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Play	FOX DARK AS LIGHT NIGHT
Original name / translated	Лисиця темна як світла ніч
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The characters

Igor

Carmen

Saria

The city people

IGOR

Life is a very strange thing. And one of the strangest things is that you suffer from the start – because it tears you to pieces like wet newspaper, ripped by the feet of passers-by. You cling to the ground but you dream of flying up to a good, dry place. Then you curl up, and become slavishly desperate. You grab people by the legs. You wrap them in soggy galoshes. You get caught in endless puddles. You tease the light. You squelch in the dark. You spatter in the rain. And one day you get tossed out on a windy mound. You breathe. You sigh. You wrinkle your surviving bones. You get stuck in the gap between the bars of a fence or bench. Or tumble into a landfill. You're already ordinary, solid, dried up. You nod indulgently in the wind. You school pigeons with your meaningless rattle. You rebuke the flowers with your smell of urine. Then one night, woken by the roar of thunder, you realize that you've completely forgotten your ragged beginnings down the road. And that in forgetting your miserable origins, you have betrayed the single living part of you. And then the inconsolable squeal of the fat rat bursts from your gut so you vomit a kind of cry, aimed

at the empty void of the sky, compelling its waters to come back to you... because you are ready to tear yourself to pieces, but can't. And you suffer from it. A very strange thing. Life.

IGOR IS ON SKYPE. HE IS AN ONLINE TEACHER OF JAPANESE.

IGOR: Γのキツネがいたとしても、捕まえようとしないでください。お (Mahō no kitsune ga ita to shite mo, tsukamaeyou to shinaide kudasai.)

STUDENT Never ... never ... the magic fox is very close ... To catch ... I'm sorry, I don't understand that. We haven't learned that yet.

IGOR: Yes, good. I'm sorry. Here's your homework. ママはフレームを洗いました。ペティアとガンヌシャははボルシチを作りました。Mama wa furēmu o araimashita. Petia to Gannushya wa borushichi o tsukurimashita.

STUDENT: Mom loves the picture. Petya and Hannusya cooked borsch.

IGOR WRITES A LETTER.

IGOR: Hello, Zhenya-san. Tonight someone rang the doorbell again. My door bell. Just once. But I lay there for a long time wet in a sweat, motionless... trying to distract myself from the memories that at once came flooding through me... as if I had got up and opened the door wide for them. How strange they can still catch me by surprise. I always remember. I remember all my past life. Yes, I can already call it my past life. I think I can. Yes, when they all ambushed me and beat me up. I also remember the date. But I try to think only about specific things. The supermarket. Cars. Pigeons. Clouds. A package from the supermarket on the table. My laptop. Skype. Tea. Beer. But yes I remember. Everything. Even when sitting at home, in the little comfort of this burrow. I seem to have become split in two - I live in one place, and I remember another. I live during the day and I remember the night. Or is it vice versa? And where am I really? I simply do not exist, I dissolve in these two streams of my being. I just dissolve in everything - in the voices of neighbours, in the sounds of the street from the balcony, in the light of the orange lamp, in the parquet patterns on the floor. This is the first time I have lived in such an old house with such parquet. My heart skips a beat when I hear someone climbing the stairs. That's all I've become. That's all. The fact that I met her is such an incredible coincidence. Or vice versa - it was inevitable. After all, she stood there like a shadow. And I walked past like a shadow. Although I thought that there was only one shadow in this city - me. Maybe that's why I looked back, I couldn't help but look back. She looked at the world in a very strange way. I was very worried about her. And for myself.

IGOR VERY SLOWLY FOLDS THE LETTER AS ORIGAMI INTO THE SHAPE OF A CRANE. HE PUTS IT IN A BOX OF DOZENS OF THE SAME PAPER FIGURES....

