannot underestimate this threat: "since he is used to racing against time, this time he will only have until midnight today."

Albertina: What will this cryptic phrase mean?

Ciano: I think it's referring to Maverick, because he's the only one in the family used to running but I don't understand your role in this story.

Albertina: Please help us. What can we do?

Ciano: You just have to call me if any other communication comes to you.

Albertina: We certainly will.

Ciano: Very well, see you later. *(And he leaves the scene)*

The doorbell rings, Albertina goes to open the door. Glory enters the scene.

Glory: Hi! Are you Mrs. Robinson?

Albertina: Yes, I am. And you, what do you want?

Glory: I'm from the United Kingdom Sotheby's International Realty and I'd like to know which of these apartments is for sale.

Albertina: The one upstairs. Now excuse me, we're busy. *(She is about to close the door when...)*

Glory: I just steal a minute, I would like to know if, besides that, there are others for sale.

Albertina: I don't know and I'm not in the mood to have a conversation about this now, so please go talk to the person who is interested in selling.

Glory: I've already gone upstairs, I also rang the bell several times, but no one answered me, so I took the liberty of...

Vance: If you wait a moment I try to call Linzi again, she's often on the terrace hanging out the clothes to let them drip on ours. Maybe if you find a buyer for her apartment, this story will end.

Glory: You are really kind, I don't deny that moving these heavy bags is really tiring, if I could avoid climbing stairs unnecessarily I would be happy.

Vance: I go immediately, maybe I'll be lucky. *(And he leaves the scene)*

Glory: I am mortified, I didn't want to disturb, but I have children to support and this job...

Albertina: For God's sake! Don't talk to me about this, that's not the moment.

Glory: Sorry, I didn't mean to upset you.

Vance and Linzi enter the scene.

Vance: This is the person interested in selling the apartment, now, if you don't mind, we have to take care of urgent matters. *(And he goes into the kitchen with his wife)*

Linzi: Hi! Vance told me you work for a real estate agency. How did you know I was trying to sell my house? I had only put up the sign in front of the garage for a few days and it has already disappeared.

Glory: I picked it up while I was doing the usual inspection in this area to look for houses for sale to offer to my clients. I saw a woman take that sign and throw it away.

Linzi: Anyway, before I start any speech, I tell you right away that I want at least two hundred thousand pounds.

Glory: How many square meters are we talking about?

Linzi: I don't know exactly, however my apartment is like this.

Glory: *(Starting to look around)* Just like this?

Linzi: Yes, the apartments in this building are all the same.

Glory: *(Speaking with her face turned towards the cupboard)* How is the coexistence between condominiums in this building?

Linzi: What does this have to do with the sale of the house?

Glory: The first question that potential buyers ask me is whether the relationships between condominiums are good.

Linzi: In this case I can say that there are no problems. I've never had disagreements with anyone.

Glory: So why do you want to sell?

Linzi: I have to move for work reasons.

Glory: *(Looking inside the cupboard)* Really very interesting.

Linzi: Is my story interesting, or the cupboard?

Glory: They are both interesting. At this moment I was admiring the beautiful furnishings of this house.

Linzi: I remind you that he doesn't have to sell this, so if you want to come and see mine now...

Glory: First I want to take a photograph.

Linzi: Even if the furniture in my apartment is not as beautiful as this one, I would still like to sell it furnished.

Glory: It can be done.

Linzi: How long will it take to find a buyer?

Glory: I can't tell you this with precision. However don't worry, as soon as it happens, I'll take care of closing the circle!

Linzi: This is reassuring!

Glory: Can I open this showcase? *(Saying this while she already rummaging inside)*

Linzi: No problem for me. I think that even the hosts would not object, unless you intend to put a bomb in it.

Glory: I just wanted to admire these trophies.

Linzi: Maverick won them all. He is a good marathoner, he runs like a hare.

Glory: Who is Maverick?

Linzi: He is the son of the Robinsons.

Glory: *(While Linzi is distracted she puts something inside one of the trophies)* Do you know this boy well?

Linzi: Since he was a child. Why are you asking me?

Glory: If he has his trophies here, it means that he still lives with his parents, but sooner or later he too will want his independence and need a home, so...

