



# Ukrainian Drama TRANSLATIONS

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## **Once Upon a Time in Ukraine**

### **Characters:**

**SASHA, the small one**

**DASHA, the sleepy one**

**MASHA, the nervous one**

**VITALINA, the adult one**

### **ACT I WHO WE ARE**

Masha: Help! Someone help me! Is someone there? Hey! Shit, I'm probably dead.

Vitalina: You're not dead.

Masha: Who's that? Who's that?!

Vitalina: There's no point in yelling, "Help! Someone help me! Is someone there?" I already tried it.

Masha: Water. I need water

Vitalina: You can't have water. Ok, you can have some. But please, no water dripping, it is such a cliché

Sasha: Turn on the lights! I can't see

Vitalina: Would if I could.

Sasha: Turn on the lights! Please. I can't see. I can't breathe. The hood, nobody said anything about the hood. Why do I have to have a hood on? I can't breathe

Vitalina: Now. Voila

Sasha: Thank you. Thank you so much. Merci beaucoup. Argh! Who's that?

Masha: Shhh. Do you hear that? It's water dripping...

Sasha: Pfff, it's such a cliché

Masha: Oh, come on. Wait! I guess we're missing something

Vitalina: Everyone is here. You are here, she is here, I am here. Everyone is here.

Sasha: I miss my mom...

Vitalina: Shut up! I mean... calm down! I mean... it's ok. Your mom is always with you...

Masha: No, that's something else... now, we got legs...

Sasha: That's good

Masha: We got shoulders...

Sasha: That's very good

Masha: We got..

Sasha: Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

Sasha & Vitalina: Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes. Head and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

Masha: Very funny, ha-ha. Aha! I remembered!! We're missing Dasha

Vitalina: Do you think she's...

Sasha: She can't be... She simply can't be...

Dasha: Here, finally here. Uff, that was quite a journey. I can't feel my legs

Vitalina: At least you have them

Masha: What is it? A stand up competition?

Sasha: Yeah! Let's sit down and discuss

Dasha: Yeah, let's sit down, I can't feel my legs

Masha: Yeah, yeah, yeah... What's that smell?

Vitalina: I think it's us

Dasha: Can't be the legs. I can't feel them

Sasha, Masha, Vitalina: We heard!!

Dasha: Don't yell. Please. My head is splitting... What happened yesterday? Do you remember?

Masha: I don't

Sasha: I don't

Vitalina: Me neither. But I have a feeling that it's been a very long yesterday. Very very long yesterday. Almost two years long

Sasha: I can't remember anything... What happened to us?

Vitalina: You should train your memory

Sasha: Train! I remember the train!!

*Music 'Choo Choo Train for Children'*

## **ACT II ON A TRAIN**

Vitalina: Travelling on trains with Ukrainians is particularly disgusting. We have a national tradition. We eat on the train. In the Ukrainian train we eat grill-chicken, cutlets and drink horilka (which is like vodka, but very patriotic and Ukrainian) or beer. We say it is a collective trauma. The Holodomor (big famine in Ukraine) was written into our DNA, that's why Ukrainians constantly stuff their bellies. Especially when we sit. It's stressful for us to sit and not to eat.

Sasha: And I'm also annoyed by refugee children. Those who should be rosy-cheeked little angels with tears in their eyes, but they start fighting, screaming, sharing toys, space, starting at adults, ungrateful ill-mannered little bastards.

Vitalina: They especially annoy me when they are my children.

Sasha: Then I feel not only irritation but also a burning shame.

Vitalina: This is one of the reasons why I returned to Ukraine. I just couldn't stand myself with my children in polite well-mannered Europe. Some volunteers brought a bag of cool branded clothes to my 6 years old daughter: "Do you like these dresses?" Well, you got it,

Sasha: She "don't like".

Vitalina: "Doesn't". For a month she wore only dirty leggings, shouting and screaming that she would not take them off, because they were her own clothes and now she would wear them

Sasha: for the rest of her life.

Dasha: I also hate refugees building a career. They say it out loud. I am Ukrainian. My house burned down. I have projects in support of Ukraine planned for the year ahead. At home that guy worked in a nameless cultural institution, not knowing where to spit. And now, fuck me, I'm a great artist. Cultural front fighter. And by the way he is also a man.