IGOR: So. The tale of the fox. The magic fox. Almost all Japanese fairy tales contain magical foxes. There once was a small village in the mountains. Very small. A single grandmother lived there. Yet she loved to have fun and attend various holidays and festivals. So one day, she decided to visit her relatives who lived in a big city and she started the long walk there.

STUDENT それで、山に村がありました。とても小さかったです。そこにお祖母さんが住んでいました。彼女はお祭りとお祝いがとても好きでした。彼女は大都市に住んでいた親族を訪問しました。Sore de, yama ni mura ga arimashita. Totemo chīsakatta des. Soko ni obāsan ga sunde imashita. Kanojo wa omatsuri to oiwai ga totemo sukideshita. Kanojo wa daitoshi ni sunde ita shinzoku o hōmon shimashita

IGOR: Once, when we were sitting at my house drinking raspberry tea, I invited her over for a beer. She refused because it was cold. She asked me what I was thinking about. I was thinking about my grandmother. Tell me about Grandma, she asked. *Tell me about grandma.* I told her this tale. What else could I do?

そして、一度彼女はその大都市を訪れました。お祖母さんはそこに長い間滞在しまして、夜に家に帰ることに決めました。

天気良かったので、彼女は大都市に泊まりたくなくて、家に帰りたいかった。

Soshite, ichido kanojo wa sono daitoshi o otozuremashita. Obāsan wa soko ni nagaiaida taizai shimashite, yoru ni ie ni kaeru koto ni kimemashita.

Tenki ga yokattanode, kanojo wa daitoshi ni tomaritakunakute, ie ni kaeritakatta.

So once, when the old woman, the grandma, was visiting the city, she stayed a long time and it was night already when she decided to return home.

IGOR Once, my grandmother was visiting relatives and stayed late. It was already night when she decided to return home. She walked and walked, and suddenly saw a bunch of people running through the woods. They greeted grandmother and invited her to come with them. The people looked very strange and she had no idea what they were doing in the middle of the forest. But my grandmother loved parties and agreed to go with them. On a large lawn between the trees, she saw a theatre stage. The actors came out and performed a sad play about a fox that saved a samurai from death, then came to him as a young beautiful girl. The fox girl and the samurai married and they had a child. In the end, though, the fox girl had to return to the forest. Grandma really liked the show, and she was fed a variety of delicious tidbits. Later, a few days later, she told her relatives in the city about how she had met these people in the woods and about their theatre. But the relatives said they were not real people - just forest spirits and magical animals. And the tidbits were just dried pigshit.

Grandma didn't believe them and went home through the mountains again at night. In the meadow she saw a fox, which suddenly turned into a beautiful girl and began to dance in the moonlight. Then my grandmother realized that she had indeed met some inhuman beings.

SARIA: *Oh, how beautiful!*

IGOR: *What?*

SARIA: *She just danced. Alone.*

IGOR: *What?*

SARIA: *Sometimes I feel like that fox.*

IGOR: *Alone?*

SARIA: *But beautiful. And dancing in the moonlight*

IGOR: Oh, how the moonlight would suit her ... That night we slept. And then lay hot and drank cold beer, in spite of everything. I immediately got drunk and began to talk about how beer helped me fall asleep on long lonely evenings in a strange city – the streets of which I could only secretly view from my burrow. "You are like a fox!" she said, laughing. "No, you're the fox," I replied. Charming.

SARIA: An inhuman creature?

IGOR: No, I'm an inhuman creature. I am a ghost creature.

SARIA: You're completely confused. You're drunk.

IGOR: I love you - I said in Ukrainian. She seemed to understand, because she pushed me away and turned to the other side, revealing a long red tail. And I was lying, looking at the ceiling and trying to distract myself as usual. I listened to the sounds from the porch and the rumble of the neighbours' radio. I tried to remember how I used to live on memories. I needed these memories. When I really felt like my past life was becoming a past life, I became scared. Who were you in your past life? Not was! Still am! And I have memories. Suddenly up came memories of how I lived a month ago - before I met her. How I lived when she was not here and nor was I.