Linzi: It doesn't seem to me that he has the intention of leaving the nest.

Glory: Why? Doesn't he have a girlfriend?

Linzi: Maybe, but I think he still has no intention of leaving mom and dad.

Glory: Now I would like you to provide me with the cadastral data and the floor plan of your apartment, so I fill out your form and insert it in the agency's archive.

Linzi: Then come with me upstairs. But first, we need to talk about commission on sale and so on.

Glory: We will talk about anything you want.

Linzi: So I'm going to tell Vance and Albertina that we are leaving. *(And she leaves the scene)*

Glory: Take your time. I'm not in a hurry.

Linzi enters the scene.

Linzi: They told me they can't go back to say hello because they have an important issue to resolve.

Glory: No problem. Do we want to go now?

Linzi: Follow me! *(As they go out they meet Cordula who takes the opportunity to enter)*

Cordula: *(After greeting Linzi)* Is there anyone? *(The doorbell rings, but no one appears)* I'd better go and open the door myself.

Uber: Hi! Who are you?

Cordula: I could ask you the same question.

Uber: I am the coach of Maverick.

Cordula: I am the best friend of the family. *(Not realizing that she just dropped the prescriptions from the folder she was holding)*

Uber: I came here on a private matter.

Cordula: Don't worry. I don't care about your business, I have a mystery to solve: I found these in the medicine bag and I have no idea how they got there. Even the pharmacist knows nothing about it. *(At the moment she realizes that the prescriptions have ended up on the ground)*

Uber: *(He helps Cordula pick them up, but instead of giving them back...)* Where did you get them?

Cordula: I found them in the medicine bag *(Tearing them out of Uber's hand)*

Uber: This is absolutely not possible. *(Taking up the prescriptions)*

Cordula: And you, what do you know about this? *(Appropriating them again)*

Uber: Absolutely nothing. *(He tries to grab them again, but the woman dodges his hand)*

Cordula: Then shut up! And stop questioning what I say.

Uber: I assure you these are mine.

Cordula: I don't think!

Uber: They are not really mine, they belong to someone in this family.

Cordula: No member of this house needs anabolic steroids and growth hormones, so either explain the matter to me better or...

Uber: *(With a lightning bolt he snatches the prescriptions from his interlocutor and runs away)*
Auf wiedersehen.

Cordula: *(Screaming)* Come back here scoundrel!

Albertina and Vance enter the scene.

Albertina: What is happening?

Vance: Who were you arguing with? With your husband?

Urban: *Finding the open door left by Uber, he enters the scene)* Did you call me?

Cordula: No, I wasn't saying to you, idiot, but to Maverick's coach who stole the prescriptions.

Vance: You don't need to scream for that. Just ask the doctor to do them again.

Cordula: They weren't mine.

Urban: Were they mine? Of course they don't know what to steal nowadays!

Cordula: You shut up, otherwise I can't explain myself!

Vance: You have to calm down otherwise we don't understand anything.

Cordula: Before taking them away, that man said they were needed by some member of this family.

Vance: So why didn't he leave them here? Did you see the name of the doctor who made the prescription?

Cordula: Unfortunately not.

Albertina: Did you at least see what medicines were prescribed?

Cordula: Yes, but I don't want to tell you.

Albertina: Why?

Cordula: It is embarrassing.

Albertina: For who?

Cordula: For you and your husband.

Vance: Don't hesitate and speak clearly.

Cordula: They were anabolic steroids and growth hormones.

Albertina: And what are they?

Cordula: Growth hormones, I believe, are used to inflate, if they are for growth!

Albertina: So do you think they are to increase the...

Cordula: And what else for?

Urban: I'm just out of luck! The only good medicine is prescribed to others!

THIRD ACT

Same scenography of the two previous acts.

Cordula: *(Looking at the clock)* Why doesn't Ciano call? By now he will have already visited all three boys.

The doorbell rings and she goes to open the door.

Linzi: Hi Cordula! Why are you here?

Cordula: And you, why don't you mind your own business?

Linzi: Then you start first.

Cordula: Was you grow foolish?

Linzi: No, my dear, it is you who are always pointing out to Albertina the fact that my clothes drip on hers.