Masha: About men. There are also men. With families or without. They live in the housing provided. They use all the benefits of European humanity. They speak russian.

Vitalina: Ну а чо?

Masha: They're in Europe. Not at the frontline, but where social assistance is. You, healthy man with a beer belly, why did you turn up here at all? These shitty Ukrainian refugees. Especially those with a beer belly. When we meet, I pretend to be a local. I don't know you guys. I don't speak your language.

Vitalina: Ну а чо?

Masha: Moreover, this language is usually russian.

Vitalina: Так а чо?

Masha: Men. Meh.

Vitalina: Others, mostly women, are dissatisfied also, they go home frowned.

Sasha: We thought we would get everything here, we thought everything was ready here.

Dasha: And nothing is ready.

Masha: We were accommodated in a monastery,

Vitalina: in a damp cell.

Dasha: We got sick.

Masha: We were fed sandwiches.

Sasha: Children need soup.

Dasha: The beds are broken,

Masha: it is impossible to sleep.

Vitalina: No one speaks our language.

Sasha: Nobody helps.

Masha: And having finished last sandwich, they get on the ferry to Ukraine with such an expression on their face:

Dasha: if they kill me, you are to blame.

Vitalina: I'll be honest with you, I hate these people. And they hate me. That's normal. It sometimes happens with compatriots.

Masha: The train crawled like a turtle. We stopped at all the stops and picked up women with babies, although there was absolutely nowhere to take them. Through the windows volunteers handed us water, cookies, candies for children, and Validol for old women, and one woman even handed us meatballs so that we could feed ourselves for a moment in a normal Ukrainian train.

Sasha: I got a bottle of water but my mother said:

Vitalina: well, don't drink, you'll have to go to the toilet.

Sasha: It was a strong argument, getting to the toilet and back seemed like a super-objective, so I took a small sip and closed it.

Dasha: And then there was an air raid alert and the train stopped in the middle of nowhere and turned off the lights. And we held our breath, because we understood that something was flying. And this something can fly into us.

Vitalina: And at that moment I loved my compatriots so much. All of them. Those who gave cookies, and those who smiled. Those who told a joke about a dead Russian and those who caught the Internet and shared the latest news. Those who left their homes, their plants, their plans, their habits, their husbands. Those who fled, not knowing when and where we would arrive and how we would be met there.

Masha: An old lady cried because she had lost her daughter in the crowd and now her phone was out of range. "She should be here, not me, not me, the old cow". The woman was shaking hysterically.

Dasha: "What is her name?"

Masha: another woman asked

Dasha: "What is your daughter's name?"

Vitalina: "Sasha Pasichna."

Masha: "Sasha Pasichna!! Is Sasha Pasichna here?!!!" she shouted. "Transfer to the next carriage. Mom is looking for Sasha Pasichna!!"

#### SASHA PASICHNA SCENE

Masha: 20 minutes later, Sasha was found in the 4th carriage. We were in the 10th. We were almost happy. We found Sasha.

Dasha: And then for a few more days this story circulated on social networks, and everyone was looking for Sasha and spreading word of mouth that Sasha was lost and her mother was looking for her. Someone commented that she had already been found. And someone sent further and searched again.

Vitalina: This train went from the center of Ukraine to the border for more than 16 hours. There were many children in that train. And everyone understood that here and now they are our common children, because if they start to cry, then we're all fucked. I held my daughter in my arms making funny faces and singing songs for many, many hours. In that train there was no other choice to survive than to love each other. Trust each other. And don't cry over lost pajamas, lost luggage, lost documents or lost lives.

Masha: In such a train, you understand that the only value is life. And that we are very lucky that we are all together in such a wonderful carriage. And the Sasha was found. And the husky is here. And there are cutlets. And the windows are still intact, instead of being blown out by the explosions, and the train driver drives back and forth for the seventh day restlessly, not gaining a fuck about safety measures that simply don't work at war. When the air raid alert goes off the only ones I can hate are the bitches that launch those missiles. Because this is genocide being committed against my people.

Dasha: Do you know what genocide is?

Vitalina: Of course...

Dasha: This is when there were no men of childbearing age left in some territories, because the russians forced them into this chopper.

Masha: And when I think about it, I forgive the bald russian-speaking Ukrainian men with beer bellies that are alive here.

Dasha: It's so normal to be alive.