IGOR: The hardest thing for me is to fall asleep normally. There are no problems when I'm actually sleeping. The problem is falling asleep. Just when I'm lying in the dark and ready to fall asleep, memories bubble up. So the answer is to not turn off the light immediately. Only when I feel completely drowsy do I turn off the last lamp next to the bed. But that doesn't always work. So sometimes I drink a bottle of beer. Reliable. I always have beer in the fridge. That, by the way, has not changed. It was like that then. It was like an anchor for me. To forget is to stop being. Forget about beer - forget about grandma. Forget about the basement. Forget about dusty canned food in the basement. Forget about the medallion. Yes, little by little I

realized that I came here, not to start a new life - but to remember the old. By the way, I remember this city very well. The main thing is not to come out of the hole. From the basement. From myself.

IGOR WRITES A LETTER

IGOR:

Hello, Zhenya-kun! There was no internet today. All my lessons were cancelled so I decided to go outside. That is, to really go out - not just to the supermarket and back, but a proper stroll on the pavements swinging a heavy black and white leather bag, not some flimsy plastic throwaway in the wind that gets caught on a bush. If you see what I mean? Do you remember the video where you're standing in the local park on the tenth day of the occupation? In the background, there's a big cloud of empty bags fluttering behind you, wafting and transparent, like a convoy of hungry phantoms heralding a ghostly apocalypse. And you're laughing in your way, telling me they're the spirits of those who left Donetsk – that Asda bag is a sales manager, the wrinkly black Boss bag worked for ZhEK, and those pastel disposables from the vegetable stalls are pizzeria girls. And soon the whole of Donetsk will be inhabited only by this rustling mass. We always loved to chase them, but that day the wind was so strong that it didn't only scatter the bags around the park – it brought tears to your eyes as well. It was so impulsive and angry. I often mention that video – maybe because it was your last. After that, you didn't shoot anymore. And it was the last time I saw my neighbourhood, at least on screen. Surprisingly, we hadn't crossed paths before, although we could have. I don't know why not. I take the fifth turning, head through the walkway, go past the deli, walk along the avenue, then past the loading bay and straight on to the 'loaf', and there, somewhere, you were always moving around on your skates with your phone camera. You knew half of my friends, I knew half of yours. So basically we had enough in common to understand each other's jokes. So, Zhenya-kun, as soon as you show up, I'll do with you what Colin's mother did to the Jehovah's Witness – the one who sneaked in through an open door and decided to tell Colin's schoolgirl sister about God through the bathroom door while she was in the shower. Well. You won't believe it, but now my neighbours behind the wall are listening to the very song that Uncle Vasya loved. So then. There was no internet today and I decided to go for a walk...

IGOR VERY SLOWLY FOLDS THE LETTER AN INTO ORIGAMI CRANE AND PUTS IN A BOX ALONG WITH DOZENS OF THE SAME PAPER FIGURES

IGOR:

What is reality? One of the billion possible correct answers is this: reality is the key, which, when you left home in a distracted mood, you for some reason didn't put in the usual place. So, when you come home, you start feverishly searching, rummaging here, there and everywhere in a fog of anxiety and irritation. You even seem to remember exactly where you lost these damn keys on your walk. But it's all an illusion. The keys lie quietly where you put them. What we think about ourselves, how we explain the events of our lives, is an illusion. Reality lies where we can't see it. As a rule, we are far from it. From the truth about yourself and your keys.

One day, I started Tinder and the next I immediately deleted it. Trying to make acquaintances made me almost physically sick.

TINDER:

IGOR: Hello!

GIRL1: Hello!

IGOR: Are we meeting somewhere?

GIRL1: Let's meet! Where?

IGOR: I don't know. You say.

GIRL1: "The Old Walls"?

IGOR: And where's that?

GIRL1: Aren't you from Lviv?

IGOR: I live here now. But I came here only a year ago.

