



# Ukrainian Drama TRANSLATIONS

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	<b>en</b>	МОООМ, IT HURTS!
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Auswärtiges Amt



Yurii Vovkohon and Grigory Semenchuk

*Moom, it hurts!*

A play

Translated by Tania Rodionova

## Characters

**ADAM** — a serviceman wounded in the hand, about 30 years old. Also, he is a 13-year-old boy from an orphanage

**ALIK** — a wounded serviceman on crutches, about 50 years old, originally from Henichesk

**OREST** — a wounded serviceman with an amputated leg, about 50 years old, originally from Lviv Oblast

**ANDRIYKO** — a wounded serviceman without both legs, in a wheelchair, about 30 years old, originally from Ternopil Oblast

**ROBERT** — a wounded serviceman with an amputated foot, about 30 years old, originally from Zakarpattia Oblast

**PETRO** — a wounded serviceman, about 30 years old, originally from Vinnytsia Oblast

**MARIA** — a nurse, novice of the monastery, about 30 years old

**ZHENIA** — a boy from an orphanage, aged 13

**SERA** — a boy from an orphanage, aged 13

**SANIA** — a boy from an orphanage, aged 13

**IVAN MAKSYMОВYCH** — the orphanage director, about 50 years old

**NATALIA PETRIVNA** — an orphanage teacher, about 40 years old

**VOICES:** Sania's voice (Adam's friend and sworn brother), Alisa's voice (Alik's daughter), Tetiana Viktorivna's voice (Alik's mother), Karina's voice (Robert's wife), TV announcer's voice, unknown voice, voices of the sworn brothers Fierce and Monk, Taisia Maksymivna's voice (an orphanage teacher), company commander's voice

## SCENE ONE

*On the stage is a 4-bed ward in a military hospital. Orest, Andriyko, and Alik are lying on their beds. One bed is empty. They all do their own thing: Andriyko is sleeping; Orest is scrolling on his phone; Alik is reading a book. In the corner, there is a TV set turned on all the time, broadcasting the national telethon.*

*Maria and several orderlies bring Adam on a gurney to the ward and transfer him to the bed.*

*He is shaking as he recovers from the anesthesia.*

**MARIA:** Good evening, boys. I brought you a new companion, young and handsome, so you can have more fun together.

**OREST and ALIK:** *(in one voice)* Good evening!

*Andriyko wakes up.*

**ANDRIYKO:** ... hello-hello!

**OREST:** Better you stay with us, young and pretty lady! Then we would definitely have more fun.

**MARIA:** Oh dear God, what's on your mind... Boys, you just talk to him so that he doesn't fall asleep. *(She looks at Adam)* All right? *(She leaves)*

*They stand up and examine the newly arrived Adam. From time to time, he regains consciousness and answers their questions, then falls asleep again.*

**OREST:** Poor man, he is shaking so hard. *(He looks towards the newcomer)* It's a good thing though that he's injured his left hand, not his right... In 2014, I had my right hand wounded by shrapnel, and I barely learned to hold a spoon with my left one.

**ALIK:** dunno, and if he's left-handed? After the operation, recoverin' from the drugs, I also felt like I was fuckin' high, I almost fell out of my bed... *(pauses)* Fuckin' katsaps have done a lot of shit...

**ANDRIYKO:** Hello, my friend, what is your name?

**ADAM:** Aaa, Adam, aaaim... Adam.

**OREST:** What brigade are you from?

**ADAM:** S-s-seventy-two, Black Zaporizhzhia Cossacks, Ukraine or death..., motherfuckers *(Smiling)*

**ALIK:** Deeeath? *(Smiling)* Naaah, you've got your whole life ahead of you, Cossack. Where the fuck did they do all this to ya?

**ADAM:** V-v-Vuhledar, ind-d-ustial zone. The t-t-tank hit usss... Sania, go! ...f-f-fuuck... *(Silencing)*

*Alik quickly gets out of bed, grabs his crutches and approaches Adam's bed*

**ALIK:** *Hey ya, fighter, don't sleep! (Slaps Adam in the face)*

**ADAM:** And w-where is Sania? Saniok, my bro...

**ALIK:** Hush, kiddo, it's okay. Ya are in the hospital. It's not that easy to mess with us!

**ANDRIYKO:** I remember when I myself was recovering from anesthesia, God forbid... And then you are so hungry and it gets dark in your eyes.

**ALIK:** I'd grab a bite myself!

*Orest pulls out a roll of pastry out of the nightstand. And unwraps it.*

**OREST:** Why didn't you say you were hungry? Guys, please help yourselves, I got the delivery from home today. *(Passes out pies)*... Adam, kiddo, will you?

**ADAM:** *(Groans)* Take this shit awaaaaay from me... I don't wanna...

**ALIK:** What the fuck are ya givin' him? He doesn't need that shit right now.

**OREST:** Well, I'll leave some for you. I bet you have never tried such good ones. These are with rose jam. Baked according to an Austrian recipe from my Granny Dara. While studying in gymnasium, she took courses for housewives from the Union of Ukrainian Women. Imagine, my granny knew four languages, knew the Romans and the Germans by heart, went to the theater, organized balls and concerts with her colleagues, and then those Katsap scums came, and those who weren't killed were taken to Siberia. In freight cars, like cattle. And now what? It's the same again. The same story repeats itself a hundred years later. Do you realize what will happen if we do not get through?

**ALIK:** Oh, c'mon, we'll get thru, we've got everything under control!!!

**OREST:** They thought that, too... Out of our entire family of nine brothers and sisters, only Granny Dara survived the war and Siberia. But she held on for dear life... She outlived all her camp guards. She lived to see six grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. And now, a century later, we have a big family again. We all used to come to the village to visit our granny at Christmas and Easter. Two tables were put together and food was spread all over them... Meat jelly, pâtés, *Sülze*, knuckles, *Knödels*, *zupas*, baked bacon... I have never tasted such goodies as at Granny Dara's.

**ALIK:** What are these 'goooodies'? Kinda tasty stuff?

**OREST:** That's what we call something very fucking delicious.

**ALIK:** Interesting, ha. Neva heard the word.

**ANDRIYKO:** Our whole family gets together at Grandma's, at Mina's, too. And if you don't come, she'll be mad at you for six months or so. Well, cos two days before the holidays, she starts cooking everything, and then a week is not enough to eat it all. During their lifetime, they suffered so much hunger that afterwards all they dreamed about was eating well and feeding someone else.

**OREST:** ...And all her life Granny Dara hated moscals and said that there would be a great *wojna* with them. We were fools and laughed at her... But she remembered all her killed relatives and raised us. And she taught all her children and helped them to achieve something in life. And among the grandchildren, I was the only one who was not interested in science. I was an adventurer, and she loved me the most and, in fact, cared for me the most... Mom and Dad had no time for that. In the history of our people, we usually have men who are either killed in wars, or alcoholics, or migrant workers, and the boys are raised by women. But Granny Dara was a strict woman, she knew how to deal with all of us... From my childhood, I remember the *The Decalogue of a Ukrainian Nationalist* thanks to my grandmother: "I – the spirit of eternal element, who shielded you from the Tatar flood and placed you between two worlds, to create a new life. You will attain a Ukrainian state or perish fighting for it. You will not allow anyone to tarnish your people's reputation or honor..."...And when the moscals took Crimea and went to Donbas, my Granny Dara stood out before my eyes. And I told my family that I was going to the ATO zone. And they knew that they could not make me change my mind. All of us in our family inherited that from her.

**ALIK:** Ya know, ma grandma, she "spoke Ukrainian", too. But she said nothing 'bout the war. Ya know, like really nothing. But maybe that's not the main thing. She just loved me. No one in ma whole life has ever loved me with such simple and warm love as hot milk. She always used to bring groceries to the city for me and mom, and we were so ashamed of her, cos she was from the village and so simple... When I was in prison, I always remembered her old house in the village. The walls are painted with lime, the stove, *rushnyks*, and cherry pie... I used to dream that I'd come there and drink milk from a glass with bread, and she'd watch me and enjoy it. But she died, and I didn't get a chance to see her... Maybe she didn't say "any patriotic shit" to me, I still wouldn't get it, but thanks to her I realized what ma home is. And I went to fight not for the "state" and not for any values, but for ma people... and, as they say, to protect ma yard. As Castaneda wrote: "To take responsibility for one's decisions means to be ready to die for them." He was a cool man. In prison, I read his book three times, from cover to cover.

*On the TV screen, during the broadcast of the telethon, footage from the village liberated by the Armed Forces of Ukraine is shown. The TV report tells about how the local residents met our military. It shows an old lady inviting the soldiers to come and eat some borscht. Everyone is watching the story attentively.*

*Adam lets out a long groan.*

**ANDRIYKO:** Oh, it hurts him so much. The anesthesia must be wearing off now.

**ADAM:** Oh fuck, the effect is almost like from bath salts...

**ANDRIYKO:** Oh, I see we have an experienced fighter here. *(Laughing)*

**OREST:** When I was fighting in the Donbas in 2015, an old lady from the area came to visit us at the checkpoint and brought pies. She told us that her son was also serving in the ATO. And that she was feeding us because maybe someone else would feed him there. She had no contact with him, she was very worried. We even tried to find out where he was and how he was doing. But we didn't find such a fighter. The pies were good, even though we were a little scared at first. Who the fuck knows, maybe she's a separatist and wanted to poison us. Well, but then we gave some to the dog to eat, and the dog didn't die... And so, we became friends with that granny. She kept bringing them, until they stopped supplying food to the village. We told her to evacuate, but she didn't want to because she had the graves of her second son and her husband there. That's where she got hit by shelling, near those graves. Right on Thomas Sunday. She was taking her pies to the graves. And we had to withdraw from our positions, that was the order. I can't remember her name, what was it? Granny Vera... or something like that... A lot of time has passed, and I'm still ashamed. The village was bombed, the cemetery... And we withdrew...

**ANDRIYKO:** In the Kherson region, during the liberation, we were also greeted by local old ladies who gave us homemade food. The food smelled like home. While I was eating, I closed my eyes and saw my home. It's strange that you have to leave your home to protect it, isn't it? And when you close your eyes or go to sleep, everything appears in your dreams. And so you walk in those dreams. I once wanted to escape — to the city, abroad, to freedom, to another 'free' world. And when you're fighting at war, then all that 'your world' ends where those old ladies who treat you disappear. Our company commander used to joke that those old ladies will treat you while you are alive, and when you die, they will continue to bring pies to your grave.

**OREST** *(Laughing)*: That's for sure, to the grave... Me too, I've gotten used to joking about death in the last nine years. Sometimes you forget that you are at home, and in the company they just freak out, they think you are some kind of psycho. But what did you expect? We live in such a time. We have already turned half of Ukraine into a cemetery and the other half into a festival. And those who are neither here nor there have fled. There's nothing left to do but to joke... Hey, kiddo, you've been silent for a good while. Now tell us what old ladies treated you to?

**ADAM:** Guys, damn it, can you keep it down? It's so fucking hard... *(Groans)* Oooh fuck, aaaaaah. I can't do this anymore.

**OREST:** Alik, my friend, go ask Maria if he can sleep now? We cannot watch over him here all night.

*Alik gets up, picks up his crutches and limps out into the corridor. He returns in a few minutes.*

**ALIK:** Maria, well, she says if it's been an hour already and he says he wants to sleep, then he can go to sleep. After a couple of hours, the anesthesia will wear off, and he'll get another shot. So what, I turn off the light?

**ANDRIYKO:** Yes, turn it off! Maybe you and Orest will get some sleep, because it seems that I have already slept enough already, although I feel like I could sleep even more. Sleep is the key to recovery. And the kiddo will sleep. He will feel better tomorrow.

*Alik turns off the light. The TV screen keeps flashing with the national telethon.*

## SCENE TWO

*The TV screen in the ward keeps flashing with the national telethon. The men are sleeping. On the air, an expert talks about the number of abducted children and whole orphanages that were brought to the territory of the Russian Federation. A documentary report is shown about an orphanage that was brought to Lviv from the zone of hostilities. Adam also falls asleep and has a dream.*

### *Dream one*

*In Adam's dream, the ward turns into an orphanage room. Three little boys are lying on their beds: Adam, Sera and Zhenia.*

**ZHENIA:** But she, Taisia Maksymivna, is such a stupid bitch... She didn't even notice that we ran away...

**SERA:** She reads all these books... As if there is something smart in them...

**ADAM:** And I think she's okay. Stop bad-mouthing her! She is certainly better than Petrivna... She is kind...

**ZHENIA:** That's cos you're spineless. Everyone is okay with you, even our principal who makes us pray three times a day... You seem to enjoy it. Do you enjoy reading books, too? Instead of playing serious games with your bros. You're even afraid to touch the projectile we found... You, coward...

**ADAM:** So what? Ivan Antonovych didn't do anything bad to me... And praying is not so bad either. And you know what, I'm not a coward...

**ZHENIA:** Ha, prove it! Tomorrow we'll run away again, during the walk. And you'll prove that you're not a coward. I wanna make a bonfire and throw it over there. See how it bangs...

**SERA:** And where will we find the matches?



**ZHENIA:** We will steal them from the canteen... I know where they hide them...

**SERA:** Coool!

**ADAM:** Guys, maybe we shouldn't be doing this?

**ZHENIA:** For God's sake, you little coward. That's what I'll be calling you soon.

**ADAM:** Well, if Petrivna finds out, then she'll kill us all, cos we messed up... So, then we'll all be responsible. Don't you know that she'll punish everyone terribly? She likes that kind of thing... And we'll also set up Taisia Maksymivna and Ivan Antonovych...

**ZHENIA:** There is no going back. I told Mashka, she wants to see this, too. And you love Mashka, don't you? She'll think that you're a cool guy, and if you don't go, I'll tell her what a cowardly boy you are...

**ADAM:** And will Mashka go for sure?

**ZHENIA:** Right, right... She also wanted a bonfire... And there's also a projectile... How long is it there, what do you think ?

**SERA:** Well, I saw that there was something there even before. Probably, since the Great Patriotic War.

**ZHENIA:** Or maybe even since World War I... Hey you, book lover, why are you silent? Got any thoughts???

**ADAM:** I only have one thought, that no matter how long it's been there, it can explode like anytime. And then you won't be able to get your guts back together... You got to be careful with that...