Cordula: Isn't it true? However, even if I didn't tell her anything, she would notice by herself!

Linzi: I just came to clarify the matter and tell her that it is your clothes that drip first on mine and then on hers.

Cordula: You are a real carrion. I always spread them out on the side facing the courtyard.

Linzi: You are only capable of offending! Anyway, I remind you that you have a silly husband, not me.

Cordula: You don't take this risk! Nobody would even touch you with a cane as is customary with snakes!

Linzi: You're so rustic that if someone threw you into a bush you'd come out with a pheasant in your mouth!

Cordula: Now he broke my balls! If you have complaints this is not the place.

Linzi: In fact, I didn't come for you.

Cordula: Then leave and come back later!

Linzi: If things go as I hope, very soon I will leave this place.

Cordula: (*Sarcastically*) We will resign ourselves to the idea!

Linzi: You are just jealous, because they will pay two hundred thousand pounds to buy my apartment.

Cordula: I'd give you two hundred thousand punches in the head, anyway, if you find a fool who gives you such a sum, better for you. I'm certainly not envious. Although it seems strange to me, the apartment above mine has been vacant for a long time and, although the owner asks for much less, it has not yet been sold.

Linzi: The real estate agent assured me that a negotiation is already underway.

Cordula: If you are about to leave, why do you want to continue to cause discord? Leave without breaking our balls!

Linzi: (*Saddened*) Who will I quarrel with in the future? I'm afraid of finding myself more alone than now.

Cordula: Don't tell me you want me to console you!

Linzi: Forgive me! I know I have a very bad tempered.

Cordula: Okay, let's lay down our weapons.

Linzi: However, was it really necessary to remove the sign in front of the garage?

Cordula: Do you want to start arguing again?

Linzi: The real estate agent said she picked it up from the ground after a woman removed it.

Cordula: And why should I be the person the real estate agent saw? Then, this woman, who sees everything and is able to sell a house for double its value, who is she?

Linzi: I don't know! I found her here.

Cordula: And what was she doing?

Linzi: She was waiting for me.

Cordula: In someone else's house?

Linzi: In fact she was a strange woman, she talked to the furniture.

Cordula: Why? Did she sing the lullaby to the woodworms?

Linzi: I assure you she was talking to me, but she kept her face turned towards that cupboard. She also asked me for permission to open it to see Maverick's trophies. She touched everything in there.

Cordula: And you didn't stop her from doing it?

Linzi: I didn't think she was doing anything wrong. Given my presence, she certainly couldn't steal anything.

Cordula: (*Approaching the cupboard, she sees an object in a trophy*) She couldn't steal but she could put something.

Linzi: What is that?

Cordula: A little bottle with a strange red liquid inside.

Linzi: Could it be the blood of San Gennaro? Then the miracle happened again.

Cordula: The miracle would be if you became slier. Now what does San Gennaro have to do with it?

Linzi: I saw the miracle of blood liquefaction on television just yesterday.

Cordula: It seems to me rather unlikely that the famous miracle could happen inside Albertina's cupboard.

Linzi: I know I said nonsense, but it felt so romantic just thinking about it.

Cordula: I take and I bring this to my friend who works in the analysis laboratory, he will surely be able to tell us something.

Linzi: As soon as you know something call me.

Cordula: Why are you interested in this? Don't you have to move elsewhere?

Linzi: If you don't tell me, I'll ask the buyer for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for the apartment, so I'll stay here.

Cordula: Okay, as soon as I know something I'll warn you. Now let's go! I have to go and give my husband the medicines. *(And they leave the scene)*

Maverick, limping, enters the scene, accompanied by a girl.

Maverick: *(In tracksuit)* How bad this leg hurts!

Ivy: Sit down and let me see!

Maverick: *(Sitting down and leaning his leg on a chair)* If you weren't there, I wouldn't have been able to get home.

Ivy: We were two crazy to go to train in such a bad weather!

Maverick: I want to be a champion and I can't afford to skip a training day.

Ivy: I, on the other hand, simply have to lose weight.

Maverick: Do you think it's a serious wound?

Ivy: I don't know, I'm a simple baker, not a doctor, however it doesn't look good.

Maverick: How can there be people so irresponsible as to blindly shoot in the woods?

