



Play

LOST IN THE FOG

Original name /
translated

ЗАГУБЛЕНИ В ТУМАНІ

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Language of
translation

English

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LOST IN THE FOG

A fantasy drama

Characters:

ALISA (PUMA): young woman – a warrior

ANTONINA: young woman – a mother

ANFISA: young woman – pregnant

ARSEN (BLACK FOX): young man – son of Antonina

SCENE 1: Prologue: Infernal communion

A lonely house in the middle of countryside, of unknown location. There is a thick fog outside the window. It is a modest living room, with doors leading in different directions. An early morning, dim light. Suddenly something flashes in the sky outside the window, there is a sound of an explosion. A young woman ANFISA appears in a dressing gown, and rushes to the window, staring into the fog outside. An elderly woman ANTONINA enters the room from another side, adjusting her clothes.

ANTONINA What is it? What's happening?

ANFISA I don't know. A plane maybe...

ANTONINA A plane? Where? (*She gazes out too*) I can't see a thing. Did you see something?

ANFISA I heard an explosion – and that's it. It's crashed, I guess.

ANTONIA Crashed or shot down? And whose plane?

ANFISA How should I know. I see the same fog as you.

We hear the shrill sound of a siren. The women shudder. ARSEN, a young man, hurries into the room, getting dressed and putting on his shoes on the move, He searches for a mobile phone, finds it, picks it up. The siren stops.

ARSEN Hello...Aha... When...Already?... I'm coming now...

The women exchange worried looks, and ARSEN leaves the room

ANTONIA (*To Anfisa*) Good god, why did he set his mobile with this horrible sound? Tell him to change it.

ANFISA Why me? Tell him yourself...You're his mother, for christ's sake.

ANTONIA He doesn't listen to me... Because I'm his mother.

ANFISA And you think he'd listen to me?

ANTONIA Oh dear, I have feel in my heart that something dreadful has happened. Maybe it was shot down.

ARSEN dashes back in again.

ARSEN Mum, have you seen my lighter?

ANTONIA No, and you smoke too much. Now everything seems to have become lost in the smoke.

ARSEN I'm in a hurry, mum.

ANTONIA You need to go already? What's happened? Did they shoot a plane down? Whose plane is it?

ARSEN Well, what do you reckon? It's theirs – of course, it's theirs! We don't have planes. Why ask if you know already...

ANTONIA I don't think I know anything anymore. This fog...Everything is foggy. Everything is a blur. Foreigners, allies... You're better with tea than smoking...

ARSEN There's no time. They've called me in.

ANTONIA But you have time to smoke.

ARSEN Mum – give it a break.

ANTONIA sighs and goes out. ANFISA, standing by the window, turns to him.

ANFISA Don't go... I'm so scared for you.

ARSEN (*irritated*) I can't not go. And you know why! I told you all about it.

ANFISA Please, don't go...And you know why you can't say no to me.

ARSEN (*continuing to pack*) And you know this blackmail. We've already talked about it.

ANFISA But why? Don't leave me alone...

ARSEN You aren't alone – my mum is here...

ANFISA Don't leave me alone with your mother...

ARSEN Did she say something?

ANFISA She looks at me this way like I'm... Well, I'm having a hard time with her...

ARSEN And I'm having a hard time with you. If you don't want to stay – you can leave. I didn't force you to...

ANFISA Are you kicking me out? I can't go anywhere with this horrible fog out there...

ARSEN Fog is fog. What's horrible?... And I am not kicking you out! I'm giving you freedom.

ANFISA I don't want to be free. I need you...

ANTONINA enters with a package. ANFISA wipes her tears and leaves.

ANTONINA Here, I've packed something for you... Keep yourself fed!

ARSEN Thanks, mum.

ANTONINA So tell me what's happened? Where are you going?

ARSEN There is...a guy came down on parachute and he is alive, most likely. We've got to catch him.

ANTONINA Just be careful out there, son, I beg you...

ARSEN I'm always careful. I understand the fog and that's why they call for me, you know that...

ANTONINA Yes, but still take care... And why she is crying? Did you have a barney?

ARSEN No, not really. She's just worried about me. Don't give her a hard time. You know it's hard enough already for her...

ANTONINA And who is giving who a hard time? Everyone seems hard right now...*(pause)* Tell me, do you love her, at least?

ARSEN Don't you start, mum!

ANTONINA Oh, I can see it... You weren't like this at all with the other girl; you were glowing... But with this one it's not the same at all...

ARSEN Enough, mum, just drop it. There's no going back with Alisa, never. She left.

ANTONINA Never say never, my son. Everything is possible in life... And the child... are you sure it's yours?

ARSEN It could be mine... that's for sure.

ANTONINA I see...

ARSEN And what do you think I should have done? Shown my tail like dad?

ANTONINA You did right... But you don't love her... How can you live like that?

ARSEN Mum, please stop... Right now the guy who came down by parachute in the fog is the only thing on my mind.

ANTONINA Blast this fog, when will it clear?

ARSEN It's only a fog, common fog... Right, I have to go now.

ANTONINA When will you be back?

ARSEN Today or maybe tomorrow. As God wills.