**ZHENIA:** Oh, what a cowardly boy you are... And your friend is also a coward... It's a good thing that we only have one coward in the room here...

**ADAM:** C'mon, I'm not a coward... Okay, I'll go with you tomorrow. Can I take Sania with me?

**ZHENIA:** Yeah, take him. Where will you go without your cowardly friend? And you will both shit your pants right there in front of Mashka... But if you tell anyone, I'll beat you up so bad you'll regret it for the rest of your life... And that's why you tell your bro Sania that this is a big secret... Cos if anyone finds out...

**SERA:** Do you hear me, coward??? And what about those who came to you? Didn't they take you home? They were so nice... And probably rich.

**ADAM:** Nope, they never came...

**SERA:** Of course, who needs such a little cowardly boy... They once told me that your mommy left you cos your daddy ran away, cos he was a coward, just like you...

*Suddenly, Adam hears a scream from behind the wall.*

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** (*Screaming*) Moom, it hurts!

*Adam wakes up. The wounded men are snoring all around him. Adam feels the excruciating pain. He gets out of bed and goes into the corridor. Maria is sitting in the corridor by the night lamp. She is writing something down. She notices Adam.*

**MARIA:** Oh, dear, who gave you permission to get up at all?

**ADAM:** Nurse, this is driving me fucking crazy. My hand hurts like hell. And on top of that, someone behind the wall is screaming. Someone shell-shocked, probably. Hey, could you give me a fucking good shot so I just fall asleep?

**MARIA:** Okay, I don't know who was screaming. Maybe it was in your dream. I took a little nap myself... It hurts... Well, it will hurt, because you had surgery. Although you are lucky, the shard was removed from your hand. The surgery was easy. A fucking good shot??? Oh, those expressions of yours...

**ADAM:** Well, I had a rough childhood... Well, my boyhood and youth were fucked up too. And what about you? Are you a teacher of Ukrainian or what?

**MARIA:** Maybe I am a teacher. Maybe I don't want to give you a shot and I won't... And why would you say swear words at a stranger? (*Looking at him sympathetically*) All right, I'm going to give you a shot now. But you should still stay in bed. I was planning to visit you myself. But since you are already here, please sit down. I will make a note in the logbook.

*Adam sits down heavily in the chair next to him.*

**MARIA:** Okay, I have your name. And your rank?

**ADAM:** Soldier.

**MARIA:** Military unit?

**ADAM:** Seventy-second brigade, A2167.

**MARIA:** Date of birth?

**ADAM:** December 1, 1991.

**MARIA:** Phone number of your family member to be notified?

**ADAM:** I can give you my friend's number, from the orphanage. I would call him myself. I just can't find my fucking phone.

**MARIA:** Why, what kind of words are you using?! Please be a little more reserved... I will give you our phone tomorrow. There was no phone with you. And now I have to write down in the logbook who to call if anything happens. It'd better be a family member.

**ADAM:** C'mon, I've got no family, I'm telling you. I'm from an orphanage... I'm an orphan. All I can give you is my buddy's phone number. We were at the front together, too. I hope he didn't fall apart like me.

**MARIA:** If someone else had been wounded there, they would certainly have brought them with you. So, don't worry, try to call him in the morning. Write his phone number and name down here, please.

*Maria hands Adam a logbook and a pen, and he writes down the number trying to remember it.*

**ADAM:** Here... But let me call him tomorrow. Cos I'm so pissed off... Fuck, I'm not sure I can sleep right now.

**MARIA:** I'm going to give you a shot and trust me, you'll fall asleep. The doctor gave you a *good* painkiller. You will sleep well. And I will pray for him. For your friend and for you.

**ADAM:** Pray? *(Laughing)* Holy shit... It's been a while since anyone prayed for me. *(With skepticism and embarrassment)*

**MARIA:** Look, if you are going to swear like that, I will not pray for you...

**ADAM:** Hey, nurse, look, why are you panicking?... I'm just fu... shocked... Yeah, I'm shocked, you know, and you're teaching me Ukrainian language here... Listen, can I ask you something? It would be nice if you don't say a word to my neighbors that I'm an orphan and that I have no one. Cos it's very hard, you know? When I arrived, they were already talking about their grandmas, how much they love them and all that stuff. So could I ask you not to spread my story? I wanna chill here for a while, like I'm a hero... Wounded... Well, and not be treated like a mental cripple...

**MARIA:** I didn't even want that. It is not accepted here to discuss people. But if they ask me, I don't know if I can lie either... And trust me, I understand you, I've seen some sorrow in my life too...

**ADAM:** You've seen it too, you say? *(Smiling)* Interesting, ha... Well, yeah, you work in a military hospital, you've probably seen stuff... If you need a psychologist, you know, maybe we could whine to each other sometime? I like to listen to some kind of shit, cos compared to

the shit in my life, it is easy for me. Maybe one day I'll become a psychologist... *(Laughing)* If I don't kick the bucket...

**MARIA:** Maybe I'll tell you if you are going to be polite and go to have a rest now. And God forbid, they will see me chatting with a post-op patient in the middle of the night.

**ADAM:** Plus, nurse... Can I give you some cash? For your help? Over the past few months, I have made a fair amount of loot on the front. Don't be shy, if anything... I just don't know where my wallet is...

**MARIA:** What are you talking about? What money? *(Concerned)* Go back to your bed. I will see what kind of painkiller they gave you, prepare a shot and come to you. We have to be quiet so as not to wake anyone up... And your wallet must be over there, in a nightstand, where your belongings and documents you were brought with are...

**ADAM:** Ma'am, yes ma'am! I'll go and wait for you to come and give me a dose of some stuff...

*Adam heads back to his ward. Later, Maria comes there with a syringe. She gives Adam an injection and leaves.*

### SCENE THREE

*On the stage is a hospital ward. Alik enters the room on crutches, followed by Maria. She brings Orest in a wheelchair... In the corner, there is a TV-set turned on all the time, broadcasting the national telethon.*

**MARIA:** Boys, who hasn't come to get bandaged yet?

**ADAM:** Well, I kind of haven't...

**ANDRIYKO:** Me, as usual. I'm waiting for you right here, not running anywhere. *(Laughing)* You said I was going for rehabilitation today. Is that true?

**MARIA:** *(To Andriyko)* Yes, that's true. But first we have to examine you thoroughly. *(Turning to Adam)* And then I'll examine you. How are you? Can you help me?

**ADAM:** Okay, let's do this. If you need help, I'll help you. Anyway, I got lucky. Maybe you can get me a part-time job, as a nurse or something. I will take care of these wounded guys here. *(Laughing)*

**ANDRIYKO:** Nurse, do you know where they are sending me to? I need to call my mother and tell her where I will be.

**MARIA** *(To Adam)*: Roll the blanket here, put the diaper under, okay, now leave it, I'll do the rest myself to keep it sterile. *(To Andriyko)* Oh, you will not be sent far. You won't go outside the region, so don't worry. *(Looking at the wound)* What have we got here?

**ANDRIYKO**: *(Noticing that Adam winces and imagines what it must have been like when he was wounded)* An unpleasant picture, huh..? Four floors collapsed on me. Apparently, God saved me and I survived. I was taking a shower in the basement when a missile hit the dormitory. I was completely naked, in my birthday suit, with only a prayer rope around my neck. One slab crushed my legs, the others folded over me like a dome. I lay there for eighteen hours and prayed with a prayer rope. I remembered my mom and my childhood. It was as if I was in a dream. The rescue guys said that they were about to give up, but then they heard someone whispering and they dug me out.

**ALIK**: I somehow didn't believe all those stories about the light at the end of the tunnel, about the mother, that your whole life is flashin' before your eyes... When I got hit, I didn't feel the fu... *(looks at Maria and corrects himself)* I didn't feel anything like that. There wasn't anything romantic. I even thought that it was kinda like Castaneda wrote: "Death always comes like a chill down your spine". You know, you just fight and think: Fuck, how stupid is this?

*Maria proceeds to bandage Adam's hand.*

**ADAM**: Hey, nurse, promise to be careful? I'll need this hand to kill people, and then drink beer and paw girls, you know...

*Maria looks at Adam with judgment.*

**OREST**: When I first got sliced up in Pisky in 2014, I wasn't worried about getting hurt, I was worried about telling my mom I was in the hospital. So that she wouldn't leave everything and come to me.

**ANDRIYKO**: And at first I didn't even want to tell my mom that I was going to war, because she wouldn't let me. So I enrolled in the Territorial Defense Unit and lied to my mom that we would not be sent anywhere and then asked them to send me to the front in the first batch myself. Now I have a sin, because you can't lie to your mom.

**OREST**: Hey, kiddo, and how did they let you leave home, what did you tell your mom?

**ADAM**: Oooouch. *(Pretending that Maria hurt him while she was bandaging him)*

**MARIA**: *(Realizing she hasn't even touched him)*. Shhh, it's okay, it always hurts... *(Looking at his hand)* You have such deep scars here... Did you have surgery on it before?

**ADAM**: Well, there was a story when I was a kid. *(Pauses with his eyes closed to calm down and answers Orest sarcastically)* Well, I told my family that now it's only our Motherland

Ukraine that matters and we have to fight for it... And so my mom wasn't very nervous. She is a strong woman. And when I told her that they would pay me a hundred thousand hryvnias, she was even happy. I will never earn such a salary in my life. And what a great deal it is - you kill, you defend your Motherland, and you even get a hundred thousand...

**MARIA:** (*Leaving the ward*) Andriy, you can start packing little by little. I will be back in an hour with your discharge papers.

*Maria leaves. Andriy picks up the phone and starts calling someone.*

**ANDRIYKO:** Hello, mom, can you hear me? They are sending me to rehabilitation today. Yes, you can come and visit. Just don't bring too much food with you. Yes, mom, they give food here, we have everything we need. Mom, I'm not a kid anymore, I was at war. No, mom, I haven't found a girlfriend yet, neither among the nurses, nor among the volunteers. Well yes, there are nice ones here, but what am I going to tell them that you want grandchildren? Yes, mom, I'm praying for you too. Well no, actually I didn't sleep very well. Here, behind the wall, a guy, apparently shell-shocked, has been calling his mother all day and all night. No, I don't know what his name is. Yes, please pray for him as well. It won't hurt anyone. Who did you meet? And what did she tell you? Oh, please don't cry, mom. Don't gnaw at yourself. You are the best mother in the world. I also thank God for everything. All right, please calm down, I'll call you later.

*Andriy nervously hangs up and remains silent in anger.*

**OREST:** Andriyko, what happened?

**ANDRIYKO:** Well, a neighbor bragged to my mother that she got her son 'disabled' for the army. She even said that if my mother had taken better care of me, I would have never become disabled. That one should protect their children. So, what is this: she is wise, and we are stupid?

**OREST:** C'mon, forget it. I used to be so sick of things like that, too. One time I came back from the front and I was standing in line at the store, dressed in civilian clothes. And one lady said something like: "Oh, I'd never let my son go to war. Do you know how much it costs to raise a child? In kindergarten, go give money for gifts for the teachers; in school, go give money to repair the office; get your child into the institute, and then they take him to the army and send him back crippled." I asked her how she looked into the eyes of those mothers who buried their sons, and she told me: "And these are their problems! I worry about my child." I really wanted to strangle her right then and there.

**ADAM:** Why are you guys so fucking surprised? Ukraine is a land of opportunity, you know. I might even look for some ways to stay out of the army if it wasn't for the salary. Hell, you can't make that kind of money anywhere now, there are no jobs. And here - they feed you, volunteers bring everything you need, and your motherland gives you a machine gun. If you're not too stupid, you can even get some crap out of dead orcs. And what's more, I'm

wounded now, maybe they'll give me some extra pay or a medal. And do you know how crazy chicks are about AFU guys now?

*Adam looks at Orest and Andriyko.*

**OREST:** So what, you think, we're happy to have no legs now?

**ADAM:** Hey, don't be nervous like that. Now the state will make prosthetics for you... Maybe they'll send you to America, and you'll meet this Schwertznegger... You'll be as good as new... And then you can even go back to the front... Well, maybe they won't let you be a paratrooper, but that's okay, you'll be clearing mines somewhere over there. They say the katsaps have now buried a huge bunch of those fucking mines. So they need people like that. You'll be paid a hundred thousand again. And when you return home, you'll be real heroes...

**ANDRIYKO:** That's easy for you to say when all your hands and feet are in place. The only question is whether it is worth a hundred thousand... You will finish your military service and return from the war to your family. And I will become an extra burden to them for the rest of my life. (*aggressively*) You know what, my friend, maybe you'd better stay out of the army. Why fight then? For money and to show off?

**ADAM:** You know... I've seen enough such fools who ran to fight at war for the idea, and later no one gave a fuck about them. You think they will pity you for a long time? They needed you when they were afraid that the katsaps would kill fucking everyone. And now that they have calmed down a bit, each of them is looking for a way to settle down, make a career, transfer to the rear, and make their kids hang out abroad. They will call you a *hero* for a while, then they will write you off and once a year on Defender's Day they will invite you to the club to take a picture of the Head of the District Council handing you a certificate. The truth tastes bitter, doesn't it, my sworn brother?

**ANDRIYKO** (*aggressively*): I'm not your sworn brother... We didn't even let guys like you out to the forefront, because you never know if they'll shoot you in the back out of fear when running away.

*Maria comes in with hospital discharge papers. She hands them to Andriyko.*

**MARIA:** Boys, why are you so loud? Andriy, here is your epicrisis. Are you ready? Adam, can you help us with the bags?

**ANDRIYKO:** I can do it myself... I don't need his help.

**ALIK:** Hold on, bro, I'll help ya...

*Alik helps Andriyko get into the wheelchair. Maria takes him around the ward to say goodbye to the others. Andriy doesn't shake Adam's hand.*

**OREST:** Goodbye, God bless you!

**ALIK:** Hold on, ma friend!

**ANDRIYKO:** Guys, wait. *(Takes out his phone and shows a photo on it)* This is my mother, she will pray for you, because now we are like family. *(Looking at Adam)* At least part of us is...