GIRL1: A year? And you still don't know anything? And where are you from?

IGOR: From Donetsk.

GIRL1: Are you an immigrant?

IGOR: I don't know.

GIRL1: Well, you don't know. Did you come here from Donetsk?

IGOR: Yes.

GIRL1: So, an immigrant. But no worries. I'll treat you like a normal person.

IGOR: Are you from Lviv?

GIRL1: I'm from Rivne. But I study here at UCU.

IGOR: So you're an immigrant?

GIRL1: Hey?

GIRL 1: Why?

GIRL1: Dickhead.

...

GIRL2: Hello, I'm Julia!

IGOR: Hello, I'm Igor!

GIRL2: What do you want most now? I'll tell you too. We can say together – on one-two-three?

IGOR: Ok.

GIRL2: One, two, three!

IGOR: Well, right now I want someone to walk past my window and maybe whistle or throw a stone to make me look out so maybe we could have a beer together. Or coffee.

GIRL: Ahaha! Romantic!

IGOR: And your wish, Julia?

GIRL2: I'm not Julia, romantic! I'm Yuri. Do you want me to take a picture of my dick? Then coffee!

...

GIRL3: So you've been living here a year and haven't met anyone yet?

GIRL3: And you just go from home to the supermarket?

GIRL3: Tell me more. What do you think of besides the basement? Do you have any other dreams? And is the basement real, or a metaphor?

GIRL 3: You know, I think that you're still sitting in that basement and you've just internalized your fears so much that you're projecting them out. But you have to understand that an apartment is just an apartment. That you will not resurrect your grandmother. That you were not guilty of anything. It's just a coincidence. You have to open the door to a new life. You have to let go of all the memories - like letting down a balloon. Do you want to go to High Castle on Sunday and let go a symbolic balloon? I'll tell you how to encode all your negative memories on it. You will become a new person, really.

GIRL3: Are you there? Have you unsubscribed or something? Can you do that on Saturday. And how do you feel just eating jam in a basement?

GIRL3: Igor! It's really rude not to write anything to a girl for three hours! And tbh, I advise you to see a doctor. If you've been living here all year and haven't met anyone yet, it's an illness. Think about it.

...

IGOR: A wet newspaper, trampled by passers-by. Ok, people – why when you meet a blind man looking for his key, do you start pushing, pinching, and pushing him? How will this help him? He has a key - he just can't see it. It is easier, of course, to be like you - to forget what's lost and live on calmly pretending you've not lost anything. Then I realized most people live this way, yes really. So I stayed at home all year... Kidding! I didn't sit at home

for that. It's because in summer here the weather is so humid you turn into a snail, and in winter a naked lizard! Well, enough of the odd jokes. Back to the key, the undiscovered key. When I lost the internet, of course, I didn't go anywhere for a walk. Have you ever tried to stay at home for a year with just breaks for the supermarket? After that, even if you've got snakes and giant cockroaches in your home - you won't just go out for a stroll, believe me. Even if your apartment itself is destroyed, you somehow manage to stay in it. It's much easier than when you sat in the basement with your loved ones and wondered what you will do if one of them is killed. No, you are not thinking of that any more - of when you're just looking at one point on a dark wall - because you can't look at a light wall. You are looking at the dark because that makes it easier to not look anywhere. That's all you can do. At first, you feel disgusted that thoughts are just sluggishly flickering through your head like gray sputum, without setting off any more reflections. But then you realize that this is the only way to live at this time. This time in the basement. Some quarrel. Some pretend to be asleep. But it's all just the scuttling of lice. You are not a man, you're a louse. And that's all. Fullstop. This is a fact, how you pass time in the basement. Then of course you go out - you go up back and see people. But ... But sometimes you don't go out. My grandmother went out. Her neighbours could she was sicj because she had turned gray as ash... It doesn't matter how. It was clear she hardly needed missiles from the sky to kill her - just a gentle poke of the finger would be enough. She needed pills, but she had left them behind up there. I looked away from the wall and got up to get her some pills - we had some too. But grandma stopped me. 'Igor,' she said. 'I'll go up and get the pills. I want to get my family locket as well. My neighbour forgot the pills, and I forgot the locket. And without it, I'm sitting here like a woodpecker. And I don't want to be a louse; I just need to hold this family locket in my hands. I inherited from my grandmother. You don't know where it is, but I do.' And she went upstairs. And I stayed. I wouldn't have let her go even for the locket, but I was very impressed by her words about lice. After all, I felt the same, literally the same. So my grandmother went upstairs, and I did not. So even if I lose the Internet and go out for a walk on the street - it will not change the fact that I continue to sit here. Below. I cannot come out. I don't know how to come out now. How do lice become balloons? Where can I go except the supermarket?