Masha: Even if you are a man. Meh.

**ACT III WHERE WE ARE**

Dasha: Nay, that's not where we are. Train

Masha: Definitely. Not a train. Uh-uh

Vitalina: Absolutely. If it was Ukrzaliznytsia we would know it. By the way - did you know that in early invasion times Ukrainians would use these words: "palyanitsia" "ukrzaliznytsia" to spot russian saboteurs infiltrating our towns. They simply couldn't pronounce these words. Poor fuckers. Can you?

**PALYANITSIA UKRZALIZNYTSIA SCENE**

Sasha: Somebody trained their memory, I see. How do you know all of that?

Vitalina: I know more than you can imagine. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, that are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Masha & Dasha: Shakespeare? Shakespeare....

Vitalina: Do you guys understand what you were just saying? "Palyanitsia" is a type of a Ukrainian hearth-baked bread made mostly of a wheat flour in a home oven. The Holodomor was written into our DNA, remember?

Masha & Dasha: How do you know all of that!?

Vitalina: I know more than you can imagine. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, that are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Sasha: Home... Maybe this is our home

Masha: Uh-uh, home would have walls. Do you see any walls? None. You see?

Dasha: I see the yellow fields and skies of blue...

All: I see trees of green  
Red roses too

Dasha: Shut up! I see the yellow fields and skies of blue... That's what my home looks like.

Masha: My home looks like the city of steel watching the sea of storm. I remembered...

Sasha: My home looks like the place a husky would play.

Dasha: achoo!

Sasha: And a place which Mama would clean after a husky



Vitalina: My home has no door

Sasha: My home has no roof

Dasha: My home has no windows

Masha: It ain't waterproof

Sasha: My home has no handles

Dasha: My home has no keys

Masha: If you're here to rob me

Vitalina: There's nothing to steal

Masha: Wait, it still doesn't look like the place I belong. I don't see the sea. I don't see the harbour

Dasha: Now I understand your water obsession. Me, I've always been more of steppe girl. But I don't see the steppes either. Feels like they were taken from me.

Sasha: It doesn't feel right. Feels like it is not the place we've chosen.

Vitalina: Feels like it's the place we have to be. So...

**HOME IS WHERE IT HURTS SCENE**

Vitalina: So it does feel like a place we belong

Dasha: Maybe still a train? I like trains. I can eat there. Especially in InterCity

Sasha: City! I remember the City!

#### **ACT IV IN THE CITY**

Dasha: So I went to Germany. At first I took a car to Dnipro. Then from Dnipro I took a train to Lviv. Then from Lviv to Przemysl. From Przemysl to Krakow. From Krakow to Berlin, from Berlin to Leipzig. And finally from Leipzig I took something to some small German town.

Vitalina: Well when you're in a different country of course it's a bit tough because of German language which you don't sprechen. But of course you try, you try to speak at least etwas, because you need to. And das ist develops you and teaches you etwas. You literally learn the language faster because you have to, nobody understands you otherwise. Well, I can say that in big cities you can get away with English not with everybody but still. But in a small town like ours... well German only

Masha: About the atmosphere... they don't have the war. That's why it was easier here because you don't have to worry about the hits, missiles... how to say it... air alarms. It was much easier here but everybody was so worried about the parents, grandmothers, grandfathers, grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great-grandparents, great-great-great-grandparents... sorry grannies. Especially when they didn't get in touch – you heart would sink and you worried a lot

Sasha: The strangest thing was that in saunas of Germany everybody is naked. I mean men, women, children – everybody is naked. When we arrived we got a few free sessions in sauna. That was a stress recovery program for Ukrainian refugees. Me and my girls went there, four young girls, and we were in such a region full of grannies, we enter the sauna and everybody is naked. We were shocked we were told that you cannot wear a swimsuit, you should be naked, covered with a towel. So we wrapped ourselves up into the towels. But ofcourse we had some swimsuits underneath. Well they have strict rules about swimsuits there. They say swimsuits spread bacteria. Well that was very unverstandlich.

Everybody: Ummm

Sasha: unverstandlich

Dasha: One more thing off the record, only for you my friend: I once visited that nudist beach (*all: correct pronunciation*) in Germany, stress recovery program for Ukrainian refugees. Oh my, I wish I didn't. And not because everyone was naked there but because there are children and their parents and their grandparents and they were naked...