*Alik and Maria help to take Andriyko out and carry his belongings.*

*Alik returns to the ward and lies down. On the screen, the national telethon continues with stories about the wounded and how doctors are saving the lives of soldiers.*

*Adam watches the story for a while and then suddenly falls asleep.*

### ***Dream two***

*The ward in Adam's dream once again turns into a room in an orphanage. Little Adam, Zhenia, and Sera are sitting on their beds, bandaged... Adam is crying.*

**ZHENIA:** Damn, now we're fucked up...

**SERA:** It's all this coward's fault. Why didn't you take Mashka away?

**ADAM** *(Sobbing and shocked):* There... There... There was no time to.

**SERA:** I guess Mashka died, I saw that there was nothing left of her head... *(screaming)*  
Fuck...

**ZHENIA:** And where is your bro, that coward Sania???

**ADAM** *(Keeps crying):* He... He was the farthest... He was the first to run and call for help.

**ZHENIA** *(to Sera):* Of course, this fucking coward. Anyways, listen to me, if they ask us, we will blame everything on these two cowards... Like they invented this whole story...

**ADAM:** G... guys? How come? I asked you not to go there yesterday...

*Zhenia gets up and approaches Adam's bed.*

**ZHENIA:** Hey, coward, you will take all the responsibility, you hear me? Cos if you don't, I'll cut your balls off when you fall asleep and you'll be castrated. I promise you. And neither your Sania nor anyone else will help you here. We'll take care of him later... Do you understand what's gonna happen to us now? They'll probably send us to a children's prison



somewhere.

**SERA:** And we'll all survive in the children's prison. And you, coward, you will not survive. Well... But it'll be even worse for you here... Wanna go there without your balls? Why are you weeping like a girl?

**ADAM:** I... I... I can't forget... Mashka with no head...

*The door opens. The teacher, Natalia Petrivna, enters.*

**NATALIA PETRIVNA:** All right... Little criminals... Do you even understand what you have done? Now they will send you all to prison, and I will be sent along with you. I knew that you were planning something, but not something like this... I don't even want to talk to you... What about him? (*Looking at Adam*) Sitting and crying? Have you started thinking with your head now? My God... What have you done... Now you will all be judged... And I will say that you have done this even before. Now listen: tomorrow an investigator will be here, a commission from the district will come, the chief has been called back from vacation. They will all be dealing with you. So think about what you are going to say... Because I won't let you live quietly. You will all be put on trial, and there will be not a trace of you here...

**ZHENIA:** Natalia Petrivna, we didn't want to do this, it's all Adam's fault. He was the one who found it and made us do it...

**SERA:** We didn't know he would do such a thing... We were just curious. And he took that iron thing and threw it in the fire to look cool to Mashka.

**NATALIA PETRIVNA:** I don't even want to hear this. The investigator will deal with it tomorrow. And I have to make up a story and tell how you got away. Thank God, I'm under treatment and can say that I had high blood pressure and went to make myself some tea. And so Taisia Maksymivna was supposed to look after you. Got it?

**ZHENIA:** Of course, Natalia Petrivna, that's how it was.

**ADAM:** (*Shouting*) Natalia Petrivna, this is all a lie... I didn't want to do anything like that... It was them who came up with the plan...

**NATALIA PETRIVNA:** Your one word against theirs. The investigator will deal with you.

**ADAM:** Natalia Petrivna, and where is Sania? He can confirm everything...

**NATALIA PETRIVNA:** Your Sania can do nothing anymore. He has been sitting on the bed for the last half an hour, crying and mumbling something like a mute... So think, bandit, what will happen to you... It is in your best interest that he speaks before tomorrow...

*Natalia Petrivna leaves. Zhenia gets up and approaches Adam's bed.*

**ZHENIA:** Damn, you're a little bitch!

*He swings at Adam to punch him. Suddenly, Adam wakes up and comes back to reality. Alik and Orest are lying and sleeping in the ward. Adam lies back down and tries to fall asleep.*

#### SCENE FOUR

*On the stage is an evening ward. Maria enters the room holding a tray with syringes to inject painkillers for the night. Alik and Orest lie and smoke electronic cigarettes. Adam is sitting on his bed. The men see Maria and hide their electronic cigarettes.*

**MARIA:** Why, you boys are acting like kids indeed while hiding those stinkers! Who needs a painkiller shot?

**ALIK:** It's been a while since I took my pants off. I've been waitin' for ya.

**OREST:** What a nice job you have, I'd go and poke girls in the ass myself and get paid for it. You'll give us painkillers every night, and that's how you'll remember us - not from the front, but from the back. And that's how you'll recall us. They'll tell you that Adam got married, for example, and all you'll see is his butt. *(Laughing with Alik)*

*Maria starts giving injections.*

**ALIK:** Ooouuuuch. *(Simulated)*

**MARIA:** Why, stop pretending like that.

**ALIK:** I've got everything there! And there's no living place left anymore. At least draw some patterns with these syringes. You can draw me a skull with bones, a parachute for Orest, since he is a paratrooper, and a hundred thousand hryvnias for the kiddo.

**MARIA:** Boys, please don't make me laugh, because I will poke you the way you will cry. The hand will tremble - and you will all be bruised.

**ALIK:** And d'ya have a tasty jab so I can get rid of the pain and watch some cartoons? Cos well, I can't watch TV anymore, it's all about war and war.

**ADAM:** Oh yeah, I'd like to get high, too. Cos your painkiller isn't making it any better...

**MARIA:** Oh, it breaks my heart to see you in pain... But sometimes it has to hurt. You just have to realize and accept it. Without pain, we would not become better... Because until you go through pain yourself, you will not be able to understand other people's pain. For some reason it is like this: everything has to be born in pain so that you can appreciate it later.

**OREST:** Well yes, now we have the whole Ukraine full of people in pain, it is being born in torment, if only it would be remembered and appreciated. Because we forget everything very fast.

**ADAM:** Orest, why are you making it all so sad? You should go on TV to work for that telethon. You make such pretentious speeches, I'm fucking shocked. Well, what is the basic difference between us and the katsaps? We have an order to kill them, and they have an order to kill us. We both get paid well for it. Well, they came to our land, yeah. But in general, to be honest, there's no difference between us.

**ALIK:** It's just that the best die on our side, and the worst on theirs... The Katsaps have only one idea - to destroy us so that no trace remains...

**MARIA:** Okay, boys... Stop it... Please don't talk about evil spirits at night... And wean yourself off the painkillers bit by bit because it's a real problem: when you've already developed a tolerance to all kinds of painkillers and nothing takes away the pain.

*Maria gives the last injection.*

**MARIA:** That's it, go to sleep now. Good night.

**ALIK:** Gooood night!

**ADAM:** Nighty night to you too, beauty!

**OREST:** Good night!

*Maria leaves.*

**ALIK:** Hey, kiddo, look up in Andiyko's nightstand... There should be a bottle.

**ADAM:** Ooooooh! I've waited so long for this moment. We had a strict platoon leader. If you were drunk, you were immediately taken off the battlefield and put in the cellar!

*Adam opens the nightstand and finds a small bottle of cognac.*

**ADAM:** Oh, bro. Let's have some fun now. Wait... *(laughing)* Are you allowed to already?

**ALIK:** Kiddo, we came back from the dead, ya know! We're allowed to do everything. Orest, will ya join us?

**OREST:** If I had been drinking, you would all be flying around the room. *(Laughing)*

*Alik takes the bottle.*

**ALIK:** Well, cheers to you, ma bros!

*Alik takes a sip and hands the bottle to Adam.*

**ALIK:** Hey, kiddo, careful. It might be too much for you.

*Adam drinks and closes the nightstand; he notices that there is something else there and pulls out the prayer rope.*

**ADAM:** Oh, it looks like Andriyko forgot his "prayer thing." He might be looking for it right now.

**OREST:** People don't forget things like that. It means it was meant to be given to someone else. Keep it to yourself.

**ADAM:** Pshhhh, what's the point? I've never liked religion since I was a kid, I don't get it... And I have no desire to pray.

**OREST:** Oh, that's okay. Andriyko's mother will pray for us, and you can pray for her and your mother, too. You don't have to be a religious person, just think that they will be pleased... My mother used to pray all the time. That's what they told me in the military hospital: apparently, someone is praying for you. Maybe praying was the only thing she could do for me. I was so naughty at school, and when the Soviet Union collapsed - we beat hucksters, we transported alcohol, cigarettes, Poland, the Czech Republic, and then I left to become a truck driver, and I already had a family and seemed to calm down, and then the anti-terrorist operation began... It wrecked her nerves a lot. And now my mom is gone, but I still feel like she keeps praying for me. Like she is still here. It is similar to what my leg feels like. I know it's been cut off, but it still hurts, like it's alive. Phantom pain. They can't do anything about it... They say it's in my head.

**ADAM:** Well, if we think about it rationally, can anything that has already been cut off cause pain?

*Orest shrugs his shoulders.*

**ALIK:** *(his voice noticeably drunk)* I've got ma mama and daughter stuck in the "occupied territory". I was in Mykolaiv when the fuckin' bastards attacked. I aksed her: "Leave while ya still can." And she's like: "Where'd we go, we dunno anyone." And ma kid doesn't talk to me anymore, she can't forgive me, she says I "left" them...

*He takes his phone, calls someone, and starts talking on the speaker without a headset.*

**ALIK:** Hi, mom, how are ya?

**TETIANA VIKTORIVNA'S VOICE:** Hi, we're pretty much okay, could be worse, still alive. And how are you?

**ALIK:** Well, I'm okey-dokey. I, um, I wanna send ya some money for livin' and to buy ma kid some stuff, let her choose herself. You know she is not gonna wear something she hates. Did ya tell the neighbors that I went to work in Poland?

**TETIANA VIKTORIVNA'S VOICE:** Yes, of course, these new ones, they have already aksed about men. They kept Svetka's Dima in the cellar all week. He was released, though very broken, barely alive. Aleg, just don't be mad at me, Alisa went to her mother. We had a fight.

**ALIK:** Mama, are ya kiddin' me, how could ya let Aliska go to that whore? Do ya remember why I brought her to ma place?

**TETIANA VIKTORIVNA'S VOICE:** Aleg, don't be mad, listen to me. The school headmistress, that bitch, Valentina Semionovna, immediately began to lick the russians' ass, not to be removed. And they are going to send the children to a camp somewhere in Sochi. It's kind of a sop from the new government. I tell her, Aliska, this is a trick, you're going to be taken to a fucking orphanage and they're not going to let you go. And she says that I am an old fool and that all her friends are going there.

**ALIK:** Maaamma, why didn't ya call me right away? Ya can't even keep a kid by yourself. Ya couldn't keep me either so I went straight away from school to crime...

**TETIANA VIKTORIVNA'S VOICE:** Aleg, how could you...

*Tetiana Viktorivna is heard crying*

**ALIK:** I'm sorry, mom, sorry. We'll figure it out somehow.

**TETIANA VIKTORIVNA'S VOICE:** Aleg, I'm sorry. I couldn't. I'm sorry, son.

**ALIK:** Okay, mom, bye. I'll try to call her now...

*Alik hangs up and immediately dials a number. Beeps, no one answers. He throws the phone aside, picks up the bottle and drinks the rest of the cognac. He picks up the phone again. Dials again. Beeps are heard again. He sits down on his bed and puts his head in his hands. There is the occasional moaning from behind the wall.*

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** (*Screaming from behind the wall*) Mooom, it hurts!

*Alik punches the wall with his fist.*

**ALIK:** I'm fucking fed up with ya yellin'!

**ADAM:** Calm down, you. Why are you so nervous? Tomorrow's another day. They are still

safe there, right? Well, nobody is shooting there, are they? Everyone is gonna make peace soon, and you'll just go there to them.

**MARIA:** (*Entering the ward*) Boys, who shouted?

**ADAM:** Sorry for that, nurse... I feel so fucking bad... I had a bad dream. I almost jumped off the bed...

**MARIA:** Sleeping pills should only be prescribed by a doctor. But come here, let me take your blood pressure, and we'll see.

**ADAM:** Oh, nurse, everything's fine. I will lie a bit now and fall asleep.

**MARIA:** Come-come. We should check it. Here, I am your commander and I am responsible for you.

*Maria and Adam walk out into the corridor.*

## SCENE FIVE

*On the stage is a corridor and a nurse's duty station at night. Maria and Adam are sitting down at a table.*

**MARIA:** Okay, soldier, you think I don't smell alcohol on you? Do you want me to tell the doctor tomorrow that we have a person here who, among other things, drinks alcohol?

**ADAM:** Nurse, I can't sleep. I have nightmares. I thought 50 grams would calm me down a bit and I'd sleep properly... Please, let's not start that show. I'm not a child anymore. I know what I need.

**MARIA:** Maybe you are not, but you are acting like a child. Your former neighbor complained about you that he had never seen a more disgusting character. There are different people here, you have to treat them normally. You are lucky to get well soon, but some people have no legs and are on crutches. And you still tease them...

**ADAM:** You know, why should I feel sorry for them when I'm luckier than they are? They all have families, and they will be taken care of when they get better. And I don't have anybody, I don't give a shi... I don't care anymore. I came to serve in the army not to whine and philosophize about the fate of our Motherland, but to kill katsaps and get good cash for it... I don't give a fucking shit about philosophy. I know that no one cares about my life for a long time, and this is what lets me look at them without compassion... That is how a soldier should behave. He is a killing machine, not a machine for lyrical digressions...

**MARIA:** You know... compassion, on the contrary, is a sign of strength, not weakness. You have to understand this, and then it will be easier for you to live... Why am I arguing with

you anyway? I should have already called the department head and told him that we have a person here who everyone is complaining about. Did anyone drink with you too? Where did you get the liquor?

**ADAM:** I don't betray my comrades...*(pause)* Andriyko left it in his nightstand.

**MARIA:** Andriyko? That child of God? Oh, I'll never believe it. Where did he get the liquor? He didn't even have a chance to go out and get it... Why are you lying to me?

**ADAM:** Nurse, I swear to you. Well, go and look in his nightstand... And why are you so nervous anyway? I haven't had a drink in six months since I was at the front. Let the hero relax a bit...

**MARIA:** Listen to me, soldier! I'll come to your ward tomorrow morning because I don't want to wake people up now, and I don't want to find anything in that nightstand, okay?

**ADAM:** Ma'am, yes, ma'am! I promise it'll be empty tomorrow!

**MARIA:** Volunteers brought me another phone. But I'm not sure if I should give it to you or not, now that I've caught you on...