Yes, and then I couldn't find the key. I searched all my pockets, all the linings of my jacket. I even looked in my socks. There was no key. I was standing on the stairs, for some reason many people were walking around me - up and down. If it weren't for these people, I would be still sitting stupidly on the carpet against the wall. So I had to go outside. To avoid conversations. I opened the front door and for the first time in a year thought about where to go - left or right? Do you think this is a simple question? Ha. Ha. ha.

IGOR'S APARTMENT, MYSTERIOUSLY TRANSFORMED BY THE PRESENCE OF SARIA - IT'S DARK AS LIGHT NIGHT, LIKE EYES SHUT IN SUNSHINE

SARIA So, you're a teacher?

IGOR Yes. Japanese language. Quite an exotic profession here.

SARIA So, you're a clever guy?

IGOR *(laughs)* Yes, I guess so!

SARIA When I was little, we had a teacher at school, a young white guy like you. He was so smart! He told lots stories!

IGOR: What kind of stories?

SARIA Oh all kinds. I often tried to trick him in class, copying, spying and all that. I thought I was smart, once outsmarting such a smart dude.

IGOR: Cunning as a fox.

SARIA Yes, I thought so. Then I somehow realized that he knew, saw and understood everything. All my tricks. I was very ashamed. I think he really felt sorry for me. Or ... Or he was in love with me - a little bit.

IGOR And I loved my teacher. I even went out with her once. More precisely, she went out with me. She was ten years older - and so ha-arna!

SARIA Why didn't you marry her?

IGOR Because I grew up. And she started dating another student.

SARIA Hmm, I don't know. That's kind of unhealthy.

IGOR When I saw them together, I wanted her to die.

SARIA She was cruel.

IGOR And she died.

When there was shelling, everyone ran to the basement. But they stayed to use this time when they had to hide from no one, when they could walk freely around the school holding hands, kissing against a backdrop of school vases and exhibitions of children's drawings on 'Love for the Fatherland', hugging each other against the posters, on the desk, on the teacher's desk, against the corridor wall, standing openly in the window, looking out together over familiar landscapes, seen only alone before, to write to each other on the blackboard what had long been written in wild imagination in class. And for a moment I was very upset with them. If you die from shelling, then so be it. I thought. Sometimes it is better not to go to the basement.

IGOR: I went outside. It was warm. I'd know idea where my key was. I was alone in a big city. For the first time in a year, I walked down this street just like that, walking nowhere. A granddad in a tank top overtook me. Why, I

