



Ukrainian Drama TRANSLATIONS

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Author

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Play
Original name /
translated

On the Eve, or, Everything Will Be All Right
Напередодні, або Все буде добре

Translator

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translation

English

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A simple life story set against the backdrop of war.

(Written with the support of the Goethe-Institut scholarship program.)

Characters

Maksym

Maryna, his wife

Tasia, daughter of Maryna and Maksym

Mark, Tasia's fiance

News Feed

February 13, 2022

"Canada Calls Military Instructors Home from Ukraine Due to Danger of War."

"Biden Promises Zelensky Quick, Decisive Response to Potential Russian Aggression."

"Poland Prepares for Wave of Refugees from Ukraine."

"The Pope and Thousands of Others Pray Silently for Ukraine."

Scene 1

***Maksym** and **Tasia** talk via video link in Messenger.*

Tasia. Dad, I will kill you some day!

Maksym. What are you talking about, sweetheart? Easy now! Everything's all right...

Tasia. All right?

Maksym. Well, what isn't?

Tasia. Are you kidding me?

Maryna's Voice (*from next room*). Max! Who are you talking to?

Maksym (*shouts*). I'll be right there! Wait! (*Goes to next room, speaks softly.*) Listen, I'm begging you, please!

Tasia. That's it. Either you tell her right now... Or I'll tell her everything myself.

Maksym. Sweetheart!

Tasia. Quiet! I know what you'll say... The deadline is tomorrow.

Maksym. I can't do it tomorrow.

Tasia. There you go again!

Maksym. Tomorrow is the fourteenth....

Tasia. So what?

Maksym. What do you mean? It's Valentine's Day. How do I tell her on a day like that?

Tasia. That's all right. Tell her. In the evening. Prepare it throughout the day then tell her in the evening. If you don't, I'll tell her myself.

Maksym. Why do you keep giving me ultimatums?

Tasia. What else can I do if you're acting like a child? You've been putting it off for a month. Now every day counts.

Maksym. Here comes Mom!

(*Enter Maryna*)

Maryna. It's Tasia! Why didn't you call me?

Maksym. We can have our secrets sometimes, too.

Maryna. Hi, Tasia!

Tasia. Hey, Mom!

Maryna. You look great! I hope everything is okay!

Tasia. It is, Mom. I miss you so much. Why don't you just come, huh? I'll pay for the tickets.

Maryna. I miss my daughter, too. I want to hug you so much!

Tasia. Well, come, then!

Maryna. We will! Absolutely. Maybe in the summer. Who spends the holidays with whom? You or us... maybe you'll come here. It's beautiful here in summer right now. The city is full of blooming flowers, especially in the center. But, tell us, what's the news?

Tasia. Look, summer is so far away. A lot can happen before summer comes.

Maksym. Tasia!!!

Tasia. What, Dad?

Maksym. Nothing. So, how did your day go! How are you doing?

Tasia. Nothing to tell! I just sit at my computer.

Maryna. Oh! I have a new outfit! You'll love it. I'll show you. (*Goes out.*)

Maksym. Thanks. I see you're barely holding back.

Tasia. We agreed – you tell her tomorrow. This is the last delay.

Maksym. Okay, okay. I know what I need to do, myself. Only I don't know where to start. I don't want to get her too worried – you don't know her. She has health problems after that damned Covid.

Tasia. Her life is always like that.

Maksym. Now, why would you say that?

Tasia. Make up your mind already. She's not little, she should know. Why do you keep her in the dark? You won't let me say a word to her.

Maksym. No, it's her choice. She hasn't even been on her Facebook page in ages, you know. She goes to her computer just to work or listen to music files. She's calmer this way.

Enter Maryna in new dress.

Oh! Looks good on you!

Maryna. Well, show her! Give that here! (*takes Maksym's smartphone away*) Look! What do you think?

Tasia. Very cool, Mom.

Maryna. Do you like it? Really?

Tasia. Of course I do.

Maryna. I ran by our favorite outlet store yesterday, remember? The one near the subway, in the basement?

Tasia. Of course!

Maryna. And in my size. Perfect fit! I think, "I think I'll take this!" And if you like it, you can have it. You have those high-heeled shoes, the perfect color... That's what I thought. (*Pause.*) What do you think?

Tasia. What?

Maryna. Were you even listening to me?

Tasia. I love the dress, Mom. Enjoy it, you wear it.

Maryna. But do you want one?

