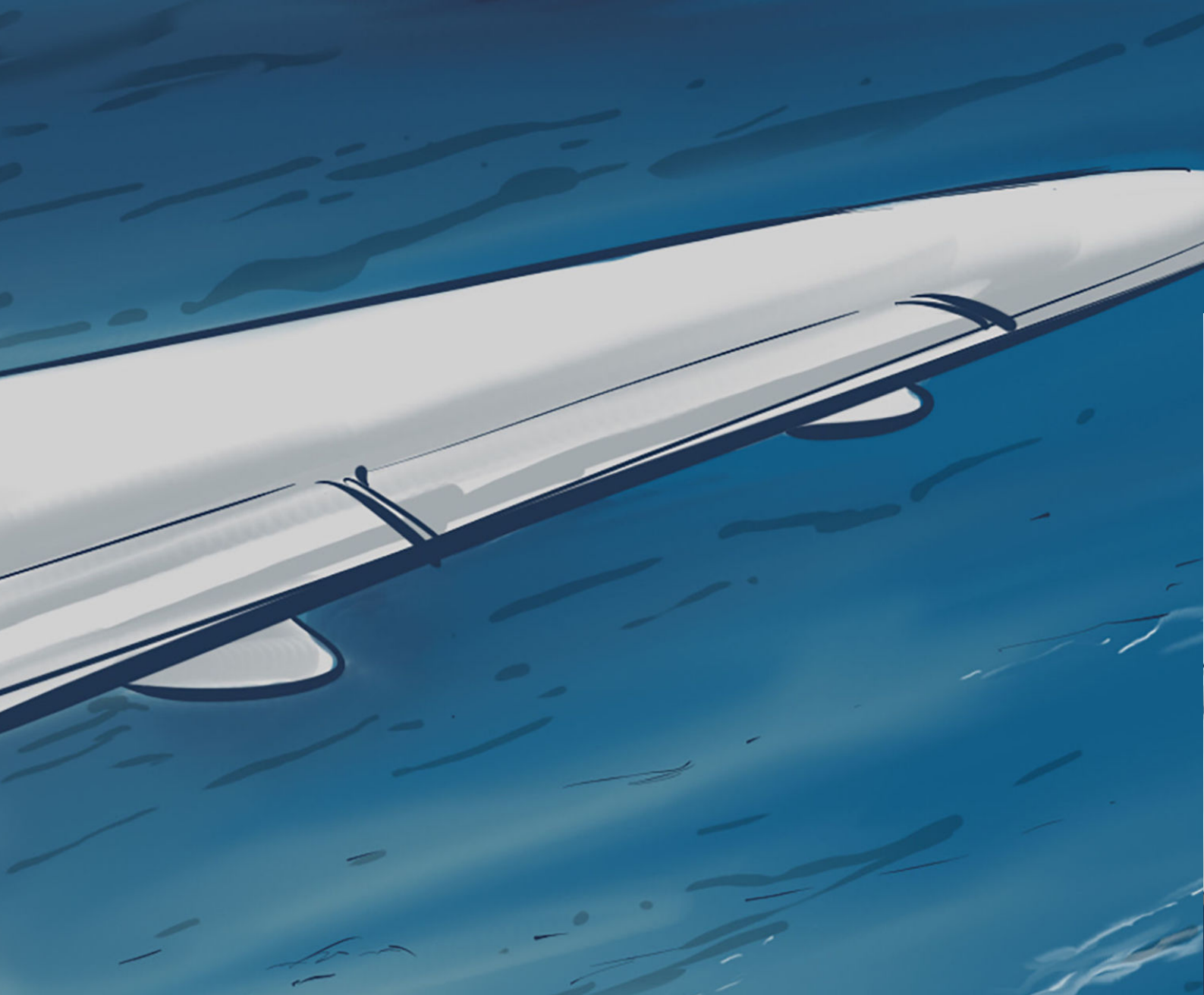




AMERICAN CHOCOLATE

STORY BY: FRED CORNFORTH
ILLUSTRATIONS BY: LEO



The Caspian Sea was violent with white caps visible from thousands of feet in the air. The wind was stiff and unpredictable. Somehow our Aeroflot flight found its way to the ground.



Our hosts stood on the tarmac looking in every way like KGB agents. Later we learned one was a retired KGB!

They broke into disarming smiles and handshakes, representing the local group who had invited me to travel some 6,000 miles to speak in South Central Russia.



