



Ukrainian Drama TRANSLATIONS

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Play

A DANTEAN JOURNEY

Original name /
translated

Шлях по Данте

Translator

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Language of
translation

English

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Duck tales make you wonder more and more about everything that happens around you. If you think about it, what is a duck tale? A duck tale is the a situation that is unusual in everyday life, that happens just once, that is strange and unexpected. It can't really be. Every duck tale leaves its mark on a person's life and can change it in an essential way.

This play is definitely a duck tale. It could happen only once.

Scene 1 **"Dream"**

A tunnel. A large tunnel in the form of the letter "U." Metro tracks run along the entire letter "U". The space is especially large and spacious. Half-filled with water. Artiom lies face up on the surface of the water. He is drowning. He is already in the water. Artiom is 12. Artiom is calm. He sinks deeper and deeper, he is calmer and calmer.

Scene 2

Artiom (he's now 20) and Dmytro. At the monument to Hryhoriy Skovoroda.

Hey!

Hello, Artiom

How are you?

All's good.

So, where did you say we're going?

Let's just go, I'll show you. We need to deal with an apartment for rent.

Okay, let's go.

Sex happens.

Texting.

Hi there.

Hey.

What are you doing?

Working.

Okay, I won't bother you.

Nothing happens.

Texting.

Tom, hello!

Hello, Dima

You home?

Yeah.

Alone?

Yeah.

Can I come over?

Come on.

I'll be there soon. What should I bring?

I don't know, whatever you want.

Do you like dumplings?

Yeah.

Okay.

Sex happens again. But only after some potato dumplings and red wine.

Scene 3

Artiom and Sasha

Artiom visits Sasha, they drink, and talk. They sit on the balcony smoking cigarettes.

I have good news, Sasha.

Really! What!?

Finally, for the first time in two years, I have feelings for someone other than myself.

Who?

I'm not ready to name names or show photos, it's still very vague and interesting.

Got it, anything happen yet?

Well, we've seen each other a couple of times, he's tall and very deep, and very simple, that's it.

But you feel good about it?

Yeah. But still, it's very vague.

Sasha and Artiom talk, everyone is excited. Her psychological type is Yesenin, he is a Don Quixote. They communicate easily, they understood each other easily, they've known each other well and for a long time. She's a film director. A good film director. Artiom really likes her work, but he never fit into that world, that's not his way, cinema and Germans.

At Sasha's again.

Yo!

Yeah, hello hello...

Your hair still wet?

I was just going to dry it.

Come on, we're going to be late.

How about a cigarette?

Come on, it's cold outside, won't you freeze?

Yeah. I'll put something on and it will be okay.

Oh, okay, come on, I'm waiting on the balcony.

Be right there.

They sit, talk, and smoke. After that Sasha gathers her things and the two go to a great pub. They listen to music, drink, talk some more and smoke some more.

Sitting at the end of the beer bar's courtyard:

Sasha, what do you say? Another smoke and we go?

All right, but I just ran out of cigarettes.

Here, wait. Here's another (*gives a cigarette*).

Thank you.

What an interesting life.

Meaning?

At our age, we have to change all the time. Each year we may get better or we may get worse, but we change.

Well, there's something to that.

It's so interesting and satisfying. You can afford to be who you want to be when you want to be it.

Artiom, I'm done smoking, what are you still hanging around here for?

Yeah, I'm kind of out of it.

Well, pull yourself together, let's go.

Scene 4

Artiom.

A small apartment, one room. Artiom fills the bath with water. Half an hour before, he bought 15 large bags of ice cubes at the grocery store. He dumps them all into the bathtub. He lowers his naked body into it and lies down. He needs to cool down a bit. He had a dream at night. A strange one. He woke up with a callus on his left hand from clutching the phone in his sleep.

Artiom spends 10 minutes in the bath. He takes a glass, adds ice from the bathtub and fills it with vodka and a little tomato juice. He goes out to smoke on the balcony. Stares at his leg. It has a big bruise on it. Somebody recently hit him with a bat. After that he broke the nose of the guy who hit him. One of them in the operating room, the other in a bathtub. They had a little chat, so to speak.