**ADAM:** Nurse, I promise you. This is the last time. I really need that phone. I have to call Sania.

**MARIA:** Okay, I will take your word for it. And this will be the last time, too.

*Maria takes the phone out of the drawer and hands it to Adam.*

**MARIA:** Here's the phone, here's the SIM card. Do you know what to do next? Do you remember the number?

**ADAM:** Yes. Thank you, I will never forget this. I'm gonna call Sania right now.

**MARIA:** Why calling now, in the middle of the night? Leave him a message. He will call you back when he reads it...

*Maria takes a tonometer out from the drawer.*

**MARIA:** Let me check your blood pressure... Soldiers often have dreams about being wounded. It's a common thing.

**ADAM:** I wish I was dreaming about the war. Instead, I had dreams about some fucking bullsh... nonsense. Something from my childhood. Not my best memories, you know. I haven't had that kind of dreams in a while.

**MARIA:** Memories... Interesting... And what did you dream about in your civilian life?

**ADAM:** Most often it was my mom.

**MARIA:** And did you know her?

**ADAM:** No, I didn't... Well, should I call her mom? The woman who has haunted me in my dreams all my life: a young girl, I remember her eyes well from that dream: they were green. I guess the same as yours, nurse. But I don't remember her face. And that she held my hands and took me somewhere...

**MARIA:** So you don't remember her at all, do you?

**ADAM:** Nope. And maybe I wouldn't even want to remember her, cos why would I? It would have been even worse. And I've never wanted to look for her. I mean, she ruined my whole life.

**MARIA:** Sometimes it may be even better not to know your parents than to actually know them...

**ADAM:** Now I'm glad I don't have anybody. Well, only Sania. He's my friend. Otherwise, I'm alone, and it helps a lot, when you realize that you can get blown up by a landmine any day.

**MARIA:** You know, it depends on how you think of it. Some people are driven by fear for their family and friends and go to war to protect them from this horde.

**ADAM:** What a bunch of idiots those people are. If I had a family, why would I care about the war? You live your life: home, work, friends, beer, and everything's fine. Instead of running into the woods and digging up the ground. And on the other hand, somebody has to go to war... Maybe we, orphans, live to die for our Motherland? Do you think anyone would cry if I was brought here in a sack?

**MARIA:** God did not let this happen... So you have to live...

**ADAM:** You know, your God has let it happen more than once. And I saw how many of our guys got killed... Fuck, our platoon was sent to a position with two MPATS, saying: "You don't need any more of them, tomorrow you'll be replaced"... And Katsap tanks came at us. Everyone had already withdrawn, and our company commander shouted on the radio: "Hold the position, it's an order". And that's it, we were just fucking blown by the tanks along with that position. Chemist and Red were torn into pieces at once, there wasn't even anything to put in a sack. Our MPATS fired. We were hit again. Zheka, Casper, and Kyrychenko were covered in dirt. Sania and I rushed to dig them out, and we got hit one more time. The order was fulfilled... Maybe the company commander has become a battalion commander. And I can't find Sania. We have been together since our childhood in the orphanage. If not for him, I



would have been humiliated a hundred times. He saved my life. And you're always talking about your God, why? Did he help those guys a lot? I look at my ward neighbors and think: If I didn't have a leg, what would I do with this life? What's the point of it all?

**MARIA:** You know, this is the time in our country when there are no atheists. Everyone I see here now believes in God... And I'm telling you, I may not know much, but I feel that your friend will be found. Believe me. Here, drink this, it will help you fall asleep. Here, drink some water. Now it's time to go to bed.

*Maria calms Adam down like a child, hugs him, gives him a pill, and takes him to his ward's door.*

*Adam enters the room and lies down on his bed. The TV screen shows the national telethon. They show a story about soldiers at the front. Adam watches it for a while and then falls asleep...*

### ***Dream three***

*Adam has another dream about his room in the orphanage. Adam is alone there, sitting and crying. A man comes in. It is the director of the orphanage, Ivan Antonovych.*

**IVAN ANTONOVYCH:** It's too late to cry now, Adam. It's a big deal... The investigator is questioning your neighbors. They all say that you found that projectile and threw it in the fire.

**ADAM:** But it wasn't my fault... The guys found it and were teasing me.

**IVAN ANTONOVYCH:** Now there are two witnesses against you.

**ADAM:** Will they put me in prison?

**IVAN ANTONOVYCH:** Maybe they won't put you in prison, but they will send you to a special facility. You're just a kid... And sometimes it's even worse than prison. It's good that I was on vacation at the time... But Taisia Maksymivna will be in very big trouble now. Do you even realize how serious this is?

**ADAM:** If I could go back in time... I would have told Taisia Maksymivna about everything.... And how is Sania?

**IVAN ANTONOVYCH:** Sania was taken to the regional center. Specialists will take care of him. They should bring him back in the evening... And you have to think what to say... How to explain everything... Because instead of those two your mischievous neighbors, you will be the one who will get the blame... Of course, we will give you a positive reference, but it won't save you if Sania doesn't start talking to prove the truth... Oh, children, what shall I do with you? I have to go...

**ADAM:** (*sobbing*) So, if Sania doesn't start talking, will they put me in prison?

**IVAN ANTONOVYCH:** I have already told you that they won't put you in prison, but they will send you to a special facility. And these neighbors of yours will continue to get on our nerves here and, who knows, maybe kill someone. I know that you would never think of such a thing. And Taisia Maksymivna knows it too, but if you had told her right away that those idiots had come up with such an idea... And now there is no way back. The investigator and the commission won't take long to find out. They'll fire Petrivna, and maybe they'll even give Taisia Maksymivna a suspended sentence. And you will be sent to a special facility, and after that, there is only one way for children - to prison. The people who come out of there are such scums that you can't change them.

*Adam jumps out of his bed and kneels down.*

**ADAM:** Ivan Antonovych, please help me, I beg you.

**IVAN ANTONOVYCH:** I have already helped a lot... Now I don't even know what will happen to me. There will be checks from the regional center, and they will find out that something is going on here... Pray, Adam, pray... May God save you. Remember, we learned a prayer?

**ADAM:** Our Father?... Will you pray with me, Ivan Antonovych?

**IVAN ANTONOVYCH:** I can't... I have to hurry... We're going to get Masha's body from the morgue. We have to bury a child...

*Ivan Antonovych leaves, slamming the door.*

*This sound wakes Adam up and brings him back to reality. All the other patients around him are asleep. On the screen, a national telethon news report tells about a little girl who died as a result of a projectile explosion. Adam gets up, turns off the TV, goes back to bed, and tries to fall asleep...*

## SCENE SIX

*On the stage is a ward in the morning. Alik, Orest and Adam are lying on their beds. Petro is brought in on a wheelchair. The TV is broadcasting a national telethon and a report on the exchange of prisoners of war.*

**ALIK:** Good health to you, bro. I'm Alik, these are Orest and Adam. Make yaself at home.

**PETRO:** Hi guys, I'm Petro.

**ALIK:** Where did ya get wounded?

**PETRO:** Oh, I was wounded three months ago. And now I've just been exchanged from

captivity. You might have seen it on TV.

**OREST:** So, did they torture you a lot there?

**PETRO:** Not so much, as compared to those who were in the colonies on the Muscovite territory. They only kicked and punched with their feet and hands, without any reinforcement. But with enthusiasm. Well, instead of walks, we used to have 'discotheques', meaning they made us 'jump like on the Maidan', and if we fell down, they would beat us the fuck up. *(smiling)*

**ALIK:** And you too? What, are they out of their minds? You're wounded.

**PETRO:** And when I couldn't jump anymore, they connected me to a TA-57 field telephone and electrocuted. It was a special program for cripples... But in general, they don't care. The doctors would put some iodine on your wound and give you something to eat to keep you alive. That's it. I might have been exchanged because I was defective, and it was advantageous to exchange me for someone who was healthy. But if it wasn't for my sister, nobody would have even known I was there. My sister made half of Ukraine look for me, in fact, she rescued me from hell...

**ALIK:** And what about your dome?

**PETRO:** Well, it seems to be fine. It's just that it feels a little creepy lying here in clean clothes and sheets, eating and sleeping and knowing that our guys are still in captivity. I'm not so much afraid for the guys as I am for the girls. Well... And loud noises annoy me... When we were sitting there, and the door slammed, it meant that they were coming for one of us... To interrogate. And you would think: are they coming for you or someone else...

**ALIK:** Of course, these devils have neither conscience nor honor...

**PETRO:** They treat women even worse. I went on an exchange with some of them, and we talked afterwards - they were under more psychological pressure. It seems that they were specially trained to torture women like that. The girls said that the worst thing was that those bastards were constantly threatening to rape them so that more Ruskies would be born...

*Maria comes in. She is wearing a cassock. Everyone looks at her in confusion.*

**MARIA:** Good morning, boys. I'm finishing my shift and just came to say

goodbye.

**OREST:** Glory to God for ever!

**ALIK:** Weeeell, hello there. So, are you a priestess or what?

**MARIA:** *(Laughing)* No, I'm not a priestess - I'm a nun. Even though I am not a nun yet, I am

still a novice.

**OREST:** Well... Sorry if we were joking about something wrong or whatever...

**MARIA:** It's okay, I do realize you are real people.

**ADAM:** (Stunned) Damn it, that's quite a story... What do we call you now?

**MARIA:** Whatever you like, just not offensive. You can call me by my first name.

**ADAM:** Mother Mary, can we call you like this?

**MARIA:** I'm not a mother. I'm going to be a nun. Although, like I said, I am not officially a nun yet.

**ADAM:** And I was thinking, why are you always talking about God? So, nun, tell me, what are you doing here among us sinners?

**MARIA:** Ah, I'm telling you. I'm not a nun yet. I'm still a novice. If you have an Internet connection, please read what's the difference... I used to study at a medical school. And now we all have to do what we can. There was an announcement that they needed nurses in a military hospital. So I thought I would have a kind of mission: with work and prayer. The abbess gave me her blessing for the job. But, as you can see, I'm not showing off. Here I am first and foremost a nurse, and only then a novice. I have already finished my shift, and now I will go to pray for you and for all of us. Goodbye, boys. May God help you heal.

**ADAM:** Well, what can I say... You certainly know how to stir things up. But I could tell right away that you were a "bird of God."

**OREST:** Thank you, goodbye.

*Maria leaves. The guys are stunned into silence for a few minutes, listening to see if she is gone.*

**ALIK:** Damn it, what a nurse we got! And ya, kiddo, didn't ya know she was a nun when ya were chatting with her?

**ADAM:** I'm shocked myself... Yeah, I guess I didn't know... She was talking a lot about prayer, God and stuff, but I thought she was just one of those pious girls. I've met a lot of them. They are all so pious, this and that, and then they do some fucking crazy things...

*Adam takes out his phone and starts to search for something.*

**ADAM:** Let me see what a "novice" means. Oh, listen: "novice" is a person who is preparing to become a nun.

**OREST:** She's a nice girl, too bad she's going to be a nun. She got everything a girl needs. She could make a good wife for one of our guys. Petro, are you married?

**PETRO:** What's the hurry? I haven't spoiled all the girls yet.

**OREST:** Adam, and what about you? Would you like to have an Eve like that? *(laughing)*

**ADAM:** Well, she's pretty and very smart. And her name is so beautiful... I used to love a girl, also named Masha... Maria... Although it's tricky - when you don't see a real woman for six months, you fall in love even with a nun...

**ALIK:** Ma dear comrades, if I told her what ya were sayin' here, she'd have kicked all of your devils out of ya with a single injection.

*The guys are laughing. Adam is silent...*

**ADAM:** I see you guys are like chatterboxes - you like all kinds of hot topics... And you are already grown up men, you should have other things on your mind, but you go on... So stay the fuck out of it. We have our own "love story" with her here. She gave me a phone and checked my blood pressure...

**ALIK:** And where exactly did she check your pressure? What part of your body?

**ADAM:** Where no one has checked it for you for a long time, cos you don't have it there...

*Orest and Petro are laughing.*

**ALIK:** Oh, you're a goddamn bastard. I see ya fella have a sharp tongue, don't ya? Where do ya come from to be so fuckin' mean?

**ADAM:** Wherever I came from, I'm not there now... They don't make people like that anymore. They're not in trend anymore... Now people only like those sweet boys. There are no real men anymore, even in the army.

**OREST:** That, my friend, is all due to lack of love. By the way, I don't see your mother calling you or anyone else...

**ADAM:** *(Embarrassed)* Well, she's abroad. Went to Poland. Sends me messages now. And why would she call me anyway? I wasn't that badly wounded... Damn it, let's finish this talk show "Life of Kiddo". I'm getting tired of talking about it. Let's better watch some TV.

*Adam turns on the TV. The TV screen shows a telethon and news reports from the battlefield. The men are watching them.*

*Suddenly, Adam's phone rings. He mutes the TV and picks up the phone.*

**ADAM:** Hello... Sania, is that you? Thank God, bro, you're alive! How are you? Where are you now? Are you at the zero line with our guys? Just shell-shocked? Why didn't you go for a treatment? Oh fuck, you say it's that bad? How many wounded? Only three of the platoon left? Who, Witch? Daaamn it, motherfuckers, may she rest in peace... And the positions? Did you retake them? Now they will definitely take a company officer to headquarters, and he will celebrate his new shoulder straps. Yeah, I don't think I'll be staying here long. I've just got scratched, no big deal. Well, shell shock doesn't count. Are there any pretty nurses? Well, there is one, but she's kind of taken. Yeah, I'll tell her hi. No, you better not meet her and never come here. I'll tell you why later. Okay, I get it, all right! Call me when you get a chance.

*Adam hangs up.*

**OREST:** So, you found your colleague, right?

**ADAM:** Yeah, I was even thinking of praying for him... (*laughing*). They have been moved somewhere near to Bakhmut. He says that the katsaps are pushing hard: new “cannon fodder” has been brought in. They are forcing the motherfuckers to our positions, and from behind, the Kadyrov's fighters are killing them in barrier troops. They are firing artillery, both at us and at their troops. They really don't give a shit. Yesterday, they shot at our medics, while they were evacuating our guys. Our Witch is dead now... She was always so cheerful. Always positive. She always made jokes. There was mud, blood, bombing, wounded people moaning, it was a fucking mess, and she was smiling at me, chatting something, and I thought, if the chick was holding up, why should I panic? And she is so young, she is still studying... She was studying... I was so fucked up - I walked away shell-shocked and felt my legs and arms were still there, but I was twitching, so I thought, who the fuck knows, maybe a shard went into my spine, and it was her trying to pull me. Damn it, fucking orcs...