wondered, do old people love to wear tank tops with so many pockets? How does this happen? Does maturity come and then you suddenly realize the humble appeal of this ugly but practical garment? Do government officials bring it to your home when you reach a certain age? Is there a secret initiation into the tank top? I suddenly wanted to live to a ripe old age and find out for certain. I did not want to think about the key. I walked slowly, looking diligently around, taking everything in. It all seemed so beautiful and meaningful. Another sleeveless granddad hurried pass. I smiled at him, he smiled at me, and suddenly I remembered the owner of the apartment where I lived, the same adept of practical tank tops. That's right, I just need to call him and ask for a spare key! It was here that a cyclist rushed past, leaving behind a train of bells, with a thin metal rattle. And the associations worked again - with mirror clarity I remembered that I heard the same rattle when I climbed the stairs and raised my hand to fix the collar of my jacket, which had got stuck on my neck in the loop of the hanger. A very light rattle, somewhere at the bottom of the stairs, from the basement. So quiet I didn't pay attention at the time - but my brain heard and remembered. My brain remembered, but I did not. I raised my hand again, touching my pocket - that's right, the key could have fallen out with this movement. The basement, I thought, you need to go down to the basement and find the key. Basement. Basement, basement, basement. I was already walking, not understanding where, in which direction, to or from home. There were more people around. I didn't want to look up. But the asphalt was so gray. I thought - if I pay - everything will be fine. Maybe it's finally time. But a drop of rain fell from above. I looked up. Yet it wasn't raining. It was a lone drop from the gray sky. And where is the rain? I thought. I want rain. Let it rain. The wind blew. A strong, evil wind. Another drop fell. Did it fall? Or did it just roll down my cheek? I looked up again. And I saw her, a motionless shadow, squeezed into the entrance to a house, trapped by a stream of people. She looked into my eyes. I looked into hers. And stopped. She held out something. She was dark-skinned with jet black hair and I was afraid that she was a gypsy who wanted to trick me. I froze. I turned away. The drop fell again. I froze, trying not to cry. And I could not, could not forget her look, full of hushed anxiety. And a crystal drop swelled either in my eye or on hers. I could not forget. Her beautiful eyes, her strange cheekbones. Her. I looked around. She was holding something out. I took it - it was an advertising leaflet. I looked and could not understand - what exactly I was being offered.

IGOR WRITES A LETTER.

IGOR:

Hello, Zhenya-kun! I'm in a rush again, you know. I'm trying to catch up. For me now again there is morning, lunch, early evening, late evening – not just day and night. I leave the window open at night so I can hear the clock on the tower ring and the morning coming. In the morning, I like to listen to the murmur of water in the drain from the toilet cistern - it lets me know day is coming. During the day, I like to watch the sunlight reflecting off the windows of trolleybuses and trams - they run into the early evening. And in the dusk, I iron shirts and even T-shirts, I read the weather forecast, and later I go for a walk with a girl. She is very beautiful.

I call her Carmen. Don't laugh. She really likes the red necklace I gave her. She has gorgeous black hair. And such sadness in her eyes, which light up with every bouquet of market flowers that I give her. I met her on the street. She handed me brochures. She was stood next to a house like a shadow. And yes, you guessed it, she saw me and looked straight at me, a shadow like her. I really wanted to talk to her, but I didn't know how, so I took a leaflet from her, then turned around, passed by and picked up another. Then I went the other way and reached for a leaflet again. By the fifth time, she was fuming, thinking I was making fun of her. But I must have looked so silly that she suddenly laughed. And it rained, warm good rain, on a warm good city. She is from the east. But she doesn't say where she's from - she just laughs when I try to guess and list countries from Tajikistan to Pakistan. She speaks broken English and I involuntarily adjust to it and also speak broken English, forgetting my university education. Soon I will have very good broken English... And I never found that key. I called the owner, an old man in a tank top and he gave me a spare.

IGOR VERY SLOWLY FOLDS THE LETTER INTO ORIGAMI CRANE AND PUTS IT IN A BOX OF DOZENS OF THE SAME PAPER FIGURES.