ANTONINA Look after yourself. *(she suddenly hugs him)* I'm scared...

ARSEN *(hugging her, then stepping back quickly)* And you take care, too, mum. Don't let any stranger in.

ARSEN leaves the house. ANFISA enters from another room.

ANFISA Why is it that they call him? Tell me.

ANTONINA He's a local, he knows every little path around here. And the lie of the land guides him, even in this fog.

ANFISA And so what? Why can't he refuse it? Say 'no' for once. For us.

ANTONINA Don't you get it? He does it for us. He can be killed. And so us too.

ANFISA Well, you say so. What for?

ANTONINA If he says 'no'. I didn't want to scare you. I wanted to explain. Don't play silly buggers with his heart.

ANFISA Only if he had a heart...

ANTONINA He has a heart. Or you wouldn't be here.

Sound of footsteps outside, then a knocking on the door knocking. ANFISA goes quietly to the window, ANTONINA to the door.

ANFISA (whispering): Don't open it. There's a stranger there. Let him go.

The knocking gets louder.

ANTONINA (whispering): Can you see anything?

ANFISA Only vaguely. But I think he has a weapon.

The knocking starts again, insistent.

ANTONINA He won't go. (Loudly) Who is it?

ALISA Does Arsen live here?

ANTONINA And who are you?

ALISA An acquaintance of his. Open the door.

ANFISA Don't open it. He definitely has a weapon!

ANTONINA I think I know who this is... (To ANFISA) Hide for now!

ANFISA goes out.

Scene 9

ALISA looks out the window

ALISA How could I forget? How could I ever forget that feeling of music, flight, light... This feeling of happiness. But can it come again? Was it just a moment? I don't know... I'm afraid to think. Could I just give up and stay? To give up my dreams, my hopes, my whole self? No, that would be a betrayal. I have always been cramped and depressed here. I suffocated. I wanted space, flight... But he, he was here... well, probably. Could he change something? Why would he? When it's so... comfortable... But I thought - if he really loves, he will throw everything and come looking for me. But he didn't. And now what? Why did you come here? Is there any hope in this meeting? Any light, music, flight - coming to life? I'm so naive... But even if it happens, could it be even worse? Who is he? The enemy? Perhaps. Probably. And then what are you doing here? Because you hope that this is not so? What an idiot. You need to act. Yes, pull yourself together. You have a mission. Break out from captivity. There is nothing more important. Nothing. Only this. And the rifle is not for me, it is for them. Yes, the system is in place. Concentrate, think. Wait or go alone? Where is the greater risk? Be shot out there. Or here – be handed over. The mother won't do it. But will they surrender or not? What about him? If he is the enemy... And now this child and Anfisa. Did he need her as much as she did ?! A mess. Difficulties everywhere. Aagh.

She looks out the window and sees the silhouettes of the women.

They're coming back. What am I going to do - toss a coin? (Finds a coin.) If it's an eagle, I'll stay. (Throws.) Eagle.

ANTONINA and ANFISA come back in. ANTONINA is carrying a box.

ALISA (suspiciously). What's that?

ANTONINA We found a watch for Anfisa.

ALISA A watch? How do you know it's a watch? The box is shut...

ANFISA It's ticking - tick-tock, tick-tock.

ALISA (*a horrible thought striking her*). Stop! Put it down on the table...very slowly.

ANTONINA What's up?

ALISA Quietly! If you want to live - quiet! Anfisa, take your hands away very gently and slowly step away. Even further.

ANFISA puts the box down with trembling hands and backs up.

ALISA (*to Antonina*). You get out too.

ANTONINA (*quietly, pale*) Do you think it's a bomb?

ALISA I don't know. Both of you get out quick. Chop-chop.

ALISA moves slowly to the box, listens. Then carefully picks it up.

Open the door and walk away.

ANTONINA opens the door and closes her eyes, but watches ALISA closely. ALISA goes out. Outside ALISA looks around, seeing ANTONINA and ANFISA close behind her.

What are you doing? I said - go away! Quick! Down on the ground now!

She hurls the box as far as she can, jumps back and drops to the ground, covering her head.

The sound of an explosion, with lots of smoke, smoke. ALISA gets up, with her hands covered in soot. Inadvertently touching her face to wipe her eyes, she leaves dark streaks. ANTONINA slowly gets up, then ANFISA, who is trembling uncontrollably. ANTONINA approaches ALISA, tries to wipe her face, ALISA stands frozen. ANTONINA hugs her abruptly.

ANTONINA Thank you... God, you saved us... Anfisa, come to us. Girls, we are alive!

Scene 10

ARSEN is running from the far side. He sees the three women embracing, their shoulders trembling. He freezes, then slowly walks to them, stopping at a distance. Pause.

ANTONINA Arsenchik. You're alive! thank God!

She rushes to him, hugs him, and ANFISA joins her. ALISA sees him and remains still. Arsen hugs the women and looks at ALISA

ARSEN What happened here?

ANFISA Bomb! It was a bomb.

ANTONINA Alisa saved us. Say hello and thank you. Why are you standing like a tree stump?

ARSEN This is unexpected... Hello... Alisa or... Puma...