**PETRO:** Are you from the seventy-second?

**ADAM:** Yeah. Right, the medal-winning one.

**PETRO:** Witch was a redhead? Her name was Maryna? From Haisyn?

**ADAM:** Yes, that's her. So you knew her?

**PETRO:** Yeah, I did. She was in our tourist club. We went to the Caucasus together. To the mountain of Ushba. I heard that she had joined your medical unit... Just before the flight, we came down from the mountains in Kutaisi and got drunk with the Georgians, and she was laughing and hugging everybody as usual... I saw the Georgians staring at her... And I said: “Calm down, Genatsvale, it's my sister, her fiancé is waiting for her at home”. We barely made it to the plane. Damn it, Marynka...

*Petro's phone rings. He answers it.*

**PETRO:** Good health to you! I feel fine. This is a decent ward, everything is clean. The doctor will be back soon. Yes, I've already heard about Marynka, you say it's her. A guy here told me that he was with her in the seventy-second. I can't believe it either... Just remember what she was like... And how are you, have you moved a bit away from the forefront? No? Where did you break through, Spirne? You say you did a fucking great job? Did you hit something? Wow! Did they give you a medal? Tell them to give you a vacation instead. Maybe we could meet again. All right, take care, yeah, glory to the heroes!

**ALIK:** So what's goin' on near Spirne, dude? My guys are there too.

**PETRO:** The motherfuckers were breaking through. Seriously, with all their equipment: tanks, IFVs... But we fucked them up. Five pieces of equipment were destroyed, and up to a company of infantry was killed.

**ALIK:** And what does your fella say 'bout our losses?

**PETRO:** What fella?... Ahhh... I talked to my sister. She's in a mortar company.

**ALIK:** Weeeell, hello there. No fucking way... And how can a chick work in the artillery? She can't even pick up a mine.

**PETRO:** Why the hell would she pick up mines? She's a senior battery officer.

**ALIK:** And do the fellas actually obey her?

**PETRO:** And why would they disobey? She's been at war since 2014. They're fighting like hell, kicking the shit out of the katsaps. And now they did it again. She says she's been nominated for another award. She already has half a cupboard full of those medals.

**ALIK:** I dunno, a chick in the army seems kinda wrong. It has to be the other way round - we've got to protect them. "The universe is a woman, God is a man." I read something like that in Castaneda's books.

**PETRO:** Oh, if you had blurted that out to my sister, you'd have had to get new teeth.

**ALIK:** Nah, a woman in the army is complete bullshit. If ya don't have to fight, things will start to go wrong - men will fight over a chick, and it will be a fucking mess. And when ya will have to fight, everyone will either show that they're heroes or risk their lives to get the wounded girl out, and there'll be a lot of stupid deaths. And they are not meant for war, not even physiologically.

**OREST:** But basically, it is not about physical strength, it is about stamina and responsibility. It's better to be in one trench with a woman than with a man who's a drunk. We had girls who fought with us in the Right Sector... Our friend Freya went to war after her husband was killed by separatists near Debaltseve. And our sniper Bila had her children at

school, she left them with her mother, and she always brought us some amulets and drawings from their class. Now a lot of girls are at war, and a lot of jocks in dresses are fleeing abroad.

**ADAM:** It's a fucking circus... Nuns in hospitals, babes in trenches... But what can you expect when this country is so fucked up... Although I did know some women who could kick the shit out of any jock. Doesn't matter if it's a boy or a girl... All that matters is that they shoot well, as our company commander says...

**ALIK:** This is bullshit. Guys, would ya really want your sisters to go to war right now?

**OREST:** I'm telling you, it doesn't matter...

**ALIK:** I mean, okay, at the hospital or among the volunteers, but a girl has nothing to do in the army. In a few months there, a girl becomes a whore. They'd better go to a nunnery like our Maria than go to war. There, even if you fuck someone, it's only good for your health.

**ADAM:** Listen, Alik, you'd better shut up.

**ALIK:** Why should I? I see the way ya look at her. It's all good, kiddo.... Don Juan said that the way to God leads through the heart.

**ADAM:** Damn it, I'm sick of your Castaneda.

*Maria comes in. She brings apples and gives them to everyone.*

**MARIA:** Hello, once again. Here are some vitamins for you. I got them from an old lady at the market.

*Alik takes the first one and bites the apple.*

**ALIK:** Adam, take it. These apples are from heaven. *(Laughing)*

**OREST:** Oh, we didn't expect to see you again. Thank you! And why don't you spend your holidays with friends or family?

**MARIA:** All I know here is where the monastery and the hospital are. Now you are my family and friends here, and my holidays, work, and mission. Please eat and get well.

**ALIK:** Maria, tell me, do you think that God created women for war? Why should a girl go to war, when she is meant for love, for home, for comfort, and to help her husband? As it says in the Epistle to the Ephesians: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as ya do to the Lord. Cos the husband is the head of the wife."

**MARIA:** God did not create anyone for war. He gave each person the freedom to choose.



Each of us is made in the image and likeness of the Creator, and each of us can create our own life.

**ADAM:** And what about you, nurse, would you go to war? They give you a hundred thousand. You don't make that kind of money in a monastery, do you? You could give it to a good cause.

**MARIA:** What are you talking about? What kind of income in a monastery... These seem to be reasonable questions, but how humiliating... My situation is different. I am a doctor, maybe not a doctor yet, but I studied at the medical school. And when I saw how much grief the war brought, and how much more can happen if we do nothing, I realized that this is my mission to be here. This is my own war against the war.

**ADAM:** You studied to be a nurse, right?

**MARIA:** No, I majored in pediatrics. I wanted to treat children. I didn't finish it though, and now I have you. (*Laughing*)

**ADAM:** And weren't you afraid of us, wounded and shell-shocked? Just look at these ghouls... What a kaleidoscope...

**MARIA:** I had taken courses in psychology of crisis situations earlier. Just for myself. But they helped me here as well. And with our lives now, it can't be a bad thing for anyone. Even just to understand ourselves and others better. We are all in a crisis situation right now.

**OREST:** We already had that situation before. It was only with the war that we finally saw it.

**MARIA:** So it had to happen for us to see it.

*Alik grabs the phone and starts calling someone. Maria sits on the bed, picks up an apple and starts eating it. Petro turns to the wall hoping to fall asleep. Suddenly, Alik shudders as he gets an answer.*

**ALIK:** (*Anxiously*) Hey, kid, why aren't ya pickin' up the phone when I'm callin'? Why are ya so quiet? Listen, stop foolin' around and go back to your grandma from that bitch, your mother. What d'ya mean? Are ya fuckin' kiddin' me? I told ya, I'm your dad, I raised ya! I didn't leave ya, I couldn't take ya with me, I told your grandma to get the fuck out!.... Listen to me: ya are not goin' to any camp. Who cares about friends, these are not your friends, these are street hooligans. Their parents are fucking separatists, let them worry about them. I told ya, ya hear me? Why are ya quiet?

*Alik is silent for a few moments and listens to the answer.*

**ALIK:** (*Yelling*) Who am I? Have ya lost your mind? Say it again? When I come, your ass will be all blue! To kill whom... Me? Ya are fuckin'... Don't hang up, d'ya hear me?.... Alisa,

calm down! D'ya hear me?

*Alik hangs up the phone. He is silent. He looks at Maria. She finishes her apple.*

**MARIA:** Please respect others. People are sleeping here... Why are you shouting?

**ALIK:** Well, ya told us that ya have taken those courses in psychology. And what does your psychology tell me to do when ma daughter, whom I raised since childhood, wants me to die? How do I deal with her?

**MARIA:** Ahhh... Just like with all the other children: with patience and love. So that she knows that she has enough love and will never lack it.

**ALIK:** She's just like me, so stubborn. She'll do anything to spite me. Just to prove a point. She'll suffer, but she'll do it.

**MARIA:** You know, she is worried about you too. You just don't let her tell you about it. You seem to be training her for real life, but in the meantime, life is already going on without you. Don't demand anything from her, just talk to her like a friend, like you would talk to yourself.

**ALIK:** But when can I talk to her? I'm always at work so that she has something to eat and something to wear. Most trendy clothes - snickers, jeans, jackets - okay, she gets it. She is the only one in the class to wear such stuff. And you don't really know what to say to kids anyway. Especially to a girl. But she is a fighter. I raised her like a boy: football, aikido, she has been fighting since childhood...

**MARIA:** You just have to be ready, and life will give you the opportunity to talk.

**ALIK:** Well, here it is...

*Alik lies down on his bed and turns to face the wall to fall asleep. Orest is watching something with headphones on his phone. Petro has already fallen asleep and started to snore. Maria turns off the light.*

*She is leaving the ward, when Adam grabs her hand.*

**ADAM:** Maria, I need to ask you a question!

**MARIA:** Go ahead... Just let's go out into the corridor so the boys can sleep.

*Adam and Maria walk out into the corridor.*

**ADAM:** So, Maria, have you thought about my question about how God let this happen? I was joking then, and now I see that you specialize in this kind of stuff. Even if there were no dead and wounded, it's just that this war has separated so many families. I can't even imagine, especially since I never had a family.

**MARIA:** It's hard to imagine how many families seemed to live together, but were never really together, even without the war. And on the contrary, the war will make some people appreciate their loved ones even more, hold on to each other, and be afraid of losing them.

**ADAM:** Well, not me. Who would I be afraid of losing?

**MARIA:** We always have something and someone to lose. I don't even want to lose you. And even random people whom I don't know by name, whom I just meet on the street, whose deaths I see on the news every day, as if I had just met the person and they are no longer with us. And when I hear on TV that two or three people have died in one of our cities, which I have never even been to, it still hurts me to lose them. Everything depends on you, on how close you can feel to other people. My faith and my mission give me that closeness and love for people. Especially now.

**ADAM:** You know, your problem is that you see little bits of good in people and think they are normal. But people are all fucked up by their nature. Just by default. They can become good, but only when they are scared, or when they experience some kind of grief, or when they are in pain, like here in the hospital. And even then it's only for a little while. Cos that's what life is like. If you don't fight your way through, they'll push you away and make you guilty.

**MARIA:** And your problem is simple: you are so afraid of being pushed away that you see nothing but fighting. There is good in every person, even you, but you are just afraid to show it because you think it will be taken away or broken.

**ADAM:** Look, Maria, can we be on a first-name basis? Even if we can't, I'd like you to, cos I'm not used to being talked to in such an official manner by people of my age.

**MARIA** (*uncertain*): Okay, we can try.

**ADAM:** So tell me, Maria, if there was no war and you were not a novice, what would you do then?

**MARIA:** I don't know. Maybe I would treat children. Or maybe I would move somewhere closer to nature. Have you ever been to the villages near Kholodnyi Yar?

**ADAM:** No, never. Why would I go there? I heard some guys say it was a "place of power".

But not for me. I am not a fan of all that "philosophy".

**MARIA:** I used to go there before the war. You could spend half a day driving through abandoned villages to get there. Houses overgrown with thickets, tree branches sticking out of the windows, and yards covered with tall grasses. And one or two houses per village where some old ladies live. And near one of the houses, children's clothes were drying on a line: tights, dresses... I had the same feeling there as I have now, during the war. I felt that this place was the most important place on earth, because it was here that the decision was made whether life would prevail over death. It's like being a tree at the edge of a desert. You hold the desert back by living as fully as you can in spite of everything. And what do you want to do when the war is over?

**ADAM:** Honestly, I don't even know. I don't really wanna think about it. You wake up and see that three thousand hryvnias have already been transferred to your card, and you feel calmer. And to think that they can kill me, I don't give a fu... I don't care. Well? If I had money, I'd probably build a house in the village... I'd drink all the time, probably for about six months or so. And I would buy drinks for my buddies... Cos how can we forget all this stuff? Even if we ignore all that crap, like heroes don't die... The dead people I used to serve with would still come to me in dreams and haunt me. Maybe I would start some kind of business. I studied to be a mechanic, although I failed to graduate... Well, I would probably get married. Although I'm not sure if I could love someone. I felt that way only once before. But that person is gone now. And what do I need it for? I'm fine on my own. There are guys I can hang out with and not think about anything...

*Behind the wall, someone is heard moaning from time to time.*

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** (*Screaming from behind the wall*) Moom, it hurts!

**ADAM:** Oh, you hear that? That weirdo is moaning again...

**MARIA:** Who is moaning?

**ADAM:** The one behind the wall who is calling for his mom. Listen, don't you hear him?

*Suddenly, Petro hobbles out of the ward and into the corridor.*

**PETRO:** Do you often hear screams like that here?

**ADAM:** Every day... It's okay, you'll get used to it...

**PETRO:** Maria, could you give me another shot? Because I just woke up and it hurts.

**MARIA:** Of course! Go lie down, I'll be right back...

*The men go to the ward and lie down, while Maria goes to prepare the injection. Later she*

*comes in and gives Petro a shot. Adam is just about to fall asleep.*

**PETRO:** Thank you!

**MARIA:** Good night, boys! May you have good dreams.

**ADAM:** Good night, Mashka... Oh, I'm sorry... Maria.

*The TV is broadcasting the telethon. They are showing a story about bloody battles at the front.*

### ***Dream four***

*In Adam's dream, we see the orphanage room again. Adam is sitting there alone, crying. Suddenly Zhenia and Sera enter the room.*

**ZHENIA:** Now you cry, coward?

**ADAM:** Guys, I am going to scream!

*Sera pulls out a knife from under his arm.*

**SERA:** We'll cut your throat and that's it. We got nothing to lose. We'll kill you right here. We'll cut your throat and that's it. We got nothing to lose, right?

**ZHENIA:** Listen to me, you coward! Now the committee and the investigator will come, and you will have to say that you take the blame on you, do you get it?

**SERA:** It was you who found the projectile, it was you who decided to throw it in the fire, it was you who called Mashka, do you understand?