Artiom finishes his cigarette, finishes his drink, goes into his room, sits down at his laptop. He starts looking for photos. He prints photos and hangs them on the wall, replacing old photos. Puts some old ones in an album, tosses others on the balcony – he'll burn them to light cigarettes with.

He reprints all the photos, lights up a cigarette right in the room. He tries to make sense of his dream. A thought comes to mind:

His heightened sense of justice has abandoned him. A lot of shit, shit happens. We begin to get high from life as soon as we stop resisting reality. Time to smoke.

End of thought.

Scene 5

Artiom and a classmate. A month before the Dream

The banks of the Dnieper. A dialogue:

Nazar, don't you feel anything changing?

What do you mean?

Well, you snort a lot throughout the year.

Yes, that's true.

And how is it?

Well, I'm not going to change anything.

You're not going to stop snorting?

Anyway, my pusher has methadone these days, I want to shoot up. I tried Alpha recently, it was wild. Really awesome.

Seriously?

Yeah.

Nazar, you know you're my good friend, I'm not going to just stand by and watch as, step by step, you destroy your mind and health in general. I'm not going to help you, because it isn't my life. But as soon as you cross the line of adequacy, I'll just leave you completely.

I always say you can all give me up whenever you want.

So is that maybe what you want?

I just can't watch this world, these people, and our class supervisor when I'm straight.

Nazar, you're a fool. Can't you just end your life if it's so unbearable?

I want to die of an overdose, that's the most beautiful death.

You know right now your whole psyche is going through a total breakdown. You stopped thinking like a human being, you've become wild.

Yeah, I know.

Scene 6

Artiom and Sasha. Three Weeks Before the Dream

The Flower Mafia on Leo Tolstoy Street:

I talked to Nazar the other day. He said he wants to OD on purpose.

Then, don't hold him back. You can't help him until he wants to change himself.

I know. I just don't understand what led him to this, he is never himself anymore.

The process is probably irreversible.

Oh, well, drink up, drink up, we've got to pull Nazar out of it somehow.

Well, that's your business.

By the way, he said he wanted to commit suicide by way of a drug overdose. How would you like to die?

Meaning, in the sense of taking the next good path in this life?

I don't know, except it's got to be beautiful in some way, probably in a dream somehow.

Well, being beautiful, lying in a suit and all that, I understand, I'd probably like the same.

Then let's drink to aesthetic beauty and a worthy end!

Cheers, amen.

Scene 7 **Artiom and Dmytro**

Texting:

Hey!

Hey there, Artiom.

How's things?

Okay.

Did you hear, I'm coming to your city from 19 to 26 August. Will you be there?

I don't know. Maybe.

Do you want to get together?

Gotta do it.

Okay, let's keep in touch.

Okay.

Artiom sits by the water. He smokes again, watching the sky and water through his yellow glasses. Naturally, he's wearing headphones, listening to music. The soundtracks to the films *Kill Bill*, *Atomic Blonde*, and *North Wind*.

Scene 8 **Dmytro (*because it must be remembered*)**

Dmytro does not like to sit at home. He loves to look for beautiful landscapes in nature. He often goes there himself, whether alone or not alone. His photos are always beautiful, very liberated. He likes to post these photos on Facebook. That's what he's like. He likes to ask, "What the hell?" "Who gives a fuck?" "So what?"

These questions always stop Artiom, it is always very logical.

Dmytro is self-employed. He has his own team. They all work in the sphere of art, because it needs to be worked on. He has a dream team, people like that can turn rivers 'round, and conquer mountains. He is very lucky with his team, but he himself attracts that kind of person. His entourage never leaves anything to be desired. It's very select. He probably has a personality that few can stand. Another interesting thing: he gets bored with people very quickly, Same with Artiom, so everyone flies the coup. In short, Dmytro is full of Zen.

Dmytro has excellent taste in everything. In addition to his taste for people, he has a taste for alcohol, for walks, for his appearance and most importantly – for perfume. He never sprays anything new or extravagant on himself, but his aroma stands out clearly from thousands of others. That's how people recognize his presence, by his aroma. The triumph of the blind.