Ivy: These incidents happen more often than you think around the time the hunt is open.

Maverick: It doesn't seem to me that it is the period of mixed hunting and neither that of wood pigeon hunting.

Ivy: It may have been a poacher who fired.

Maverick: What if it was some biologist who simply wanted to put an animal to sleep to apply a microchip and then monitor it?

Ivy: In fact, that kind of syringe I found next to you might suggest this possibility.

Maverick: Anyway, I don't know why I didn't fall asleep right away. Sleep is only taking me now.

Ivy: I think the dosage of sedatives changes depending on the individual or species you want to sedate. In any case, you must go to the hospital immediately. It seems to me that your leg is getting worse visibly.

Maverick: You are right! Please, inside that jacket is my phone. Can you take it and bring it to me?

Ivy: *(Rummaging in the jacket pointed to her)* There is absolutely nothing here, maybe you put it elsewhere.

Maverick: Yet I was convinced I had left it there. If at least my parents were in the house, I could use theirs.

Ivy: Don't you have a landline phone?

Maverick: No, it was removed a few months ago.

Ivy: So what do we do?

Maverick: I don't know.

Ivy: Where could your parents have gone? Will they have gone to the cinema?

Maverick: Impossible!

Ivy: At this point I go to my house to call an ambulance.

Maverick: Don't leave me alone, I'm starting to feel some strange symptoms.

Ivy: I am sure that if I went to knock on some door of this building, nobody would open it for me. With everything that happens every day, there is distrust of strangers. So I'll waste less time if I go straight home. In half an hour I'm sure I can do it.

Maverick: *(Who can no longer keep his eyes open)* What a sleep...

Ivy: *(Worried)* Don't do it, stay awake! In these cases it is better not to fall asleep.

The doorbell rings and Ivy goes to open the door.

Urban: *(Less and less lucid)* Albertina, how have you changed! What have you done?

Ivy: I'm not Albertina, I'm Ivy.

Urban: What are you doing? Do you smoke ivy? Listen to me, marijuana is much better.

Ivy: I don't smoke anything, Ivy is my name.

Urban: *(He enters the room and seeing Maverick half passed out)* I don't believe you! Look how he is!

Ivy: There is a misunderstanding, he...

Urban: *(Interrupting her)* You don't have to be ashamed, you can tell me. You don't know how many drugs I take that are full of opiates! Between us, I'm always high. *(Laughing)*

Ivy: There is little to laugh about! Maverick needs to go to the hospital, so we need to get an ambulance right away.

Urban: Is he Maverick?

Ivy: Of course! Who did you think he was?

Urban: I thought he was Vance. Who else! Albertina, don't you even remember who your husband is anymore? Then you are worse than me!

Ivy: Still with this story! Anyway, do you have a cell phone with you?

Urban: Sure!

Ivy: Then give it to me now!

Urban: Take it by yourself, it's in the front pocket of my pants, I can't. *(Pretending to have an impediment in the hands)*

Ivy: *(After rummaging in the pocket indicated to her)* There is nothing here.

Urban: Of course! My doctor doesn't prescribe me the right medicines!

Ivy: You are a real pig. Don't you realize the gravity of the situation? Maverick could die.

Urban: If he smoked less...

Ivy: It's useless, it's like talking to the wall!

Urban: *(After approaching Maverick)* He really is Maverick! *(Then he takes the mobile out of his back pocket)* Now I'll take a photo of him, then let's see if his mother still has the nerve to say he's not high.

Ivy: *(Taking the phone out of his hand)* I'll take this! You are crazy.

Urban: How rude you are!

Ivy: *(He dials the number and since Urban continues to complain)* Shut up a moment! I'm calling for help... Hello? I need an ambulance immediately... where? *(Turning to Urban)* What is the address of this place?

Urban: I won't tell you, you treat me badly... *(Starting to hum)* Life is like ivy...

Ivy: Stop immediately and tell me where you live.

Urban: Upstairs.

Ivy: Maverick please wake up! Tell me the name and the house number of this street.

Maverick: *(With a faint voice)* 123, Downing Street.

Ivy: 123, Downing Street. Hurry up!