Sasha: I am not

Dasha: well I mean it is so nicht ok for me. Well I mean not everyone was... but... what I want to say is that elderly people and native Germans they have this tradition... they go to sauna... naked. Younger generation, I mean... immigrants, they are not against it. I mean in the bigger cities you can get a choice of sauna: a common one or a separate one. But in a small town... it's only a common one. And one day was female only. And do you know that Ukrzaliznytsia now launched a series of female only cars in every train. Just like that. How do you like this, Elon Musk? Just like that. Aber even like that it's super strange. All the women are naked. I dunno, that was

Sasha: unverstandlich

Dasha: for me.

Masha: Now, funny stories. Would you like to hear some funny stories? We used to live at a priest's house. I mean – WAS? That priest lived in the house of four floors. There was our kitchen on the first floor, there was a church on the second floor, there was HE on the third floor, HIS kitchen and HIS bathroom and there were us on the fourth floor and our bathroom. Everyone was excited. Well the priest was a contemporary guy. I dunno if it's ok to say so or not but he was drinking beer, he liked beer, well beer. He was trying to joke. He wanted to be a contemporary guy, let's put it this way. But every Saturday we went to the mass. Well because we were helped and we were to do something in return. Well because if

we didn't go to the mass... well, if we needed to go to a different town HE could give us a lift, when HE had the time, otherwise we would have to go by ourselves: by train, bus, autobus, bus... because in Germany transportation system is different than the one in Ukraine

Vitalina: By the way, oh my, transportation system, well in Ukraine transportation system is just "mwah", you want to kiss it. Because in Germany - it's raining - the train is cancelled, it is such kind of train - very fragile and sensitive. Somewhere in a land far-far away there was some fire - trains are cancelled everywhere. I'm telling you - it's raining - that's it (*girls: it's raining trains Hallelujah*). Our primadonna. Our Galya Baluvana. Well transportation is horrible there. That's why people mostly use cars. Because first of all trains are horrible. And buses also. You don't know the timetable, nobody cares about the timetable, they can be cancelled and nobody tells noone. Well there is an application for these transportation things but it doesn't always function properly

Sasha: So... what else?... Well looking for a job is kinda difficult there because of the language...

Everyone: Halo!

Sasha: Hi! well, I dunno it is hard in general because German people are hard in general energetically-wise, very closed,

Everyone: Halo!!

Sasha: they try to smile but they are very close

Everyone: Halo!!!

Sasha: let's put it this way. Everybody wanted to see their parents, to come back to their home towns, their homes, especially, I dunno, first half of the year for sure, first half of the year you'r in such a state that you cannot live normally, you cannot concentrate normally. Well because all your thoughts are there. All your thoughts are about war, all your thoughts are about your relatives. I mean you constantly check all the chats, you go to all of those parades... not parades... meetings... not meetings... Vitalina, what do you call that word? Not a parade, not a meeting? Come on.

Vitalina: pss pss pss

Sasha: Vitalina tells me that the word is parades but it's not parades for sure, it's a different word.

Everyone: rallies

Sasha: I just really forgot the word.

Everyone: Rallies!

Sasha: But those are the gatherings of Ukrainians in support of Ukraine. In Ukrainian and in other languages: in Poland it's Polish, in Germany it's Germanish, in Czech Republic it's

Cze...Czehish... well every country has its own language and Ukrainian as well and they tell all those horrible stories.

**CHERVONA KALYNA SCENE**

Dasha: And you know - in all of this story there's so much scam. You're used to that in Ukraine because you're ready, since you were a child you understand how things work there. But you don't know how it works in different countries, you think people treat you kind, treat you nicely but they.... There are a lot of stories of scam but I'm gonna tell you the top one. One story, the top one. Well, it's a classic one, they put a bracelet onto your hand in honour of Ukraine. And you think "damn, I'm cool" and then they ask for money for it. And not for Ukraine, no. They are actually foreigners, some kind of foreigners, those... They start "Ukraine, Ukraine" and you think "oh cool, he knows I'm from Ukraine" and he's like "Gimme all your money". That's the base. And now the toppest top

Masha: Imagine the situation - her backpack is broken, we cannot find our train, not train - the BUS! And we're looking for it and there is nothing. We ask people and people don't have a clue. They send us here and there and everywhere. Nothing is clear. Well 3 minutes before the departure we made it to that BUS BUT we are to spend like 10 hours in that bus and we got no food, no water. Well, I got 3 minutes. And I think to myself

Everyone: What a wonderful world...