- IGOR: The city is calmed. The rustle of leaves. Muffled telephone conversations from late passers-by. The unbridled purring of drunken couples. The sharp rattle of cars. Rectangles of light moving over the ceiling. And now it's too late. I cannot sleep. I stroke her big fluffy tail with my arm. I'm sailing somewhere. Sweet cherries sprout through my ears. Apricot orchards stir like grass around my feet. A copper glow flickers behind the dark slender trunks of nut trees. This is my fox darting to and fro.
- IGOR I love you.
- IGOR I haven't said it out loud yet, I'm just putting my hand on my forehead.
- IGOR: I love you.
- IGOR: Now I'm whispering under my breath. And I touch the hair on the back of her head.
- IGOR: I love you.
- IGOR: I whisper in her ear, pretending to blow away a cobweb.
- IGOR: I love you.
- IGOR: I put my hand under her neck.
- IGOR: I I love you.
- IGOR: I exclaim in a hoarse whisper. She looks at me in fright. I press my finger to my lips. I sew with an invisible thread.
- IGOR: It's too late. The clock strikes four or five. I lie exhausted. But she never answered me. She just mumbled something indistinctly. I'm lying and

thinking – in what language did I speak to her? Maybe I spoke Ukrainian? Or maybe she did answer – but just in one of her own languages. Which one? Maybe that's why I didn't hear?

IGOR: I once found Tinder on her phone. I'm sorry, I picked up the phone and was so tempted to look at her photos, some of her old photos, to see where she came from, who she is. But I saw Tinder and put the phone down. She was in the shower at the time, of course. You can only see other people's phones when the owner is in the shower - and you can hear when the sound of water stops. And in principle ... What difference does it make to me who she is and where she comes from. I just live with her and don't think about anything. I do not ask anything. And that's fine. I know her name is Saria. This is a very good name. But I call her Carmen. Somehow she got used to it right away. When she first came to me she was wearing a black skirt and a red jacket. Carmen. But she was a very modest Carmen. She sat on the edge of a chair and looked down. She was overwhelmed with sadness, but I somehow forgot that. I simply saw a modest, incredibly beautiful girl, eyes shyly cast down like a true oriental.

IGOR: When we went to the cafe to drink tea, she didn't even let me pour tea into her mug. She did it herself. That was cool.

IGOR: Are you studying to be a doctor?

SARIA: No. Do I look like a doctor?

IGOR: No. I just thought you were a student.

SARIA: I was a student. Do you live far away?

IGOR: No. Not far. We can come to me somehow.

SARIA: Let's go.

IGOR: Now?

SARIA: Now.

IGOR: And here we are sitting at my house. She is on the edge of a chair. I offer her a beer. She refuses because it's cold. I pull out raspberry jam.

SARIA: What are you thinking about?

IGOR: About my grandmother.

SARIA: Tell me about your grandmother.

IGOR: My grandmother used to live in a mountain village ...

IGOR: Why did she agree to come to me so quickly? No, she didn't agree - she suggested it herself. In the east, girls look down, pour you tea and ask you to come home. What would my grandmother say ... My grandmother who

bequeathed me two jars of jam. I had brought them with me and kept them for an exceptional occasion. Now is just such an occasion. So we eat grandma's jam. It paints Carmen's lips in shades of noir. Evening falls outside the window. Saria looks up, her eyes wide with sadness, as if she were in complete darkness. But I see only the glow of a red lamp. I feel incredibly warm. I'm home. We are alone, completely alone in this city foreign for both of us, but we are at home. We are with each other. One to one.

IGOR: Saria. Carmen. Are you okay?

SARIA: I'm fine.

IGOR: Are you sad?

SARIA: I'm sad.

IGOR: Why are you sad, Carmen?

SARIA: Because I'm fine.

IGOR: Well, that's how it was. And so the month passed. I never found out where she was from. I just didn't ask. I didn't want to scare her or anything. It was enough for me that she is now completely with me. Well, so I thought.

IGOR: Carmen, Carmen, what region are you from, what city are you from? Where are girls brought up in such a way they pour tea for guys, looking down, then go home with them after knowing them just three days and stay overnight. Maybe you didn't have a place to spend the night? Did the moon shine so dimly that you confused my room with your home? And where does the scar on your supple back come from? But I didn't ask her anything. Maybe I was afraid she would ask me questions?