ALISA shudders at the last word. He frees himself from the embrace of the women and approaches ALISA. The other women are watching anxiously.

ANFISA (*rushes between them*). Be careful - she has a rifle!

ANTONINA What are you doing? She just saved your life... And mine too.

ARSEN (*shifts his gaze from one to the other*). Is this all true? What they're saying about you, Alisa?

ALISA Yes, and you, they say – minesweeping? Is this true?

ARSEN Lie. I just bypass them.

ALISA And how do you do that? Do you plant them first, and then make marks to show their location?

ARSEN No. I didn't plant the mines... Where did you come from?

ANFISA She fell from the sky.

ANTONINA (*to ANFISA*). Hold it wagging your tongue? Do you want to hear? Well, let's go into the house and you can talk calmly where no one can interfere... (*Looks at ANFISA*) Did you hear?

ANFISA Am I interfering? I can tell you who is superfluous here...

ARSEN (*looks at each of the women and takes off his backpack*). Mum, I've got some food and some tea - make something...

ANTONINA Come on, Anfiso. Let's go to the kitchen and make us some supper. Ok?

ANTONINA grabs Arsen's backpack and pulls ANFISA firmly. ALISA and ARSEN are left alone.

ARSEN (*looks around*). Let's go into the house. It'll be safer.

ALISA Safer? Are you sure? Safer for who?

ARSEN For you. For me, I don't know yet. If you want to kill me right away, go ahead.

ALISA (*pause*). I do not want.

ARSEN Then let's talk in a normal way. We haven't seen each other for a hundred years. Or what?

ALISA Okay, let's go.

Scene 11

They stand opposite each other in the room.

- ARSEN** (moving closer, quiet). Will you be beaten?
- ALISA** Not yet. And you?
- ARSEN** (sighs) Of course not. Thank you for saving mum and... Anfisa.
- ALISA** It's my duty to protect.
- ARSEN** Yes, you are a warrior... Even in my nightmare I didn't imagine meeting with you like this.
- ALISA** I'd better not see you again. Ever.
- ARSEN** And I'm still glad to see you. Alive.
- ALISA** Really? And it seemed to me that you wouldn't want that...
- ARSEN** No, you know, no.
- ALISA** I know? I don't think I knew you. Not the real you.
- ARSEN** What?
- ALISA** The traitor.
- ARSEN** Am I a traitor? Are you talking about Anfisa? It was you left. Wasn't it you who betrayed me?
- ALISA** I left. I didn't betray you.
- ARSEN** If you loved me, you would stay with me.
- ALISA** And I thought that if you loved, you would follow me.
- ARSEN** So what was I to do there? Everything that's mine is here - work, home, mum... What did I have there?
- ALISA** And I left because I wanted to make a dream come true. My element is the sky. I am cramped on the ground.
- ARSEN** So you were ever close to me?
- ALISA** Don't twist things. I really missed you. Especially the first time. But you didn't come after me. So... I hated it. If I'd stayed, I would have betrayed myself.
- ARSEN** You made a dream come true. Well done. Are you happy now?
- ALISA** Not really... Because you didn't follow me.
- ARSEN** A woman follows a man, not the other way around.
- ALISA** What about finding a woman in thirty-nine lands? And fighting with the dragon?
- ARSEN** Do you still believe in fairy tales?

ALISA I believe that good triumphs over evil. Sooner or later. Otherwise you go crazy with despair.

ARSEN I'm not a fairy tale hero, Pumo. I am an ordinary man.

ALISA You are not an ordinary man. You are a traitor.

ARSEN I've already explained it all. You betrayed me first.

ALISA I'm not talking about that. I mean more globally. Are you with them, tell me? With them?

ARSEN With who?

ALISA With the enemies of our land?

ARSEN What passion! You know, it's foggy here, and who's who, you don't often see...

ALISA I just don't need to hear about this fog, I've already heard. Enough! Don't lie to me. You never knew how to lie to me. I feel you. Strange, but I still feel it.

ARSEN And what did you feel?

ALISA What are you doing with them? You were looking for me, right?

ARSEN I was looking for... I didn't know it was you at first.

ALISA How did you find out?

ARSEN (*takes out a device*). I found this walkie-talkie in the woods. They called Puma. And something clicked in me. Puma is you, right? You couldn't lie either.

ALISA (*reaches for the walkie-talkie, but he refuses*). Yes, I took the pseudonym you gave me.

ARSEN So you kept it in mind?

ALISA Like everything else... (*Pulls out a puma figurine*). I carry it with me as a mascot. And you?

ARSEN (*He pulls out a fox figurine*). Black Fox. You gave me a filthy fox. Remember?

ALISA Of course. And why Black?

ARSEN Because I outsmart death when I look for mines. So they say.

ALISA And it's true?

ARSEN I don't know. Maybe I've just been lucky so far... Why did you come here, Pumo?

ALISA I was hoping you would help me find the mines. I didn't know you were actually with them. And that you were out on the kill, hunting for me ...

ARSEN I haven't killed anyone. And you are the last person on earth I would kill.

ALISA Then why are you hunting? Just to captur