Masha: - forget about the food but we're not gonna make it without the water because we got not a drop of water. So I give Vitalina my backpack and I tell her - well, I don't know how but hold the bus and I'm running for the water. So during those 3 minutes I made it till the end of the bus station and that's a huge bus station, I made it till the end. There's a line of people, I push them "sorry, I have bus right now, bla-bla-bla" and I go to the vending machine. And it's a strange one, you need to push the buttons, press your card, pin code, password, well I managed to do it all, the machine gave us 2 bottles of water. I grab that water and I run. I made it. I run into the bus, the bus goes and I can do like...

**ACT V WHERE TO**

Vitalina: Gimme that, Masha, gimme that. Masha, gimme that now.

Sasha: Masha... I remembered that name. I used to watch Masha i Medved. Masha and the Bear.

Vitalina: Masha i Medved. Masha and the Bear, russian cartoon, very popular among children. Introducing to you the narratives of grand russia, great-grand russia, great-great grand russia, great-great-great grand russia, great-great-great-great grand russia since childhood. Sorry, grannies

Dasha: Privet, Medved.

Sasha: Preved.

Masha: Girls, stop. It sounds very russian

Vitalina: Look who's talking now. Your name sounds russian.

Everyone: Masha! from russia!! Masha! from russia!!

Masha: No, I am from a different place... I don't remember which one but I am from a different place. I just don't remember. I'm very close to remember. It's very close... And my name is not Masha. My full name is Maria. That I know

Dasha: Maria... Maybe you also know how do we get out from here, Maria?

Sasha: Yeah, it feels very strange. There are no walls, we are not in a closed space but somehow we can't get out

Vitalina: Stuck in a moment you can't get out of

Masha: I'm not afraid

Dasha: Eminem

Sasha: to take a step

Masha: I'm not afraid

Of anything in this world

Dasha: There's nothing you can throw at me

That I haven't already heard

Sasha: I'm just trying to find

A decent melody

Vitalina: A song that I can sing

In my own company

Masha: I never thought you were a fool

Everyone: Ooh

Vitalina: But darling, look at you

Everyone: Ooh

Sasha: You gotta stand up straight, carry your own weight

Dasha: These tears are going nowhere baby



back to my senses a bit we met and that was such a happy moment on one hand and on the other hand that was the feeling that we hadn't seen each other for years.

Dasha: In Lviv I felt the necessity to look for the people I knew because the city felt unknown. Dunno how to explain that but even as I was walking down the streets I couldn't recognize the city. I used to like Lviv a lot, used to come there a lot, some kind of gastronomical tours, always connected with some kind of vacation or going abroad, we stopped there on the way... And Lviv for me always had that tasty vibe. But back then in March 2022 the city had quite a different taste for me. The taste of tension, the anticipation of something horrible coming and something strange (foreign). It felt like Lviv doesn't understand me. Lviv doesn't understand my pain, it doesn't understand what I experienced in Irpyn. Well maybe Lviv understands it on the head level. Well, I dunno where the head of Lviv is, but on the feelings level the city didn't understand me.

Sasha: Now I'm thinking why would I had that feeling back then. Maybe because of some talks I heard, or stories of my friends that found the shelter in Lviv, the way they spoke to the hosts. Even the hosts that would give their place for free or very very cheap...

Vitalina: ekhm...

Sasha: they would transmit - this is war, this is the purge of the nation, something like that. And for a person who came from Irpyn or Makarov (and I heard this story from a person from Makarov) and she survived (among other things) the occupation, she survived it in the basement. There was some bitter taste in my mouth hearing that, and the feeling of not being understood, that they don't understand you. Sometimes they would tell you that somebody scratched their car. I guess at that moment all my feelings were intensified and every minor fact would add to the general picture of rejection.

