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The Sailor

By Oksana Grytsenko

Translated by John Freedman with Natalia Bratus

She approaches the car cautiously. Looks through the glass. Knocks.

SHE. Evacuating? Any injured? I'm a doctor.

Car door opens slowly, thick smoke billows out. The woman coughs.

SHE. What's on fire in there?

HE. Sorry, my cigar smoke is a bit much. Want a smoke? I see by your eyes that you smoke.

Smoke clears, we see a burly, middle-aged man with a cigar sitting and smiling at the wheel. He clasps his chest with his other hand.

HE. Sit down and warm yourself, you're shaking.

The woman, unsure of herself, sits in front passenger seat. Takes long drag on cigar.

SHE. It's not the cold, it's nerves. We just revived one old woman. Her skin is like parchment. From hunger. And one old guy is stretched out after a stroke. He has no ID. Can't speak, just moves his eyes. I'm looking for a tattoo or something on his body, to find out his name. *(Takes a drag.)* Oh, that's strong tobacco! Why are you holding your chest?

HE *(playfully)*. Because I have a wound in my heart.

SHE. At least some of us are having fun, then. Generally speaking, smoking is harmful. You're already short of breath. *(Returns cigar to him.)*

HE. Sorry, ma'am. I'm having no second thoughts.

He takes cigar and raises hands guiltily. We see blood seeping through on his chest.

SHE. Good God, what is this?

HE. I'm telling you. I was wounded. With a knife. In the heart. But halfway there they missed. The bent-armed bastards. Sorry.

Doctor attempts to examine the wound.

SHE. So your lung is punctured. It looks like pneumothorax. Collapsed lung. How can you smoke?

HE. Well, I have two. The second one's intact.

SHE. Get out of the car! Can you?

HE. I'm feeling pretty good right here.

SHE. Okay, no games here! Get out!

HE. Get out yourself. This is my car.

SHE. You will die!

HE. Everyone will die. What matters is how we live. You're ruining my last moments.

SHE. You're crazy!

HE. The Orcs said so, too.

Woman gets out of car, slams door angrily. But the thought of the patient, eccentric as he may be, makes her return. She knocks on driver's window. Man with cigar opens door. He smokes and smiles.

SHE. Do you have any relatives? Wife, children?

HE. Why?

SHE. Give me their number. So I know who to call when you start suffocating.

HE. Your pessimism again.

SHE. Or you can have pity on them and come with me. I'll seal your lung. And you can smoke again. With both lungs!

HE. Huh. Now, that's an unkind cut.

He comes out slowly, holds cigar in one hand, leans on doctor with the other.

SHE. So, how did this happen?

HE. How else? Two Orcs stopped me at a checkpoint on the road out. Both were ragged and disheveled.

And we got into an argument about the sea. I'm a sailor. Didn't I tell you? Anyway. They asked how my port of Kherson was doing. Snide bastards. Sorry.

SHE. And what did you say?

HE. Well, I didn't hold my tongue. I asked how their warship was doing.

She takes cigar from him. Smokes and smiles. They walk slowly to the medical tent.

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