**ADAM:** Guys, why are you doing this to me?

**ZHENIA:** We'll make your life miserable, you hear? It'd be better if you hanged yourself... And there would be no problems at all... Or if you cut your wrists... That would be even better... We'll tell them that you killed yourself out of a feeling of guilt.

**SERA:** Hey, let's go, cos if they see us here, we're fucked up... And you sit here and think, you coward... What else can we do with you...

**ADAM:** I thought we were pals...

**ZHENIA:** We were pals until we realized you were a coward... You are just a coward who can never do anything right... You better die now so that nobody knows what a fucking

coward you are...

*With these words, Adam wakes up. The room is quiet. The TV is showing a story of a national telethon about a heroic fighter who covered a grenade with his body and saved his comrades.*

## SCENE SEVEN

*On the stage is the ward at lunchtime. Adam, Alik, Orest, and Petro are watching TV. The national telethon is broadcasting stories about children in the frontline areas. Maria comes in wearing a cassock and carrying a stack of children's drawings.*

**MARIA:** Good afternoon, boys!

**ALIK:** Hello-hello!

**PETRO:** Good day!

**ADAM:** Hi!

**OREST:** Hello.

**MARIA:** Please take these drawings. The volunteers from Stryi came and brought them along with the medicine. The kids from the gymnasium drew them for you. I brought scissors and tape, so we can stick them. Adam, can you arrange this?

**ADAM:** Okay, give them to me. I'm going to hand out all this waste paper...

**MARIA:** Why do you say that?...

*Maria hands out the drawings.*

**MARIA:** Boys, I'll be back later.

*Maria leaves.*

*The men choose drawings for themselves. Adam sticks the drawings on their beds and nightstands.*

**OREST:** Vasyl Vintoniak, 4-A grade, Maria Panasiuk, 3-B grade, sweet kids, Marianka Kotyshyn, 4-A grade, Markiyan Lysetskyi, 4-B grade... Oh, look what this little bastard has drawn. A katsap raises his hands to the sky and pisses in his pants. God bless you, Markiyan, and keep you healthy.... You know when I realized that we would win, that Ukraine would survive? In 2014, in Pisky, on St. Nicholas Day. Volunteers brought us a bunch of children's drawings, just like now. I watched the guys to make sure that they didn't start a fire with them, and I thanked all the kids who left their phone numbers by sending them text messages. And

this was a folder of drawings from the eastern city of Dniprodzerzhynsk. Here I was holding a drawing of a house, storks, viburnum, our soldier, two flags: blue-yellow and red-black, and on top of it was written with mistakes: "Glory to Ukraina! Com back wiz victory!" and signed "Leila Ibragimova, 5-C grade". Then I realized that we had already won. Now all we have to do is drive the katsaps out of our country. Now I already have a few folders of these drawings at home. I brought them with me every time I was on rotation. And I have so many of them from my kids... When I was at war, and when I was driving a truck, I had the whole cabin covered with drawings, like in a cartoon, so I was ashamed to even let the whores in...

**ALIK:** Ma kid also drew pictures for me while I was in prison. When I got out, I immediately sent her to art classes and aikido. To develop her personality, to become a fighter, like a samurai. As Miyamoto Musashi wrote in *The Book of Five Rings*: "A fighter must have a delicate taste"... She drew the sea and the two of us in a boat for me. Every fuckin' day I waited to get out of there, to take a boat from Uncle Senia, and for us to watch the sunrise with Aliska in the morning. She actually didn't attend art classes for a long time. She didn't like the teacher tellin' her what to draw and what not to draw. She can't do anything against her will. Ma girl is a fighter. They often called me to school to tell me that she beat this guy or that guy. I would nod ma head, and then come home and say, "Alisa, now tell me," and she would answer: "That jerk was making fun of the younger kids." Maybe everything would have worked out for us, but while I was in prison, ma wife became a whore. And when I saw ma daughter growin' up around a bitch and thought what she would become, I took her to live with me and her grandma. And that bitch doesn't give a fuck. Well, a wife is one thing, but a mother and a daughter should be sacred to a man. Fuck, I'll rip the Katsap's throats out with my teeth if they take Aliska to an orphanage somewhere in Russia.

*Alik takes out his phone and calls someone again. There is no answer.*

**PETRO:** I look at these drawings and I can't even imagine how we can end this war. How can we stop killing these bastards? I could forget that I was wounded, tortured, even that my sworn brothers were killed, but I will never forget the children they killed and maimed. And even just for the fact that they ruined the childhood of so many kids, they should be destroyed. All of them. Even people I know who seem to have happily left for Europe say that their children still miss home and ask when they will be back. And even though there is Internet, and they are all on their phones, they are still drawn home. This will be with them for the rest of their lives. I'm even glad that I don't have children. Maybe it's better not to have kids now.

**OREST:** On the one hand, it is easier without children. On the other hand, children are our hope. They are the only thing worth fighting for. I'd probably just drink myself to death if I didn't have mine.

*Alik dials the phone number again. No answer. And from behind the wall comes a scream.*

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** (*Screaming from behind the wall*) Mooom, it hurts!

**ALIK:** Fuck, I'm already on edge, and this son of a bitch is torturin' me even more.

**OREST:** Well, he hasn't screamed today.

**PETRO:** I don't hear anything either... Oh, Adam, what about you, you got any kids?

**ADAM:** *(nervously)* Kids? I have a daughter... She's abroad. With my mother and my wife. My ex-wife... But we don't talk to each other anymore. Neither to my wife nor to her. They left me some time ago, my wife went to an Italian guy, and that's it. End of story. There is nothing more to tell.

*The men look at Adam, wondering why he's freaking out.*

*Alik's phone rings.*

**ALIK:** Hey, Aliska, ya okay?

**ALISA'S VOICE:** Yeah, dad, everything's fine. Dad, just don't worry please, I just had my appendix out.

**ALIK:** Ya in the hospital?

**ALISA'S VOICE:** Yeah, in the regional hospital on Myru Street.

**ALIK:** Were ya scared?

**ALISA'S VOICE:** Nah, not really. Mom wasn't home when it started to hurt. I called the ambulance myself. The doctor, Taras Mikhalych, said I was doing well.

**ALIK:** Course, Aliska, remember: I think ya are always doin' great.

**ALISA'S VOICE:** Yeah, yeah. Taras Mikhalych says he knows you. That you are a good man. That he played football with you for the neighborhood. He said to say hi from Kosoi.

**ALIK:** Holy shit, say hi to him too. Ya are lucky that ya met Kosoi, he's a good doctor. And ya are lucky ya didn't go to a camp. I'm sure God has saved ya from that shit. Aliska, listen to me, ya are the closest person to me, I was always proud of ya, but I didn't tell ya cos I didn't want ya to get arrogant. I know ya will understand everything and ya will do the right thing'. Alisa, we're gonna take Genichesk back from those motherfuckers. And after the victory, we'll borrow a boat from Uncle Senia and go fishin'. And grandma will ask again what to do with all the fish. And we'll make dried fish to eat with beer. I'll give ya some to drink, but not much, cos ya are still ma little baby.

**ALISA'S VOICE:** Daddy, I love you too.



**ALIK:** But Alisa, I know ya, don't get into any discussions with anyone. Especially about the war, especially about Ukraine. And, Alisa, please go back to your grandma.

**ALISA'S VOICE:** Yeah, sure, Dad. Grandma needs help too, she's gotten so old over this time. We have to stay together. Dad, they tell me to go to bed now.

**ALIK:** Okay, go. I love ya.

**ALISA'S VOICE:** Love you too. Take care, dad.

*Alik hangs up.*

**ALIK:** Well, thank God.

**ADAM:** So, how are your collaborators?

**ALIK:** Kiddo, are ya fuckin' crazy? Ya think I can't kick your ass if I'm on crutches?

**ADAM:** C'mon, relax, man, I'm just saying that out of love... so that you don't feel too relieved...

**ALIK:** I'll relax when I get home and hug her. And this is only a tactical success.

*Alik lies down on his bed and turns to face the wall.*

**OREST:** Okay, now let's turn off the lights. Let's go to sleep.

*A national telethon is broadcast on the screen. It's a story about children abroad raising money and buying things needed for the military.*

*A few minutes later, Adam's phone rings. He picks it up and walks out into the corridor. He answers the call.*

**ADAM:** Yeah, Sania, I can hear you. I just went out of the ward not to wake up the guys. Who's dead? Bender and Loki? Fuck... Fuck me, they were good guys. How? In the school? Did they pull the kids out? Damn, fucking assholes. How many are still under the rubble? Did you take the village back? You just don't play the hero yourself. This money is bullshit, and the company commander... Take care, bro. Okay, I'll chill here for a couple more days and come back. Okay, take care, and say hi to the guys.

*Adam sits down on a bench in silence. Maria walks down the corridor.*

**MARIA:** Oh, why aren't you in the ward?

**ADAM:** I was talking to a friend, I didn't want to wake the guys up. They're already asleep...

**MARIA:** Oh, asleep? I thought I'd come in to say good night. Here are some sweets for you to give to the boys. Why are you so sad?

**ADAM:** My friend just called and said that our sworn brothers were killed.

**MARIA:** Oh, God...! What were their names? I want to pray for their souls...

**ADAM:** I have no idea what their names were: Bender and Loki. Does God recognize by call signs, you don't know? Or just by names? Or do I have to fill out a special form?

**MARIA:** God recognizes everyone, even without a name...

**ADAM:** They were pulling children out of the rubble. The katsaps hit the school with a missile. And there was a bomb shelter in the school. Women with children were hiding in there from the shelling. Our guys ran to dig them out, and another one hit. Sania says that now there is just a pile of bricks and concrete. It can only be cleared with equipment, and while their artillery is still firing, you can't bring any equipment. He says they go to the well near the school to get some water, and there are Bender and Loki under the concrete, and a bunch of kids.

**MARIA:** Wait... If you want, we can pray together.

**ADAM:** Listen, you and your prayers... Do you want me to become a monk too? I'm angry now, and I don't think you should pray when you're angry... You should only pray when you're calm. These fu... bastards want to break us. What do children have to do with it? Although, there are such children and such parents, who the hell knows. Maybe they are some kind of spotters. Sometimes I think that I don't know who my parents are. Maybe I am a child of the occupiers?

**MARIA:** And would that really have changed anything for you?

**ADAM:** Nah, probably not. A hundred thousand is a hundred thousand. You don't really think much. You just fu... work. I also went through a lot of grief as a kid... It's okay, you see, I even defend my Motherland now... I'm even a kind of hero... I'm a hero, right?

**MARIA:** You're a hero. I think you would even be a good father. Despite the fact that you are so mean, there is still a good person behind that mask...

**ADAM:** Good... Well, maybe. But what do you really know about me? Have you never thought about having children?

*Maria thinks for a moment and then pauses.*

**MARIA:** I try to look at everyone as if they were children. It's easier to see the good in a person and easier to forgive them, just like you forgive a naughty child.

**ADAM:** I ask you, did you ever want to have children of your own? So that you could give birth to them yourself? And you're talking about your "philosophy" again.

**MARIA:** I don't even think about it anymore... I guess if I had a child, I would always be afraid that something bad would happen to him or her... Especially if it was a girl.

**ADAM:** Yeah... Lots of stuff can happen to girls... It's easier for a boy... But you never know. Now a woman can go abroad and find a nice guy there and forget about Ukraine... And we have to suffer here... Like in the belly of a whale.

**MARIA:** Oh, wow. So you know the Bible, I suppose?

**ADAM:** I was watching a movie about whales on National Geographic one night. They mentioned this story. What was the guy's name?

**MARIA:** The prophet Jonah... *(she pauses)* You know... To be honest... I was raped by my stepfather when I was in the tenth grade... I told my mom about it, and she said I was lying because I didn't want her to get married. The only thing that kept me from going crazy back then was that my granny had once taught me to pray... And I prayed. Only God can help you forget and get over such things.

*Maria bursts into tears. Adam looks at her, not knowing what to say.*

**ADAM:** Oh, dear. I'm sorry, I didn't expect such a revelation from you...

**MARIA:** For a long time, I could not understand why God would allow this to happen. And then... I realized that this pain was given to me so that I could feel compassion for all those who were hurt. Because only when you know how it hurts, can you have compassion for others. My mother did not live with him for long. And I decided to go to medical school to study pediatrics and to help children.

**ADAM:** So why did you become a nun and not a doctor? Or what is it called? A novice.

**MARIA:** In my second year, I started dating a guy. I started having nightmares again. I didn't want to tell him what had happened to me. He also suffered from depression from time to time. And like everyone else in our group, we got out of depression through temptation. We were studying medicine anyway. We experimented and tried all kinds of things. Amphetamines were popular at the time.

**ADAM:** They still are...

**MARIA:** My boyfriend always wanted more. He got really addicted. One day I went crazy and threw away all his stash. He beat me up. So I left him, cried day and night, and then started praying, and then I realized that I could only get out of this hell with God's help. I forgave everyone a long time ago... This is what I have been taught since childhood.

**ADAM:** Well, you don't forgive things like that... I mean the thrown out amphetamine...

*Maria looks at Adam, not understanding his joke.*

**ADAM:** Just kidding. I'm sorry, my jokes are so stupid... So what, did you forgive him?

**MARIA:** I did it. It was hard for a while, but I did it. I was looking for my place in life. Nothing helped. But a prayer heals all wounds. Although sometimes it seems that I am a little child again that no one believes. Then I think of God and pray for those who feel even worse. So what? You don't think I'm a "God's bird" anymore, do you? I've been through a lot of stuff too, you know, and I can tell you something too. I have many more stories... But I've told you too much already.

**ADAM:** I didn't even think you were actually a "bird of God." Your eyes are so sad... I noticed that right away. And then, when I found out that you were in a monastery, I realized that people don't go to monasteries without a reason. And I'm glad that you told me that. It's easier when you know that you're not alone with your crazy stuff.

**MARIA:** There is enough sorrow for everyone. But joy has to be found. For me, joy is God and the fact that I can help here and now. And meeting you is also a blessing from God... Okay, go to bed now, if you want to get better. What are the call signs of your sworn brothers again?