Urban: I'm leaving now. I'll leave the phone here, in case you need it again, I'll come back for it later. *(And he leaves the scene)*

Ivy: What a strange character! *(And she puts the phone on the table)*

The doorbell rings and Ivy goes to open the door.

Ivy: *(Thinking Urban is back)* Have you changed your mind? Do you want the phone back?

Theodora: Who are you?

Ivy: I'm the person who rescued Maverick.

Theodora: Why where is he? How is he?

Ivy: He's here but I think he needs urgent care.

Theodora: What happened to him?

Ivy: Someone shot him.

Theodora: *(Running up to him and taking his hand)* Maverick how are you? Where did they hit you?

Ivy: He passed out, he can't hear you. He was injured in the calf.

Theodora: *(Lifting his pants)* There is only a small hole, but it doesn't look like it was caused by a bullet. There is also no blood around the lesion. Maybe who hit him used a blank pistol.

Ivy: I really don't think so. *(Showing her a syringe)* These are shot with a special rifle.

Theodora: What is that?

Ivy: I found it near him. After reaching the target, it must have fallen to the ground, probably at the moment when Maverick moved his leg to see what had happened.

Theodora: *(Observing it)* What do you think it contains?

Ivy: The doctors of the hospital will find out. An ambulance will arrive shortly to take him there.

Theodora: You're an angel.

Ivy: The angel now has to fly home to take a shower. I'm sure to leave Maverick in good hands.

Theodora: Go ahead, I'll wait for the rescuers.

Ivy: This is the cell phone of a strange man who lives in this building, maybe he will come back for it...

Theodora: And why did he leave it here?

Ivy: He is a person who does and says nonsense things...

Theodora: Thanks again for everything, if you weren't there to rescue Maverick...

Ivy: I did it with pleasure. As soon as he wakes up, say hello for me. *(And she leaves the scene)*

Theodora: Maverick, can you hear me? I'm going to the bathroom to get something to disinfect the wound. In the meantime, I also call your parents.

Maverick: *(Who regains consciousness for a moment)* Hi Theodora! Where am I?

Theodora: At your house and help will arrive soon.

Maverick: I am very cold.

Theodora: I'm going to get you a blanket. *(And she leaves the scene)*

Maverick: Someone stop this room! *(Then, starting to look under the table)* What a beautiful bunny I see and you beautiful kitten come to me...

Theodora: *(Who comes back on stage with a blanket in hand)* Your parents will be here soon.

The doorbell rings and Theodora goes to open the door.

Alden: It's me again.

Theodora: Who are you?

Alden: You aren't the same person to whom I delivered the previous letter.

Theodora: If you have to deliver something, hurry up and then leave. We have no time to waste.

Alden: We will do it in the blink of an eye! If Mr. Maverick Robinson puts me a signature here...
(Showing the waybill)

Theodora: As you can see, he can't do that, so I'll sign the receipt myself.

Alden: It isn't possible.

Theodora: Can't you see he's passed out?!

Alden: The company I work for has very strict rules that I have to follow.

Theodora: Then you'll have to come back another time.

Alden: Absolutely not! I will not leave until I have delivered this letter.

Theodora: I have an idea. Put the receipt to sign in front of Maverick.

Alden: And who assures me that he is really Mr. Robinson?

Theodora: How pedantic you are!

Alden: Show me his ID so I can make sure he's the recipient I'm looking for.

Theodora: All right, I'll go see if I find it. *(And she leaves the scene)*

Alden: *(Left alone with Maverick)* You got quite a hangover!

Maverick: *(Resuming consciousness for a moment)* I'm thirsty...

Alden: For me you have already drunk enough!

Maverick: Please, I just want some water, I'm not drunk.

Theodora enters the scene.

Theodora: Here's his ID, check it! *(After showing the ID to the man who verifies Maverick's identity)* Come Maverick, you have to sign the receipt, I'll give you a hand. *(Guiding her boyfriend's hand)* Now give me the letter and go!

Alden: *(After delivering the letter)* There would be one more thing.

Theodora: *(Angry)* What else do you still want?

Alden: Don't get mad like this! I just need to relay another message.

Theodora: From whom?