Masha: I remember the moment when I went to meet my friend in some shopping mall and there was an air siren and the shopping mall was closed and we were all standing outside. And all of a sudden there was a fight in the crowd. There was someone from Kharkiv in the crowd and he spoke russian and some locals started shouting

Everyone: "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch" "all of that is because of your language, bitch"

Masha: and so on and so forth, one thing led to another - the fight started. Someone called the police, the policemen came and they said "if you got nothing to do we will give you something to do. There's some work on fortification in the city, there are mobilisation points where you can channel your energy in the proper direction." I was terrified. I ran to my car, closed myself inside and I was crying, very loud. I was screaming out loud. It felt like if I say a word of russian here they might think of me as an enemy. And I *was* russian-speaking, I'm from russian-speaking family, it's only now I switched to Ukrainian. And it was very painful for me.

Dasha: I remember I came to see my friends, they're from Sumy region, they are Ukrainian-speaking and they spent quite a lot of time in Lviv region already and I spoke to my friends and they told me that in Lviv region the stories from the past are still burning, the stories about the Soviets burning a person for Ukrainian language in the past. All these "kryjivkas", these are just...

Vitalina: Kryjivka. What's the story behind the legendary secret Kryjivka bar in Lviv? It is the last hiding place of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army left from the times of World War II. Their motto is "The Fight Continues". Tripadvisor recommends:

Masha: Tasty, the place has the most popular Ukrainian national dishes. A little crowded and noisy but the food choice worth it. There are cheaper options for tight budget but still it is worth to put some money aside and visit at least once.

Dasha: Anastasia Pliatsok, Marketing at Kryivka, responded to this review: Glory to Ukraine! Thank you very much! We'd be pleased to see you once again.

Sasha: Ooh, ooh, there's another one. We were a group of five visting at a late Saturday afternoon in the beginning of December. We had a variety of dishes recommended by our skilled waiter. The food and vodka was great.

Vitalina: Horilka!

Sasha: Horilka. The atmosphere was fantastic. During the course a singer shoved up and performed a great show together with a musicians playing an accordion. (*fun accordion music*) I will for sure be back!

Vitalina: And now to enter Kryjivka bar I need to whisper the password to the guard at the gate.

(whispering moment)

Dasha: All these "kryjivkas", these are just... Well for a Ukrainian from the centre of Ukraine or east of Ukraine that is some kind of Lviv attraction - KRYJIVKA. But for Lviv people this is a part of their story. Very painful story, still fresh. I remember how this story soothed my pain a bit on one hand and on the other hand I could look at the situation with different eyes. (*fun accordion music*)

Vitalina: Another thing that added up to that feeling of rejection... I live not in Lviv itself but very close to Lviv airport, in Sknyliv. I went to register in Sknyliv and they told me I have to stay at home starting from 6pm. And I say... I guess the curfew started from 9pm... and I say "why from 6pm, curfew starts from 9" and they told me "9pm is for local people, we don't know you, you have to stay at home from 6pm". I was shocked, I say "I am a citizen of Ukraina as well, every Ukrainian law, general law, applies to me as well" "until you're not ours, general laws do not apply to you" I was told. And all the time I felt some kind of irritation towards me. I dunno maybe because my passport says I was born in Donetsk. Well I guess it was just my imagination



Masha: No, it's not imagination

Dasha: I missed the joke

Masha: Well, I'm from Donetsk. For us, renting a flat let's say in Kyiv can be a whole quest. A lot of owners put in ads: "no dogs, don't smoke, no Donbass residents". Or when you call them to come and see the flat, they are all so nice and polite, but when they ask: "Where are you from?" and hear "Donetsk" - they immediately say: "No Sorry, we don't rent to Donetsk people". And it's like that everywhere.

Dasha: Ah

Vitalina: no one told me that. But every time I entered Sknyliv in my car with Kyiv plate number my car was stopped and they searched my trunk and at the same time just before me there were cars with Lviv plate numbers and they let them go. And it gave me the feeling that I don't belong here in Sknyliv, I'm suspicious here in Sknyliv I am maybe the enemy here in Sknyliv and I was very embarrassed and worried by that.

Sasha: When I went to bring my cats to Poland because it was impossible to hold them (with this Sknyliv woman) in one room all the time and there was no place for my cats to go. I took them to my son

Dasha: You have a son! Congrats, Sasha Pasichna, Level up

Sasha: Yes I got a son, he's now in Poland and at the same time I went there my husband got mobilised. It was quite a painful story for me, my husband is far from a military man and it was quite unexpected to me... as if the war started again.