If we were to compare Dmytro to a certain photograph, it would be like this:

Everything is exactly as it should be, only in the photo the cheekbones are too strong, and the eyes aren't right, and in general it's not the same person, but the hat's a funny one.

Scene 9 **Nazar and Artiom**

Artiom's phone rings:

Hey! What are you doing tonight?

No plans yet.

Wanna go for a drink at the bar?

Let's go, what time?

Maybe around 6 p.m.

Okay, sounds good.

Artiom's phone rings:

Where are you?

I'm on the way. I'll be right there!

Artiom, you're 30 minutes late.

I'm not late, I'm always on time.

Last time you were only 15 minutes late.

Nazar, between us two, only one can be handsome and one be a monster, so if you want to look decent next to me - wait, I warned you I would be late.

Okay, in any case I'm sitting at the bar and having a drink.

Okay, the next one's on me.

They meet at the bar:

Here's to our get-together and our next exams!

No Nazar, the first glass is for Ukraine!

Then for love, right?

Then for love.

They drink half a refreshing glass of cider.

Then one for the road.

Meaning?

I have to meet a friend and give him some keys.

Where are you meeting him, when?

It's not far, let's drink up and go.

Okay.

They smoke and drink up. Nazar often pinches cigarettes from Artiom: either he doesn't have his own, or he doesn't like what he has.

Together they head for the Podil industrial area.

Nazar, where does your friend live? At a factory, or what?

Let's say he's not far away at this point.

Where are you taking me?

Slow down, you'll see. Just wait a minute.

Nazar stares at a photo in his iPhone. They arrive at a run-down, beat-up old warehouse. Nazar takes out a big silver tablespoon, like a big soup spoon, almost a ladle. He starts digging. He tells Artiom to smoke a cigarette, stand right by him, and to keep a look out. He digs something up. Shows off a sack of white crystal powder to Artiom:

Yo, what's that? (*quickly suspects what it is*)

Artiom – it's speed! How else do you think I didn't get kicked out last semester? I couldn't have passed my exams otherwise.

I remember you were planning to snort, Nazar, but you told me you didn't for three weeks.

Right. Because I shoot up.

A guy with a baseball bat calmly emerges from behind Nazar's back. Artiom is able to grab his hand quickly and push him aside so that he doesn't hit anyone on the head or back. It's a guard. Nazar quickly hides the

sack in his pocket.

GUARD: What are you doing here?^{[L1][SEP]}ARTIOM: Hello! And who might you be?^{[L1][SEP]}GUARD: You think I have to explain it to you?^{[L1][SEP]}ARTIOM: Just curious, there are all kinds of people around here, maybe I'm not into chatting with just anybody.^{[L1][SEP]}GUARD: Are you an idiot?^{[L1][SEP]}ARTIOM: I didn't get personal with you. Do you have a question?^{[L1][SEP]}GUARD: You're on private property, you need passes.^{[L1][SEP]}NAZAR: We had a wild time out here yesterday. We got so drunk we lost our keys, we don't even remember how we got here, but we decided to come back for our keys (quickly pulls keys out of his pocket to show them, and a sack and fan fall out).^{[L1][SEP]}

GUARD: Are you fucking crazy?

The guard punches Nazar, who goes down immediately, probably losing consciousness from the blow. Artiom is stunned but keeps trying to do something. The guard hits Artiom too, who falls too, the guard whacks his legs with the bat. Artiom gets up, feels a rush of adrenalin, and says incomprehensibly:

Have you ever been hit with the scales of justice? (Artiom holds a huge bunch of keys with a heavy steel Libra keychain.)

What?

Artiom, knowing he is not very strong, knows exactly where to strike effectively. He hits the guard in the nose with his scales of justice. The guard's nose breaks. It is an open fracture, blood flows freely, oof. The guard moans painfully, Artiom quickly pulls Nazar to his feet, pats his face with his hands, and gets him the fuck out of there, because they'll definitely call someone on them now.