Alden: From the sender who, however, intends to remain anonymous

Theodora: And you can't refrain from respecting the rules because they are very strict.

Alden: Exactly! Basically I have to give you my mobile number.

Theodora: If this is an excuse to approach me, you have the wrong person.

Alden: Even if you are very beautiful, I would never dangle after a girl while I work.

Theodora: And what would I need your phone number for?

Alden: You will need it to reply to our anonymous sender.

Theodora: Today is the day of the mysteries. Anyway tell me the number and then we'll see.

Alden: 329/8449721

Theodora: I better take note otherwise I'll forget it for sure. *(Taking pen and paper, she writes down the number)* Okay, I written.

Alden: That is all for the moment. *(And he leaves the scene)*

Theodora: *(While she is opening the letter)* Maverick tries to stay awake, I think it is important that you listen. If someone has used this system to deliver this message to you, it means that something serious is at stake.

Maverick: I'll try!

Theodora: "If, when you read this letter, you are not yet dead, you will have only one chance to save your life: comply with my requests. You have a few hours left, so I advise you to hurry. This shouldn't be a problem for you, as you are used to racing against time, but this time the prize is your own life. It was I who poisoned you and only I can save you. So, if you want to save your life, you will need to:

- 1 - report your coach to the authorities, providing concrete evidence, for instigation and supply of doping substances;
- 2 - give up on the next marathon;
- 3 - run clean for the rest of your life;
- 4 - tell the truth to your parents.

Clearly, within the time of the ultimatum you will be able to fulfill only points 1 and 4. For the other two you will have to promise that you will carry out what is requested. If you don't keep your word, I'll hit you deadly next time. Therefore, to have the antidote you will have to send me two videos. One with your self-report in the presence of your parents and the required promises and one in which your coach confesses his faults. If I receive the two videos by midnight, your life will be saved. To send them to me, you will need to contact the rider who gave you this message. Save the recordings on a USB stick, give it to the courier and you will have the antidote."

You really disappointed me. You know that I hate those who resort to doping.

Maverick: My coach forced me, otherwise...

Theodora: That's enough! We talk about it later, now we have to call Uber, we have little time.

Maverick: I can't, I don't have a phone.

Theodora: This is not a problem, you can call him with mine. Tell him to come here and then make him confess while I record the conversation.

Maverick: Thanks for your help, I promise you everything will change. *(Theodora dials the phone number that Maverick dictates and then hands him the phone)* Hi Uber ... I'm calling you from Theodora's phone, because mine broke. You should come to my house, I absolutely have to talk to you ... don't worry, it's just me in the house.

Theodora: What did he tell you?

Maverick: The fish took the bait. He said he is nearby and he will arrive right away.

Theodora: So I hide under the table and record everything. You look dehydrated, can I bring you some water?

Maverick: *(After drinking)* Now it's a little better. *(The doorbell rings. Maverick goes to open the door, after having looked through the peephole)* It's him, go hide!

Uber: Luckily you called me! I have to tell you one important thing: today the steroid prescriptions ended up in the hands of a woman who was here in your house. Being too compromising, I had to snatch them out of her hands, but now you have to make up with an excuse for your parents to justify my behavior.

Maverick: How was this possible? Where did you put them?

Uber: In the usual colored envelopes, which your father had placed on the table. Maybe she took them by mistake, but then she didn't want to give them back.

Maverick: What drugs were prescribed on those prescriptions?

Uber: The same ones that I always make you prescribe before a competition.

Maverick: Won't they harm my health in the end?

Uber: In fact, today, you don't have a nice look, maybe it's better to stop for a while.

Maverick: But in three weeks there is the race.

Uber: A few days before the run you will start taking them again.

Maverick: What if I permanently stop taking those substances?

Uber: Do you want to become a champion or not?

Maverick: Yes, but I don't want to compromise my health. What if the doping controls found me out?

Uber: Nothing ventured nothing have!

Maverick: I tell you officially: I don't intend to take those doping substances anymore.

Uber: And how do you think you can win?

Maverick: Maybe it won't happen again, but if I win from now on it will be on my own merits. Also, there is no victory that can be more important than one's life!

Uber: What are you raving about? You will see that this momentary discomfort will pass.