Dasha: When I came back I was in such despair, I didn't know what to do and frankly speaking out of this despair and worry I started looking for a thing to do and through *my connections* I got myself a place in a humanitarian centre. That's right you wouldn't get there without Lviv residence permit. But a friend of mine... well she had a relative... who was a relative of somebody who knew someone in that centre... and you know... she spoke a word for me. Working in that centre helped me a lot, it gave a lot of meaning to my existence. We were collecting... the people came there and they wrote lists of things they need... and my task was to run from floor to floor and collect those... I dunno how to call it... a refugee set! and give it away. And there I met some true Lviv people. There I felt more or less one of them. They were asking questions: who I am, where I am from, what I am. Once a man came to me and asked "where did you come from?" and I'm like "why do you think I'm not from Lviv". Maybe he could understand it from my accent. And he says "Your eyes. Your eyes are not Lviv eyes" I was like... I dunno... on one hand it was funny (*fun/sad accordion music*) but on the other hand I was a bit tight that I give myself away even with my eyes. That I am not one of them.

Vitalina: Little by little I started getting my kind of people in Lviv. Not Lviv people. Somebody from Kyiv, somebody from Sumy. But Lviv started getting inside of me with something typically Lviv-esque. Those stories from the past that are still fresh, the people from humanitarian centre. And little by little I started seeing Lviv with different eyes. And I wasn't irritated anymore when the people who saw me every day still checked my documents

every time. I somehow understood the importance of everything they do... in Sknyliv. This way they could do something to protect their land.

Masha: You also asked if I was surprised that Lviv lives. Well at first I didn't pay any attention. Well first of all there's such a sharp contrast between the war here and peaceful life there. But then I was shocked - there's music in the street. (*accordion music/Karmanov*) Music came from some cafe, more or less funny music. And the music sounded to me like some kind of orchestra, it was clumsy and maladjusted and incomprehensible and inappropriate. And the sound contrast is the first thing I remember about the contrast.

Sasha: And the other thing - when my husband got a day off his service we came to see each other. We went for a walk, we entered Dzyga, we bought some beer, we sat there, drinking beer, well beer and for the first time I saw people around me, sitting, eating, drinking, talking. But I didn't have this reaction "How dare they?" no, I didn't have these things. On the contrary I kinda saw that there's life possible at war time. The grandma of a friend I stayed at, she said such a phrase... she remembered the Holodomor and she said "You can get used to the war but not to the hunger". I didn't believe her back then and only now I understand that there's life possible at war (*sad/funny accordion music*). I dunno if you can get used to the war itself but life is possible. and this thought first hit me when I sat in Dzyga cafe drinking beer with my military husband.

## **ACT VII WHAT NOW**

Vitalina: Do you think it's your future you see? Every Ukrainian girl will have a military husband by the time you're grown up enough to have a husband. Because by that time every man in Ukraine will become military.

Dasha: If there are men left

Masha: Men

Vitalina: Unless we do something about it now. Unless we all do something about it now

Masha: You don't think... Don't you think it's a way too early to think about the future? We're not even done with the past yet. We don't even know where we are

Sasha: You know where we are, Maria. Better than anyone else. And I do too. I remember. I dunno where to start

Vitalina: There's a wall around the city

The city will wake up

Dasha: There's a war around the city

Around the war the other cities rest

Masha: There's a chance that the city will stand

One in a hundred chance

Everyone: Go on

Masha: The boats float to the city slowly

Everyone: Go on Go on Go on Go on Go on

Masha: The clouds of locust fly at the city slowly

The city will stand

Let this moment last

Sasha: The city will rest

Let this tired city rest

Vitalina: Morning as fresh breath

Memory that cuts you like a knife

Masha: There's no death

There's only antonym of life

Dasha: A bird is flying from the son apart

straight to the father's hand

Sasha: I dunno where to start

So I start from the end

I remembered I used to go to school, big school with lots of kids, many kids

Vitalina: very loud, very noisy

Sasha: Yes. And we liked going there. Not because of classes but because of the breaks. At every break we would get out to the yard and play

(playing moment)

Masha: Hello. I am your Mariupol.

The enemy has ripped my eyes out, my windows.

Do you see my blackened walls? He has burned my body.

He tears me apart - brick by brick, he is looking for my soul. My people.

I hide them as much as I can.