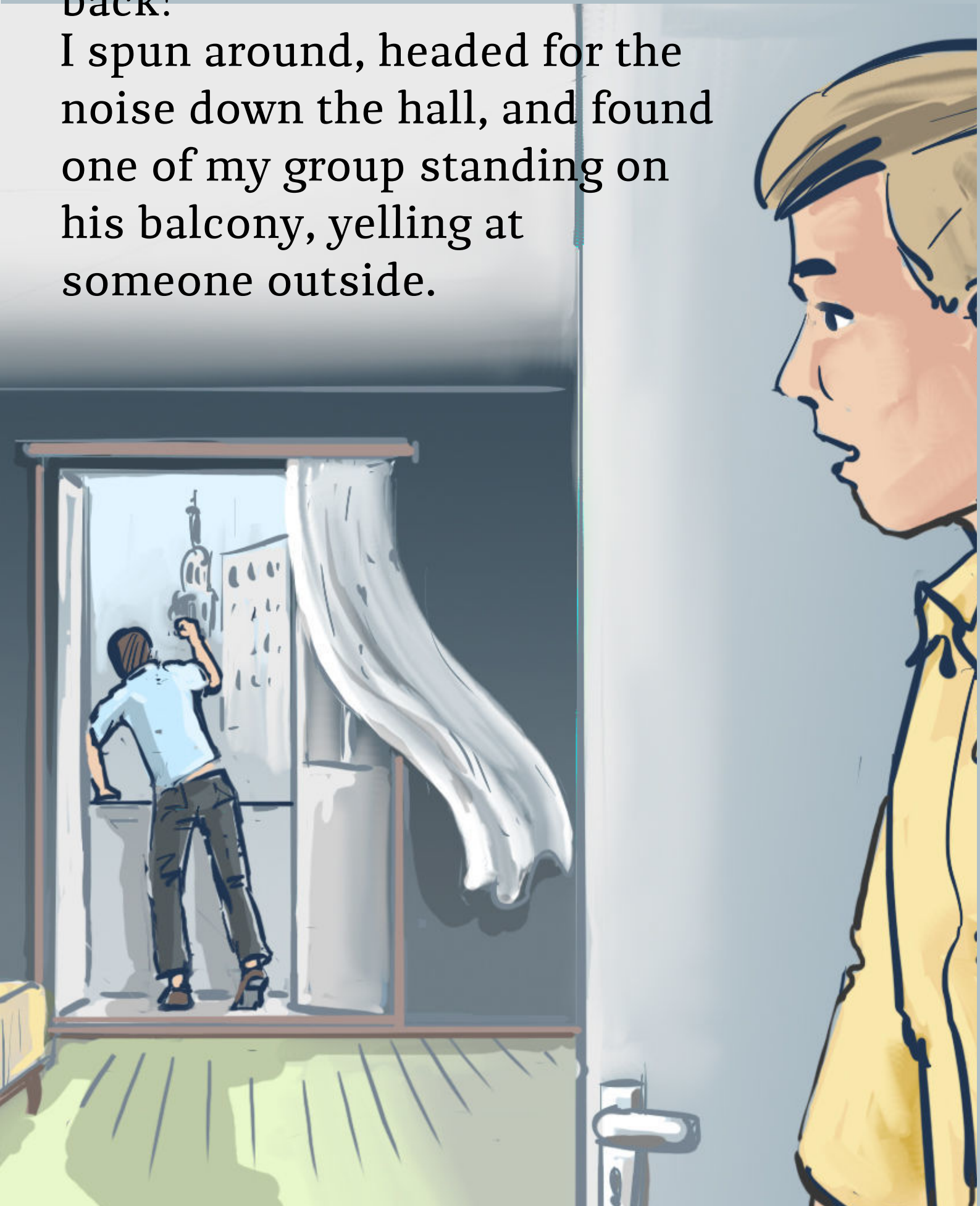
We immediately settled into the hotel we'd room in for the next several days. Then our hosts and interpreter invited us to try their local ice cream hangout so we could continue to get to know each other.

Afterward we walked back to our hotel and climbed the stairs to the second floor.



As I entered my room, one of our team yelled out, "Hey, stop! Give me my bag back!"

I spun around, headed for the noise down the hall, and found one of my group standing on his balcony, yelling at someone outside.



When he'd entered the room moments before, he surprised a burglar who made off with one of his athletic bags. We could see the thief disappear around the corner, amazed at the athleticism it took to jump down nearly fifteen feet to the ground, and disappear into the city, never to be seen again.



For a moment, we were all stunned, but the teammate who had lost his bag began to laugh.

I found his response odd, but as he gained control of himself, he told the now crowded room what had just happened. While he was going to miss his Adidas bag, he had already placed most of his clothes in the dresser found in his room.



Only two items had remained in the bag: a roll of toilet paper and a box of medicine -- chocolate flavored Exlax!

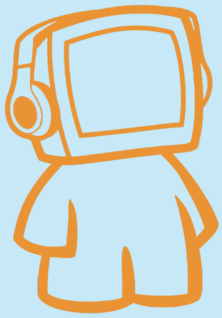
The robber must be disappointed, we imagined, as he opened up the bag to find such invaluable items. We were sure that what appeared to be "American chocolate," would be consumed quickly in one setting.



How ironic the thief would also have a roll of toilet paper, which he would soon need after eating a whole package of laxatives.

Taking other people's stuff is never good. It's been said that crime doesn't pay, but I'd go further: sometimes crime pays back in the most unexpected ways.





GOOD TO GO

MEDIA