Maverick: Now you can go, for my parents don't worry, I'll find a convincing excuse.

Uber: I'll call you tomorrow. You, however, do not be stupid and think again. *(And leaves the scene)*

Maverick: Did you record the conversation?

Theodora: *(Coming out from under the table)* I recorded everything. Now you just have to confess to your parents and...

Albertina, Vance and Ciano enter the scene.

Albertina: Maverick, how are you? You have no idea what a scare we got!

Maverick: Mom, I'm unwell!

Vance: What have you got, my son?

Maverick: For now I can only tell you that I'm a fool. I use performance-enhancing drugs to win, but I'm really sorry. So I will give up on the next marathon and in the future I will run fairly.

Vance: And do you tell us this way?

Maverick: I have to race against time. If by midnight the person who's blackmailing me doesn't get my confession and my promises, I'll die. *(Meanwhile Theodora records everything with the phone)*

Albertina: Oh my God! In fact, on the letter it was written: "Since he is used to racing against time, this time he will only have until midnight".

Maverick: That's right, if I don't do what he asked of me, that will be the hour of my death.

Theodora: Read this.

Ciano: *(He takes the letter and, after reading it, shows it to Vance and Albertina)* It's more serious than I thought.

Theodora: *(Showing the syringe given to her by Ivy)* And this is responsible for his poisoning. Someone shot it at him while he was running. It was only thanks to a girl who saved him that he was able to return home. *(Then, showing the phone)* Anyway, the confessions requested by the blackmailer are recorded here, so the first step has been taken.

Albertina: Now all that remains is to save them on a USB stick.

Vance: I'll take care of that! Meanwhile, you call the rider. *(And he leaves the scene)*

Albertina: Give me the number, I'll do it!

Theodora hands the sheet of paper on which she had marked the courier's telephone number to Albertina. The doorbell rings.

Albertina: I'm going to make that phone call, you go and open the door. *(And she leaves the scene)*

Ciano opens the door. Cordula and Urban enter the scene.

Urban: I see that you have begun to scrounge often here too.

Cordula: Stop talking nonsense or I will make you prescribe medicines that stop your tongue!

Urban: The only thing that still moves, do you want to stop it?

Cordula: *(Dragging her husband into an armchair)* Now sit here and shut up! *(Then turning to Ciano)* I have to tell you what I found out.

The doorbell rings and Ciano goes to open the door again. Alden enters the scene.

Alden: I was faster than light, right?

Ciano: Who are you?

Theodora: He is the courier.

Albertina and Vance enter the scene. The man has a USB stick in his hand.

Vance: Ah, are you already here?

Alden: Speedy Gonzales is a snail compared to me.

Vance: Then run as fast as you can this time too.

Alden: I know. I have to deliver what you will give me in five minutes.

Ciano: Wait a moment! I'm coming with you, so we arrest that bastard.

Alden: It's not possible, my bicycle is not a tandem!

Ciano: We can go by car so we save time.

Alden: You are wrong. I was asked to leave the USB key that you have to give me in a specific point of the park where you cannot arrive by car.

Theodora: No receipt to sign? Where have all the rules imposed by the company you work for gone?

Alden: The customer intends to remain anonymous and has paid a double rate for this, so some exceptions are allowed.

Albertina: These are useless speeches! Let him go!

Alden: Well said! Also because I always deliver on time. *(He takes what he has to deliver and leaves the scene)*

Cordula: Can you tell me what's happening?

Urban: To me in this family they all seem more out of mind than me and without taking medicine!

Ciano: I hope the decision not to follow the rider is right. I would not want the person responsible to go unpunished.

Albertina: I just want to save my son's life, everything else doesn't matter.

Maverick: I have no idea who could be responsible for all of this.

Ciano: Maybe someone who is closer to you than you think.

Theodora: Who are you referring to?

Ciano: I was certainly not referring to you but to your mutual friend. Let's start with the reason. It seems obvious to me that this is someone who wants Maverick to start competing fairly for personal gain. He is certainly not someone who cares about his health, otherwise he would not have poisoned him.

Theodora: The only one who runs at his level is Fulk Matthews, but he is a very good boy and would never do such a thing.