Tasia. No.

Maryna. Why not?

Tasia. Mom, it's perfect for you. Seriously. I don't need it.

Maryna. What do you mean? And those shoes? I can lend it to you if a reason comes up...

Maksym. Maryna, she already told you. What's she need with it?

Maryna. And I'm telling you: don't get in the way when I'm talking to our child. A hundred times the same old thing. When will this end?

Tasia. Mom!

Maryna. What?

Tasia. Don't fight for a couple of minutes!

Maryna. Tell that to your dad.

Tasia. Mom, I'm not five years old. I can buy things for myself.

Maryna. All right.

Tasia. Don't be angry, Mom. I love you.

Maryna (*dryly*). I love you, too. Bye! (*To Maksym*) Here! (*Hands back his smartphone, leaves.*)

Maksym. So we had that little talk...

Tasia. I love you.

Maksym. Back at ya.

Tasia. Do you have a gift?

Maksym. What gift? Oh, yeah. We decided that as a gift to each other, we'd go to the movies together. Sit for awhile in a coffee shop somewhere. Something like that, basically.

Tasia. What are you going to go see?

Maksym. I have no idea. Your mother chose. She chose something.

Tasia. You guys are so predictable. Too much so. Talk to Mom. You promised. I'm worried now.

Maksym. I will. Don't worry. Everything will be fine. See you tomorrow!

Tasia. See you tomorrow. (*Turns off phone.*)

Scene 2

Tasia turns off the ringer on her smartphone and sits in silence for a few minutes. Enter Mark.

Mark. You finished? Am I off the hook?

Tasia nods and is silent.

Mark. So? Did he tell her?

Tasia (*shakes her head*). He promised to tomorrow.

Mark. I see. And I think: Who are you like?

Tasia. What?

Mark. Coffee?

Tasia. No. What are you talking about?

Mark. About someone being so secretive. Tea?

Tasia. We agreed. I'll tell them right after the engagement. You answer for that, now. I have nothing to do with it.

Mark. That's decided. There will be plenty to do soon. Okay, don't be angry.

Tasia. Man, he pisses me off! You, too!

Mark. Wait a minute! (*Leaves, returns with a glass of juice.*) Isn't this your favorite? No?

Tasia takes the glass without thinking and drinks.

Mark. I mean, you'd think you would have already told about me. If you want, I'll go get them myself. I'll bring them here while you're busy with your classes.

Tasia. You're not flying anywhere anymore. Not you, not me, not anyone.

Mark. Why's that?

Tasia. There are no more flights to Ukraine. Done!

Mark. What do you mean?

Tasia (*opens laptop*). Look here. (*Reads from news feed.*) "Airlines stop flights over Ukraine," "Oligarchs and businessmen leave Ukraine on charter flights." And then: "US warns Russia may attack Ukraine as early as February 15." February 15! That's in two days! He reads that every day too. Tell me: what do you guys have in your heads not to react to this at all?

Mark. I don't know. Maybe it's because they're on the inside of these events, and they perceive it somehow differently. After all, they've been living like this for eight years.

Tasia. I'm just going to explode. (*Starts crying.*)

Mark. Come here! (*Hugs her.*) Don't. Everything will be all right. Everything. Will. Be. All. Right.

News Feed

February 14, 2022

"US Announces Relocation of Embassy from Kyiv to Lviv."

"Putin Has not Made Final Decision on Invasion – Biden."

"Poland Will not Evacuate Diplomats from Kyiv and Kharkiv Yet."

"British Prime Minister: it is Obvious Russia is Planning War."

Scene 3

Next morning. Maksym enters room with tray holding two cups of coffee and cookies. Maryna just woke up.

Maksym. Hello, sunshine!

Maryna. Wow! What is this?

Maksym. Happy Valentine's Day!

Maryna. Yeah? It is! You too. Make yourself comfortable.

Maksym sits next to her on the bed. They drink coffee in silence for a while.

Maksym. What did you dream about?

Maryna. I just remember a strange, vivid dream, as if we were in some unfamiliar place. It's foggy. And the sea is there. And for some reason, everyone is upset. They're all running around. We don't understand what's going on, and we just go quietly to the shore.

Maksym. And then?

Maryna. Then we see the sea, and we freeze, because a huge wave is coming at us! Incredibly high! And we stand there, just looking at each other. Then you shout, "run!" And we run.

There are people all around. So many that I keep thinking about how not to get lost, and how not to lose you.