They say I'm a fortress.

And I'm trying to hold.

I hold on while they fight for me.

I have to make it.

I remembered too.

Vitalina: It appeared that this place had quite a lot of people I knew. When we came down there there were my theatre friends Khrystia and Stas and Kulinich and Motor and Lara and Kushch and Borovenskiy and Zihmuntovych and Oleksa and Kostia and... and... And when I came back to my senses a bit we met and that was such a happy moment on one hand and on the other hand that was the feeling that it won't last.

Dasha: And then we heard the sound. The humming sound from the distance. Quiet at first and then it got louder. And we all knew what it meant.

(humming moment)

Sasha: Above Kyiv

russian drone flew

A woman opened the window

and threw a can of pickled tomatoes at it,

the ones that she picked last year

At her summer house in Chernihiv region

(there's no summer house anymore).

Dasha: Another woman opened the window

and threw a book at it,

a book by Dostoyevsky,

the one that she got from her father

- a professor of russian literature from Kharkiv

(there is no father anymore)

Masha: The third woman opened the window

and threw

her rage at it.

She had nothing else,

she left Mariupol

with nothing  
and she wouldn't risk  
taking something from a somebody else's apartment.  
and breaking it

Vitalina: The rage somehow appeared to be  
extra heavy,  
extra precise  
and extra ordinary.

"Why so much russophobia here?"

the drone screamed  
got up  
and transformed into a russian baba

Sasha: woman?

Vitalina: baba!

in a sarafan and  
in a coconut tree.

Dasha: Kokoshnik?

Vitalina: coconut tree!

Other drones/babas ran up to her and started dancing in circles,  
reciting pushkin and talking about weltschmerz, russky mir and the fate of the world.

Masha: Until they

were shot down  
with a machine gun.

Vitalina: What can I say? You always need to keep calm. Because you never know what  
you're gonna get. Something scary, something funny, some kind of scam. Or I dunno UFO  
flying into you. Or a drone.

Dasha: You always need to keep calm. You can stress out but you're like - right, I'm stressing  
out. You're late for a bus - you stress out but you run, you don't stop.

(all sing: don't stop me now 'Cause I'm having a good time)

Masha: If you hear that things flying over your head you look where the nearest bomb shelter is.

Sasha: If... well, there are a lot of situyovina like that, a lot of examples like ours but you need to understand what your next steps are going to be. No matter how much you stress out - there's no place for panic, especially now, in nowadays, when we got coronavirus, when we got war in Ukraine, when we got some other virus or some other war they come up with. You just don't know what's gonna hit you next.

Vitalina: Unfortunately we live in such times when everything is changing and an ordinary person cannot change things. We're just the pawns in some big system. Illuminati. Reptiloids. Porcupines. Quokkas. Borovenskiy directions.

Dasha: And the main thing here is not to follow... I would say not to follow the panic in a crowd but rather try to keep your head cool and look at the situation I dunno with your head cool. As much as it's possible.

Masha: Well, I dunno, talk to your head, to your psyche. You're like "yes, we stress out. But now this stress is not going to help us in any way. We will stress out, but let's find a way out first and then we'll stress out that I can promise you. But first pretty please, put your shit together, come on, we need to

Vitalina: One more thing - it's very important to be surrounded by your people.

Sasha: To have the support of your family.

Masha: No matter how much you want to look like a lone wolf, bla bla bla.

Dasha: No matter how much we want this but a man needs a man.

Masha: Men

Vitalina: And when there's a tough situation like, Ukraine at war or you're in some unknown country, like...., or your apartment is flooded, a tough situation, doesn't matter where you are.

Sasha: It's very important that there is such a person you can say it all.

Masha: It doesn't matter if that person will help you or not.

Dasha: The fact that you got a person to... a person you can... or my god.. there is a person you can tell - it already helps.

Vitalina: You feel not so alone.

Sasha: Even if it is by zoom but you know you can be heard, you can be listened to somehow, maybe a piece of advice, maybe some kind of help.

Masha: It's just very important, this feeling that you're not alone in this world.

Dasha: It doesn't matter if it's your family or your friend or your significant other.

Vitalina: Doesn't matter.

Sasha: Even if it's your pet.

Masha: It's just very important to feel that you're not alone in this world

Dasha: nods

## *Once Upon a Time in Ukraine*

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