IGOR: One day I picked up her phone again when I heard the sound of water from the shower. I opened the folder with photos straightaway. I started flipping through shots of Lviv streets, other oriental-looking girls, hookah joints. I saw some dark guy hugging my Carmen against a distant background of gray mountains and dazzling blue sky. I looked at her for a long time, then suddenly realized I hadn't the water for a who;e. Saria was standing over me, wrapped in a blue towel, incredibly beautiful. I threw the phone on the bed – then immediately asked, without giving her the chance to speak:

IGOR: Who is it?

IGOR: She understood.

SARIA: This is my brother. And you're an asshole.

IGOR: That night I was lying alone in bed. I shut the window. I drew the curtain. I lay in the dark and remembered the tale of the fox. It was bullshit, they said. But my grandma still went to the mountains again. What if the fox ate

her? What can you expect from those inhuman creatures that live in the forest? Anything. Grandma was brave. But I fell down somewhere, headlong, into some dark place. A basement. A forest. Night. Do you think that when a person cries alone, he can growl a little? With an inhuman tone. I got up, sat down at the table, reached for the jar with what was left of the jam and swallowed it spoon by spoon. For mum, for dad, for grandma. For the neighbour who became ill in the basement during the shelling, and forgot her pills. The neighbour, by the way, died anyway. Five minutes later, as grandma went out, we heard a very loud explosion, the ceiling shook, brick dust and sand fell. The lamp went out, the neighbour howled and fell to the ground. When we went upstairs, some part of our house was gone. I rushed there, but I was not allowed in. Later, I did go to the site of our apartment. My grandmother had already been found and buried. But I wanted to find the locket she was looking for. I couldn't find it, but I still have small scars on my hands from scraping at the bricks and concrete. These scars are rather cool when I feel Saria's delicate skin as I stroke her hands after sex. She also has a scar on her back. Quite large. But I didn't ask where from. I finished the jam, went back to bed, and curled up. Suddenly I heard someone's footsteps on the stairs. I tensed, waiting for them to pass. But the footsteps stopped at my door. The bell rang in time with my pounding heart.

IGOR: Who are you, Saria, that you love guys without love? Why do you come back to them in the night, after an argument – as if you know that at this exact moment they're lying on the bed, screwed up like an old tissue in a bin. Dear girl, you knew they were crying with rage for you, your body and your eyes. In your words, your broken English. For your hot sadness. The door was unlocked. You came in. You fell on the bed next to me. Hugged and cried.

IGOR: Why are you crying? Because of me?

SARIA: Because of those I left at home.

IGOR: Because of your brother?

SARIA: Because of him. He has no legs. They were torn off in an explosion. I came to Europe to settle and help my family. And my brother. But I ran out of money on the way. The fare was much more expensive than I'd been told and I got stuck here, in this strange country, in this strange city, where it always rains. What should I do, Igor? How do I make money to move on? How can I earn something in a foreign country where I don't even know the language? Igor? What should I do? Do you really love me?

IGOR: That familiar sadness flooded into her eyes. She came from Syria. I almost asked if she was a 'refugee', it almost slipped off my tongue, but I bit it back in time. For some time she lived in a dormitory in the Medical Institute, where she was received by some random countrymen. She tried to make money by handing out advertisements on the street. She could be silent at this work.

IGOR: And you still need a lot of money?

SARIA: Four thousand dollars.

IGOR WRITES A LETTER.

IGOR: Hello, Zhenya-kun! You won't believe it, but ... Damn, I don't even know how to tell you. It's too much. We talked all night until dawn, just talked. She told me how she first saw the glare of the rockets in her mother's eyes, standing on the balcony and watching their fire fall from the sky on their city. And the first time she stepped over a pile of meat in clothes in a park. And sitting in a basement for the first time, looking at the wall. Her brother's leg was torn off when he was driving a water carrier that hit a mine. She also went to war. They