Artiom half-carries Nazar to the bus stop, calls a taxi, and goes home to wash up. Artiom stands at the sink, water flowing, as Nazar sits behind him. Artiom looks in the mirror and his face fills with rage. He turns around and hits Nazar in a safe place, tells him to get out, and kicks him out. The sack remains behind. Artiom goes out on the balcony to have a smoke and a cup of coffee.

Scene 10 Artiom and Maksym

Texting in Instagram:

Yo, how are you doing? Long time no see! To be honest, I was kinda depressed. You want to get together soon?

Hey, Max. It's kinda tough right now, what do you suggest?

How about day after tomorrow? I live with some guys in a factory now, I'll show it to you. Sometime after 7 p.m. No one will be there

A factory?

Yeah, we rent the place for business.

All right, okay, but maybe not at the factory, maybe a bar somewhere, or just downtown for a walk?

Whatever, let's text.

The day after tomorrow comes. Texting in Instagram again:

Yo, are you free?

Hey, yeah.

So will you come to the factory? I'll show it to you, it's cool.

Artiom has a sore spot for these factories and industrial areas, so he hesitates awhile, but finally agrees.

Okay. Where will you meet me?

Come to Beresteiska Street.

Okay.

Artiom arrives at Beresteiska. Texts to Max:

Yo (it was a hard word to write, but Artiom always tries to adapt to other people using their style of conversation if he can). I'm at Beresteiska, what are you up to?

I'm a little late, a client came by, I have to supply him first, I'll be there soon.

What's "soon" mean? I'm here on time.

Gimme 5 minutes.

Seriously?

This is left unread and unanswered. Artiom waits for 30 minutes growing more and more furious the longer he waits. Maksym calls:

Artiom, we just left the factory, we'll be there in 3 minutes

You still with him?

Do you mind if all three of us go together?

All right, okay.

Artiom is clearly super angry. He loves to imagine things and then think about that, and get even more angry. 'Cause you have to do something with all your negative emotions.

Maksym shows up with his client. They're both wrapped in shawls. They pick up Artiom and go to the store, buy three bottles of wine, and go to drink at the factory. Maksym also gets Artiom high. But Maksym doesn't know anything about it. It's just that Artiom ran out of cigarettes, and he gets drunk quickly, so he asked Maksym for a cigarette, and the latter, not realizing that one cigarette had tobacco and the other one didn't, gives him a cigarette with marijuana in it. Artiom coughs for a long time. It takes him a long time to get home, too.

Incidentally, Maksym and Artiom were once in a relationship, four years ago. It was Artiom's first serious relationship; for Maksym it was his first relationship in Kyiv. The proper child and the hell-bent-for-leather dealer could not coexist for long. The relationship ended immediately at the first serious crime in Kyiv – Maksym and his party were standing guard, and beat up and almost shot an elderly couple who accidentally

witnessed the actions of the pusher and his band. Obviously a person like that would spoil Artiom's character, so he left him. But time passed, people change, and Artiom managed to rethink a lot in four years. Plus, Maksym became more respectable. He even spoke Ukrainian now.

Still, they could never be together, Maksym is a factory bird who hangs out with thieves and dealers, while Artiom still understands nothing, even as, each time, he tries to understand different manifestations of the world.

Scene 11 **Artiom and Dima**

Texting:

Hey!

Hey there!

Wanna get together?

I'm in another city, Artiom.

For long?

Figure forever.

Rarely going to be in Kyiv?

Right.

How about I come see you some time.

I don't know.

Well, then you come see me, I miss you.

Okay.

Just give me a sign beforehand so I can make plans.

Okay.

So that was their little talk. It left Artiom feeling sad. The only really good sex he'd had was now gone out of his life. The only unattainable person he knew had slipped through his fingers.

Scene 12 **"Dream"**

Artiom deliberately purchases plane tickets from Boryspil to Berlin. He calls a taxi. He doesn't plan to take it all the way to Boryspil, but sets up a drop-off point earlier, near a lonely house near the highway from Kyiv. He arrives.