Ciano: You are partly right and partly not. When I questioned him, I realized he was hiding something. Also, since the blackmailer phoned Albertina's cell phone twice, it must be someone close to the family who could easily get that number. Mr. Matthews, attending Maverick assiduously, may have certainly had the opportunity.

Albertina: This is true! Not many people have my phone number; only close friends and relatives have it.

Ciano: Clearly Fulk could not have fired the shot that wounded Maverick, because I have verified his alibi and it is irrefutable, so it was an accomplice who fired. And not just any person, but someone who is familiar with guns and good aiming. In order not to be noticed, in fact, he must have fired from a certain distance.

Theodora: The father, in fact, is a hunter.

Ciano: This confirms my suspicions.

Vance: Then let's go arrest him.

Ciano: Not before having received the antidote.

Vance: Quite right! I was impulsive.

Ciano: And then, to indict people, you need evidence; we only have clues that would not be enough to set up an accusation.

Albertina's mobile rings.

Albertina: *(While everyone present stands in suspense)* Hello? Yes... in the cupboard? And how would it end up there? He hung up.

Vance: What he said?

Albertina: That he is satisfied and that the antidote is in our cupboard.

Vance: *(He goes to check immediately)* That coward made fun of us, there's nothing here. We need to trace the call immediately.

Ciano: That boy is smart, even the last few times it has not been possible to do so, he has always called from a pay phone and this time I am sure he will not have done otherwise.

Cordula: Unfortunately I know why what you are looking for is not there.

Albertina: What do you mean?

Cordula: Wait to draw conclusions! Having learned from Linzi that the real estate agent had rummaged in there, I checked and I found that bottle. Intrigued, I sent her to analyze, but I haven't had the results yet.

Vance: So the real estate agent put the antidote into the cupboard?

Cordula: I know this house and its contents very well and I knew that the bottle was not there before the arrival of that woman. So I worried about what it contained.

Ciano: Then that person is definitely Fulk's accomplice.

Albertina: There is no more time to waste! Cordula, you have to go and get that bottle right away.

Cordula: At this time the laboratory is closed, we have to wait until tomorrow morning.

Maverick: By then I'll be dead already.

Urban: How much mess for a bottle! I have it...

Cordula: You?

Urban: While you weren't home, a boy came to bring it back and also left a note.

Cordula: Where is it?

Urban: The bottle or the note?

Cordula: The bottle.

Urban: *(Taking it out of a jacket pocket)* Here it is.

Cordula: *(After snatching it from her husband)* Maverick, drink soon!

Urban: Drink, but don't expect much, it's a poor quality wine, like the one he brings when he comes to dinner. *(Pointing Ciano)*

Cordula: *(Turning to Urban)* What did you do, did you drink it?

Urban: Not all. I had put that bottle on the table next to the one for the wine we buy and I made a bit of a mess. In fact, at first it seemed a bit bitter to me, then I acquired a taste for it...

Cordula: Thank goodness you haven't drunk it all!

Maverick: *(Before drinking the rest of the contents of the bottle)* Which antidote is given orally? It doesn't convince me, I don't drink it.

It strikes midnight. Albertina's cell phone rings again.

Albertina: Hello? Yeah, ah... *(Then hangs up)* It was him, he said the syringe was put there before the shot, just to make you believe it was responsible for your poisoning. You were actually hit by a small bullet that only causes skin irritation and drowsiness and not death, while the small bottle in the cupboard contained poor quality wine with the addition of a few drops of laxative. He wanted to force you to drink it to get you clean of all that crap you took.

The doorbell rings, Cordula goes to open the door and two stretcher bearers enter the scene.

Dean: Sorry for the delay, but there was an overturned truck in the middle of the road that prevented transit. Where is the sick man?

All those present look at each other not knowing how to answer.

Theodora: We don't know more precisely, certainly one of the two. *(Pointing to Maverick and Urban)*

Dean: Don't you know? So what do we do? Shall we take one away at random?

Urban: I'll come, at least I cleanse myself once and for all of all the drugs my wife makes me take.

Dean: The woman who called us said the condition of the person to be taken to the hospital was very serious, I don't think that's so.

Urban: Wait to talk after I've been to the loo! *(He climbs on the litter and the curtain closes)*

THE END