**ADAM:** "Bender" and "Loki."

**MARIA:** I will pray for them tonight as much as I can. May God take their souls...

**ADAM:** Thank you... Say, can I give you a hug?

**MARIA:** *(Hesitantly)* Let's try.

*Adam embraces Maria and holds her tightly. They stand there for a while.*

**MARIA:** Well... Thank you for listening. Good night.

**ADAM:** You too. I'm gonna try to get some sleep.

**MARIA:** Does it still hurt? Do you want me to give you a painkiller?

**ADAM:** My arm doesn't hurt anymore... But my soul...

**MARIA:** Well, you finally admitted that you have a soul...

**ADAM:** Everyone has one... I watched a movie about it on National Geographic, too... Good night...

*Adam goes to the ward. Maria remains at the nurse's table, wiping her eyes with a napkin.*

## SCENE EIGHT

*On the stage is a ward in the morning. The men are having breakfast. Maria, dressed as a doctor, enters the room with a folder of documents.*

**MARIA:** Good morning!

**ALIK:** Morning!

**MEN:** Good morning.

**MARIA:** Kovaliov Oleh Vasyliovych?

**ALIK:** Here!

**MARIA:** Well, it's your time, you're going to a sanatorium. Please get ready. You will go to the Carpathians for two weeks. And then maybe they'll give you another month to recover. Here are your documents.

**ALIK:** Very grateful! Oh, I'm actually almost ready to go. Just a few more minutes.

*Alik begins to pack his things.*

**ADAM:** What about me - how long will I have to wait for my discharge?

**MARIA:** You're healing very well here. Let me examine your wound one more time.

*Maria examines Adam's wound gently and carefully.*

**MARIA:** I guess they'll send you to rehabilitation this week too, or home for thirty days to recover.

*Adam looks at Maria sadly.*

**ADAM:** Home?

*Maria realizes she has said something she shouldn't have and, feeling the pain in Adam's voice, becomes embarrassed.*

**MARIA:** Yes, home. Everyone has their home...

*Alik gets up from his bed.*

**ALIK:** That's it, ready to go. Maria, ya are a wonderful person, and God bless ya. Ya have been given the gift of seeing and understanding. Thanks for everything. Guys, it was great chillin' with ya. Get well, and when we retake Genichesk, ya will come to me and we'll go fishin', and then we'll go to Crimea or Moscow.

**OREST:** Enjoy your vacation! (*Laughing*) Just don't talk too much Russian in the Carpathians, or you'll get lost somewhere in the forest.

**ALIK:** What are ya talkin' about? Everything's gonna be okey-dokey...

**PETRO:** All right, good luck to you.

**ALIK:** (*To Petro*) Sorry, if I offended your sistah with ma words. I think she's doin' great. So are ya.

**ADAM:** Good luck to you, bro.

**ALIK:** Hey, Kiddo, don't miss your chance, cos luck is a tricky thing. I can see ya are lookin' at her all the time. C'mon, don't be a chicken, man up.

**MARIA:** Shall we go? I have to visit other wards. And then I'll pick up your new neighbor from the surgery.

*Maria and Alik leave the ward.*

*The men turn on the TV. The national telethon is broadcasting a video about an incredible story of meeting and getting married at the front.*

*A few minutes later, Maria brings in a patient in a wheelchair with a VAC therapy system.*

**MARIA:** See, boys, I don't let you get bored, I bring new friends all the time... Wait a bit, I'll change the sheets here.

*Maria starts to change the sheets on Alik's bed.*

**PETRO:** Well, yes, we don't lack wounded people. Glory to Ukraine!

**ROBERT:** Glory to the heroes!

**OREST:** Come on in, make yourself at home. My name is Orest, this is Petro and Adam.

**ROBERT:** I'm Robert.

**OREST:** What happened to you, my friend? Have you stepped on an anti-personnel mine?

**ROBERT:** Yeah, a bit, a bit.

*Robert's phone rings.*

**ROBERT:** Yonchi?! Hallo! You heard? Yeah, I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm now in the hospital, they cut my leg a little bit, but only to the knee. I'm gonna play football one day, but let's talk later, yeah... Cos I haven't called my woman yet.

*Robert ends the call.*

**OREST:** And what brigade are you from?

**ROBERT:** Huh, can't you tell? The 128th Mountain Asshole Brigade, yeah. We came to replace the guys, and I asked: is there anybody in the trees? And they said: nah, nobody. Did anybody go to check? Yeah, our guys went there, everything's clear. Hell nah. Nobody ever went there. When we went to check, on our way we were hit by AGS-17 and the PK machine gun fire, and I felt them coming towards us. Yeah, and I told the guys to retreat. And then I heard a bang, and I saw the sky through the tree branches. Yeah, I didn't even realize what happened. Luckily, my guys are good fighters. They immediately ran up to me, I just applied a tourniquet, and then the two of them took me under arms, the other two got us covered, and so we went out back to our guys, yeah.

**OREST:** Lucky you.

**ROBERT:** Yeah-yeah, you tell me.

**MARIA:** That's it, I've made the bed. Come on, lie down. Let me help you...

*Maria helps Robert to lie down in bed and puts his belongings in the nightstand. And then she leaves.*

*Robert's phone rings again.*

**ROBERT:** Migal?! What's up? I'm fine, yeah. The surgery went well. Nah, they didn't make me a third leg. Yeah, how should I know what they did to my leg? They're probably finishing eating it somewhere there. What nurses? Nah, what a stupid thing to say, I'm married. If my woman heard that, it would be worse than the war. Yeah, later, I really have to call Karina. Okay-okay, take care!

*Robert hangs up the phone.*

**ROBERT:** Sorry, guys, could you please be quiet for a bit? I have to call my woman, I don't want to scare her that I'm in the hospital.

**ADAM:** Go ahead and call her, bro. She's probably glad that it only cost you a leg...

*Robert calls his wife via video.*

**ROBERT:** Hallo, Karina? Yeah, hi, sweetie, don't worry, I'm fine.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Darling, why didn't you call me? Two days. I thought I was going crazy.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, I knew you were worried. I'm sorry I couldn't call you. We were on a mission. But now I'm already in the rear.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** I sat there crying for two days.

**ROBERT:** Why crying? You know I have this kind of job, and no damn bastard's going to catch me.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** I had all kinds of terrible dreams: that you were drowning in a stream, or that you were being buried in the ground, or that I went to a fortune teller and she said you were already dead. I was afraid to go to bed. Now I'm just eating and eating. I devour everything: apples, shovdar, cookies, krumpli, chocolate... Today I ate a can of peas by myself. I can't eat yogurt because it makes me vomit.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, you know that you have to take care of yourself and the baby. How is our little boy, does he push you a lot?

**KARINA'S VOICE:** He's a polite kid, unlike his father. Just this morning, he kicked me so hard on the side that I had to sit down. I can tell he's gonna be a karate boy.

**ROBERT:** Sweetie, and why are you talking through your nose?

**KARINA'S VOICE:** I caught a bit of cold. The wind from the mountains is so cold. There must have been a draft somewhere. I'm gonna go to sleep for a while, cos I haven't even closed my eyes for two days.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, sweetie, go to bed, have a good nap, and I'll call you later.

*Robert ends the video call.*

**OREST:** So, how far along is your wife?

**ROBERT:** It's the fifth month.



**OREST:** When my wife was pregnant, she used to just eat and cry, too. I told her that no one in the world has ever cried over tomatoes like she did. But you have to endure it, they are so fucked up with hormones, and here is the war beside that stuff.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, I get that.

**OREST:** It's good that you understand that. Cos I didn't get it the first time. I have three kids now. And every time it's the same story. You should take care of your wife, because a wife is the only one who can protect a man from himself.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, and from all the other women, too.

**OREST:** Well, they all have it in them: each one is like a mother. During the ATO, in Kramatorsk, I had a fighting girlfriend, Liusia. It was far to go home to my wife, so when I had a couple of days off, I would go to her place, help her with the housework, and she would cook me a meal, put all kinds of borscht and donuts on the table in front of me, and watch me eat. She was so gentle and sincere. And once I was in bed with her and felt that she was fucking me as if she was breastfeeding a baby. Then I realized that I had to go home. I asked the commander for leave and went to my wife and children. And I never saw Liusia again. I wonder how she is now. God bless her, I hope she is happy.

**ROBERT:** Didn't your woman know about the others?

**OREST:** Well, she probably had a hunch, but she knows that family is sacred to me. We have been together for over half a lifetime. Sometimes I feel like I was born married. I think that everything we love, we love the way we love a woman. Cos the first love is such a universal love for our mother, and then we apply it to everything else. We start to feel love for girls, then tender love for our daughters, and then respectful love for senior women... Look, even if we take Ukraine. You hear one word and immediately imagine a woman with a child, a girl in a vyshyvanka or in a wreath. It's as if all our women were one...

*Robert's phone rings again.*

**ROBERT:** Hallo, sweetie, why aren't you sleeping?

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Robbie, darling, I wanna tell you something.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, go ahead.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** I didn't wanna tell you, cos I knew you'd be worried, and it's hard enough for you over there at war. But don't worry, cos it's nothing terrible. I just recalled that we said in church that we wouldn't keep the tiniest secret from each other. So please don't worry, but I'm a bit sick and have a fever. But after seeing you and knowing that you're alive, I feel better.

**ROBERT:** How are you feeling now, sweetie?

**KARINA'S VOICE:** I'm fine now.

**ROBERT:** Sweetie, please don't worry either. I'll be in the hospital for a couple of days. A little bit wounded. A couple of tiny little shards. But it's nothing. I'll have a week to rest, eat well, and sleep on clean sheets.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** My God, darling, are you sure you're okay?

**ROBERT:** Yeah, it's all good. Guys won't let me lie. Guys, tell my woman that everything is fine.

*He turns his tablet with the camera toward the men. They wave their hands in greeting.*

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Oh God, don't make me feel so ashamed. I have uncombed hair and I'm wearing a bathrobe, and you're showing me to the whole hospital?

**ROBERT:** Hey, go call mom. I'll tell her how to take care of her daughter-in-law!

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Oh, mom went to see Zina. They want to give us a crib for the baby.

**ROBERT:** What crib? I told you, my kid will have everything new. Have you decided what color to do the walls?

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Yeah, I saw some wallpapers with poppies and spikelets.

**ROBERT:** How can a boy have those poppies and spikelets? What are you and mom gonna make of the hut? I see I have to go home!

**KARINA'S VOICE:** I wish you could come for a day at least, just to see you. I miss you so much, darling.

**ROBERT:** I miss you, too, sweetie. Now go get some sleep and get well soon.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** You too, darling. Love you.

**ROBERT:** Love you, too.

*Robert ends the video call.*

**PETRO:** By the way, did you get married in a church?

**ROBERT:** Yeah.

**PETRO:** And was it very stressful?

**ROBERT:** Nah, as usual.

**PETRO:** I don't really get what all the fuss is about. My girlfriend and I have been living together for four years, and for four years her parents have been bugging us to get married. And she doesn't need it. And I'm sick and tired of this stupid show: all these stamps in the passport, going to the registry office, ceremonies in the church. It doesn't change anything. We love each other anyway, and if we didn't, no ceremony would stop us.

**OREST:** Well, it depends on how you see it. If you see it as a ceremony, then you don't need it. But if you see it as a solemn promise to stay together no matter what and to be honest with each other, then why not? My wife and I got married... And I never lied to her, if it was about anything important. Even if she asked me about whores, I would tell her everything honestly. But she knows that I will always come back to her anyway and bring home money for her and our children.

**ADAM:** A perfect husband, what can I say? He loves his wife, tells her about his chicks, brings home a hundred thousand... A fucking dream...

**ROBERT:** I can see you're not happy, pal.

**ADAM:** Why should I be happy? I'm getting a little tired of sitting here. They won't let me go, and they don't treat me anymore. And our guys are dying over there... Although I don't even know what's better. Maybe staying here while it's such a fucking massacre over there.

*Robert calls Karina again.*

**ROBERT:** Hallo, sweetie, are you still awake?

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Nah, darling, what is it?

**ROBERT:** Nothing, I'm just very worried about you.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Don't gnaw at yourself, everything's going to be fine.

**ROBERT:** Sweetie.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** What?

**ROBERT:** I have one more thing to tell you. You know, we came back almost from hell. I thought I'd never hear from you again. The guys dragged me two kilometers under bullets, carrying me under the arms. And I kept repeating to myself that I had to get home cos my beautiful woman was waiting for me there, and I had to see my son. Please don't worry. I'm not badly wounded. There's a poor guy here behind the wall moaning and calling for his mom, and I'm talking to you fine, you see. I think it's a miracle from God for all of us that I'm still

alive. Well, I just don't have a foot anymore, but it's not a big deal. It's nothing, nowadays they make such prostheses that allow you to ride a bike, play football, and dance. You'll see, people will ask you where your husband learned to dance like that.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Oh, darling, you must have suffered a lot. And how are you now, does it hurt a lot?

**ROBERT:** Nah, they give me injections here, so it doesn't hurt at all. It's nothing, sweetie, the most important thing for us right now is that you are well.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** Darling, don't worry, I'm fine. I didn't want to tell you, but I'm not at home right now, I'm in the hospital. But it's better than home cos there are doctors here who take care of me all the time. I had a fever for three days, it was thirty-nine and nine. I had to call an ambulance. But everything is fine, in the morning the doctor examined me and said that there is no danger for the child. Sweetie, if you only knew how hard it was for me to be without you, but don't worry, I'm strong, and our boy is strong. He's so polite, he hardly ever pushes me, cos he knows it's hard for his mom now. Sweetie, my Angelika's aunt is a doctor in America, she'll find the best prosthesis for you. It doesn't matter that you don't have a foot, what matters is that you are alive, and that we will be together now.

**ROBERT:** Sweetie, you take care of yourself, that's what really matters. Now go to bed. I love you.

**KARINA'S VOICE:** You too go to bed and do everything the doctors say. Okay, now I feel calm. Now I can go to sleep. I love you, darling. Bye, kisses.

*Robert ends the call.*

**OREST:** So you're not going to be with us much longer either. You have to get well soon and go home and raise your kid. It's good to have two men in the household.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, I guess by the time my leg heals and the prosthesis is made, the baby will be born. And then I will come back to my guys. I promised them. If only I had someone to come back to. I just want them to stay alive. I told them I didn't care, they just had to wait for me.

**ADAM:** So, our Romeos, have you settled all your amour affairs?

**OREST:** And what are you so nervous about? Why don't you go out with Maria? Cos I can see that something is bothering you a lot.

**ADAM:** Well, I'd rather sleep than listen to all this stuff. Maybe I'd go out with her, but she's probably gone by now. Her shift should be over by now.

**OREST:** Well done! You already know her shifts and everything. Maybe you can convince

her not to become a nun.

**ADAM:** And I see you, oldster, don't fuck anymore, but you still dream about somebody going out with chicks for you? What's going on in your head? C'mon, keep it down. I'm about to take a nap.

*Adam lies down and rolls over onto his side. The men are lying on their beds, scrolling through their phones. Adam begins to fall asleep.*

### ***Dream five***

*In Adam's dream, it's the orphanage room again. Adam is sitting on the bed. There is a sharp knife in front of him.*

**ADAM:** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*With his last words spoken, he begins to cut his wrists. Blood begins to flow down his arms. He faints.*

*Suddenly, a boy named Sania enters the room. He sees Adam bleeding and starts crying and mumbling. He grabs Adam and runs out into the corridor. From the corridor, we hear Sania's voice.*

**SANIA'S VOICE:** Natalia Petrivna, Adam killed himself... He cut his wrists...

*At this point, Adam wakes up abruptly.*

**ADAM:** *(Shouting)* I'm alive, Sania... I'm alive, you hear me, I'm alive...

*Orest, Robert, and Petro are looking at Adam.*

**OREST:** Calm down, calm down... You must have had a bad dream...

**PETRO:** Oh, you scared the hell out of us, man... We almost shit our pants here...

**ADAM:** I'm sorry, guys... I had a dream about the war...

*Adam gets up and walks out into the corridor.*

### **SCENE NINE**

*Adam walks out into the corridor. There are many different boxes in the corridor. Maria is sitting next to them.*

**MARIA:** Hey, Adam. Come here, help me organize these pills.

**ADAM:** Oh, you're still here. I thought your shift was already over... For you, whatever you say!

*He sits down next to Maria and starts taking medications out of the boxes.*

**MARIA:** Yes, but I have to sort out the medications... Cipro... that's to the right, to antibiotics. And put these aside for now, these are sedatives.

**ADAM:** "He-pa-rin," what is that for?

**MARIA:** It's an antithrombotic. Put it up there. Can you reach it? Thank you for helping me. And for everything.

**ADAM:** Ready to help you anytime. I just don't know if this is going to make any sense...

**MARIA:** And what are you hoping for?

**ADAM:** Well, what could I hope for with you? (*Laughing*) Except that you'll pray for me more.

**MARIA:** You have become a real friend to me here.

**ADAM:** Wow! What a huge step forward. I have only one friend... And here, you see, I made friends with a nun in the hospital... My guys will be laughing...

**MARIA:** Let them laugh, laughter prolongs life...

**ADAM:** It won't help them anymore. Death serves in our unit. So it goes. Cyto-deine - and what is it for?

**MARIA:** This is to stop the phantom pain.

**ADAM:** Oh, I need more of that. My whole life has been a series of phantom pains. I was just thinking today that my whole childhood I was in pain for my mother, who was not there. And now I see that bullshit in my dreams... And it hurts too.

**MARIA:** Can you tell me about your dreams? And what hurts?

**ADAM:** Are you asking me to confess, Maria? It's too soon... I'm not going to die now... I need to earn some money and start a normal life. Cos everything that was before was like a computer game, a demo version. It's like I've never really lived...

**MARIA:** Well, you brought it up yourself... Talking about phantom pain and all that. I

thought maybe you could share. I barely know your story.

**ADAM:** I'd rather stay mysterious and almost perfect for you. And then one day, you might fall in love with me and regret letting a guy like that go.

**MARIA:** We are all in pain now. For physical pain, at least there are painkillers. But for pains like yours, only faith can help. I have already bookmarked the Holy Scriptures for you, I will bring it to you, please read it.

**ADAM:** No, thanks, I don't really believe in that stuff. The last time I prayed was when I was a kid.

**MARIA:** God makes you feel that way. You have it in you somewhere. I didn't know how to do it either, but it was the only thing that helped me.

**ADAM:** Don't get me wrong, but I don't think it helped you. It's just a way for you to escape from your problems and let them go in prayer. This religion of yours is a fear of something. Your fear is to understand your life and see your loneliness.

**MARIA:** Is it you who is telling me about "loneliness"? (*Laughing nervously*)

**ADAM:** I know what it is. When I got my first slight wound, I made myself think that my leg was cut off. For a while I was afraid to take off the blanket and see if there was anything there. Just like you: you hold on to it all cos you are afraid to realize that you have been living in an illusion for so long.

**MARIA:** And imagine how many people besides me around the world have been helped by faith. For so many centuries now.

**ADAM:** And so it works for everyone. When people are scared, they cling to their faith like a straw. They invent gods and promise them obedience in exchange for their help. And then they either forget, or if not, they let a lot of real love go because of the promise they made out of desperation... And then there's the fear of what others will think of them.

**MARIA:** You're such a philosopher. Where did you get that? Not in the orphanage, right?

**ADAM:** I watched National Geographic a lot...

**MARIA:** And why do you think that faith comes from fear, and not the opposite - from courage or gratitude?

**ADAM:** Because it denies the simple joy of living. You give up life and condemn yourself to loneliness. And it shouldn't be like that. Look at yourself. You were born to have children, to love and to be loved. To have children! Look, even the Bible says that God is love. And the church, monasteries, religion are the opposite - they came out of fear of love.

**MARIA:** You are confusing spiritual love with carnal love. Nuns take a vow not to commit carnal sin. But love of God and love of neighbor are the foundation of my faith.

**ADAM:** But I don't know what spiritual love is. All I've seen is carnal love. It's like separating a person's body and soul - that's death. And why should the universal love of God deny the love of a particular person? What kind of faith is it then that forbids love?

**MARIA:** Perhaps, it is not for everyone? I have already tried to live my particular love, and then I decided to become a nun.

**ADAM:** You made a mistake once and you're just afraid that you'll make it again. I felt the same way after the first shelling. I had never been so scared before or since. I didn't want to leave the cellar for three days in a row, I couldn't make myself go.

**MARIA:** The fact that you are here proves that you have found faith in something to come out.

**ADAM:** Hell, no, it's just that one fear has been replaced by another. Cos the only thing worse than the fear of death is the fear of loneliness. Guys told me they would leave me alone, so I got out. Now I have a lot of time to think. And I realized that I had lived my whole life with the fear of being left alone forever. And only here, for the first time in my life, I didn't feel that way. I felt that I was needed here. Suddenly I met... I met you...

**MARIA:** I'm sorry... But you will definitely find someone else. You just have to realize that there is a lot of love in you too...

*Maria tries to pat him on the head. Adam resists.*

**ADAM:** I already lost Maria once. Your namesake... I almost killed myself over it. Luckily, Sania saw it and called the teachers... Otherwise, we wouldn't be having this conversation cos I wouldn't be here anymore.

**MARIA:** What are you talking about?

**ADAM:** I'm talking about how I fell in love when I was a kid... There was this girl in our orphanage, Maria. She seemed to glow in the midst of all that darkness. My first love, you know... And she was kind. Utterly kind. We were friends with her. I loved her like children do. The older boys found a projectile in the forest and wanted to set it on fire. They called us all, and the one in charge called Maria to come closer, cos he also wanted to show off in front of her... And when he threw the projectile, everyone ran away, but she didn't make it. And now Maria is gone... And then they blamed me for it, saying that I did everything...

**MARIA:** I'm so sorry... I can't even imagine how you got over it...

**ADAM:** Well, I haven't gotten over it. I'm still suffering from it. I cut my wrists... You asked



me about the scars on my arms - that's how it is.

**MARIA:** Dear God. How much you suffered as a child.

**ADAM:** After that, the investigators thought I was out of my mind. And Sania, too, cos he didn't speak for a long time, just mumbled. And we were just transferred to another orphanage. One of the teachers was fired, and the other was put on probation for a year or two. What could they expect from us? We were kids... They wrote that it was an accident...

**MARIA:** Come here...

*Maria hugs Adam. Adam lets her hug him, raises his head and kisses her. She freezes for a moment, then escapes from the embrace and pushes him away.*

**MARIA:** Adam, I can't... I'm sorry...

*Maria runs out, knocking over the boxes and scattering the painkillers. Adam sits on the box. He rests his head on his arms.*

## SCENE TEN

*On the stage is a ward. The men are doing their own thing.*

**OREST:** Looks like Maria hasn't been here for a few days. You know where she is, kiddo? You've been running around trying to get a date with her, huh?

**ADAM:** Oldster, leave me alone, cos I don't know what I'll do to you...

**OREST:** So, why suffer? Go call her! I woke up last night and you were moaning: "Maria, Maria..."

**ADAM:** Damn it, I don't have her number. And what's the point of calling her if she doesn't want to talk? She'll show up sooner or later.

**ROBERT:** Kiddo, don't be mad! *(to Orest)* And you, God damn you Orest. Why are you tearing open the man's wounds? Look at him, poor guy!

**OREST:** But what I mean is, he shouldn't feel sorry for himself, he should show himself to be a decent gentleman.

**PETRO:** I can tell right away what's on your mind. Are you here for treatment, or for an affair?

**OREST:** And why me? I'm not doing anything. I'm just saying that opportunities should be taken. War is when you dot the I's and cross the T's. The kid's nice. She's nice. What can you

lose? He will be grateful to his senior colleague for this piece of advice.

**ADAM:** (nervously and sarcastically) Thanks, you old fucker! If it wasn't for your advice, I don't even know what would have happened!

**PETRO:** If only it were that simple. But she is not the kind of woman who is easily seduced by phone calls. She's a novice, after all. Every time I see her in the corridor, she is praying.

*Adam's phone rings. He answers the call.*

**ADAM:** Hello.

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** Adam Andriyovych?

**ADAM:** Yes, it's me.

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** You are listed in our records as a contact for Kravchenko Oleksandr Andriyovych.

**ADAM:** Yes. What happened?

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** I must inform you that he was killed in action while defending his Motherland.

**ADAM:** How?... When?

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** By the cannon artillery fire. Yesterday morning, near Bakhmut.

**ADAM:** So what now?

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** We need you to come to Kostiantynivka to identify the body.

**ADAM:** So it could be someone else?

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** He had his documents with him, but this is the procedure. Your signature is required.

**ADAM:** I'll call this number when I get there...

## SCENE ELEVEN

*On the stage is a ward in the morning. Robert, Orest and Petro are lying on their beds, Adam's bed is empty, made up, and there are no personal belongings. The TV screen shows a telethon and a news clip. Maria enters the room.*

**MARIA:** Good morning, boys!

**OREST:** Oh, you came back to us. And we were wondering where you disappeared to.

**MARIA:** I took a few days off. For family reasons. I needed to pray. And where is your friend?

**OREST:** Adam? Kiddo? He was discharged and went home to recover.

**MARIA:** Home where?

**OREST:** Well, he said he was going to visit his family somewhere. But it's better here without him. Nobody bugs us, nobody sneers at us.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, he's kind of a jumpy guy. Uncertain.

**PETRO:** And he's always unhappy about something.

**OREST:** These days, he was depressed, always calling to the front. His friend died there, so he ran back to his guys again, called the commander to take him away. I think he's a good kid... It's just that something prevents him from being kind to others... Although, maybe such people are needed at war... Heartless...

**PETRO:** The massacre near Bakhmut continues. Looks like they will be bringing a new person to this bed soon.

**ROBERT:** Yeah, we will never lack for wounded people. And here it is again, the news shows what's happening near Bakhmut.

*Another news story begins on the TV screen.*

**TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:** The war took the lives of two friends, but it could not separate them. Oleksandr and Adam were not only comrades-in-arms, they were brothers. They called themselves that way because they grew up together in the same orphanage.

**OREST:** Guys, look. It's our Kiddo. Petro, turn up the volume.

**ROBERT:** Really? Holy shit. Look.

**TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:** Their teachers even called the boys inseparable. This is what their favorite teacher, Taisia Maksymivna, remembers about them.

**TAISIA MAKSYMIVNA'S VOICE:** *(crying)* They were polite children. Of course, like all boys, they did all sorts of naughty things, as they say, they messed up. But they were kindhearted, defended the weak, kept their word, and I could always count on them.

**TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:** They kept in touch even after finishing the residential school,

and in the first days of the full-scale invasion, they decided to go together to defend their Motherland. Adam and Oleksandr went through all the challenges of war, harsh living conditions and fierce battles. They even died a few days apart, defending the outskirts of Bakhmut. Their sworn brothers with the call signs Fierce and Monk came to pay their last respects.

**SWORN BROTHER FIERCE'S VOICE:** These guys were fighters, and they died like fighters, in battle. We were like a family. Adam was like a brother to everybody. Near Zaitseve, he pulled me out when I was wounded. I promised to bring him my homemade mead when he got married. Now I don't know how to thank him. You know what I'll tell you: the war takes the best of us.

**SWORN BROTHER MONK'S VOICE:** They died like heroes. Sania was hit by artillery and crawled to the wounded. And Kiddo, I mean Adam, he's a machine gunner, he stayed behind to cover the retreat... and the tank hit him. They probably wouldn't survive without each other. God takes people together so as not to separate them.

**TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:** The company commander is also here.

**COMPANY COMMANDER'S VOICE:** They were true patriots - defenders of the state. They showed a responsible attitude to their service, faithfully executed orders and respected their commanders. Eternal glory to them!

**TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:** The friends were buried next to each other. In this way, the two defenders seem to show us that brotherhood is stronger than death.

*The telethon is broadcast on the television screen, showing two coffins covered with blue and yellow flags. One of them has a rosary on top.*

**TV ANNOUNCER'S VOICE:** And although the young men had no family, almost the entire city came to bid farewell to the heroes. This is the last tribute from their compatriots!

*Shocked, Maria sits down on Adam's bed. She freezes in this position. Screams come from behind the wall.*

**UNKNOWN VOICE:** (*Screaming from behind the wall*) Mooom, it hurts!

*Maria looks at the men. Her eyes are filled with tears.*

**MARIA:** Hear someone behind the wall calling his mother?

*Curtain*