Maksym (*chokes a little, clears throat, finishes his coffee in one gulp and puts down his cup*). And then?

Maryna. Are you okay?

Maksym. Yeah, don't worry.

Maryna. Then – I woke up in horror. Brrr! What's it all mean?

Maksym. Finished? (*Takes the cup.*) What's it mean? Means nothing.... Waves, I think, are supposed to be a harbinger of excitement.

Maryna. And they say strong feelings in a dream signify the opposite in life.

Maksym. So there's nothing terrifying here, but something on the contrary – courage, maybe. That's good.

Maryna. What did you dream?

Maksym. Me? Mmmm, nothing. Maybe I dreamed something, but I don't remember. Good Morning! Rise and shine! We have big plans today! (*Leaves room quickly.*)

Scene 4

Evening of same day. A large modern shopping center. Maksym waits for Maryna in a store, where she went into a fitting room. While she tries things on, he's on the phone.

Maksym. Don't you have any inside news? You're a journalist, I thought maybe... I mean, you see all the news. Okay, got it. Have you packed your emergency backpack yet? I haven't either. I don't even have one. There is a sense of threat for some reason. Or, more to the point, I feel a sense of threat, but no sense of danger. I don't know how to explain it. Well, yeah, it feels like a big game, in which everyone is playing with us. Wait a minute!

Maryna opens the fitting room door, shows off new blouse.

Maryna. You like this?

Maksym. Yeah, it's pretty, but...

Maryna. Not perfect, huh?

Maksym. No, it isn't.

Maryna. That's what I thought. Who are you talking to?

Maksym. Serhei.

Maryna. Say hi to him! (*Closes curtain.*)

Maksym. Maryna gives you her regards. So you have no plan B at all? Is Katya with the kids? Where'd she go? Ah, yes, her mother is in Uzhgorod, I forgot. And you? You'll come back, and then? Territorial defense? Uh-huh. Got it. (*Looks at smartphone.*) Sorry, Tasia's on the other line. Hang on a minute? Okay. (*Switches.*) Hello, sunshine! I'm talking to Serhei here. He says hi. Okay, I'll tell him. No, no, I didn't tell her yet. We went to the store after the movie. We couldn't pass it by, you know that. She's in the fitting room... and I'm hanging nearby. You know how much I love all this. Especially in the present circumstances. Basically, it all seems somehow surreal. Although, you know, this place is full of people. And there's a line at the cash register. No one believes anything like this can happen, you know? We are a strange people. I'll tell you – absolute Olympian serenity. Wait a minute!

Maryna appears in a new sweater.

Oh, that's great! Looks fabulous. We'll take it!

Maryna. Good. I have a few more things. (*Closes curtain.*)

Maksym. Tasia, I promised you! I'll talk to her tonight, don't worry. Then we'll talk. Listen, I have Serhei hanging on the other line... yeah, take care! (*Switches.*) Seriozha, you here? Sorry! In

the store. Maryna wanted to look for new shoes. Instead, looks like she'll buy a new sweater! Don't tell me, friend! (*Laughs softly.*) That's right! I look and think: it's like primping on the edge of a precipice. But, listen, just in case: she doesn't know. In general. That is, she senses everything somehow – she even has dreams all the time – but she knows nothing. By the way, I had a dream today. It wasn't even a dream. On the contrary, it came to me while I was awake. I mean, imagine this: I wake up in the middle of the night from an explosion, and it's so strong that the bed shakes under me. And it almost makes me jump. I understand nothing. My heart is pounding. It's calm and quiet all around. I listened to the sounds for another half hour before falling asleep again. I think I've already gotten used to this premonition of war. Every day it's in my head. What? Something like that. Really. Sorry, wait a minute!

Maryna comes out in a new jumpsuit. She looks questioningly at Maksym, who shakes his head.

Maryna. But I like it!

Maksym. But no... something's wrong about it.

Maryna. Because the shoes and T-shirt are wrong.

Maksym. Well... I don't know.

Maryna. Okay. (*Goes back into fitting room.*)

Maksym. You still here? Well, why... she almost never uses the internet, and I say nothing, because ever since the revolution she's had all kinds of health problems. She takes everything too close to heart. What am I telling you for? You know it yourself. Yes, I'll have to. I'll do it today. Of course, run along! Keep in touch. I'll ask you about territorial defense later, just in case. Say hi to Katya! (*Hangs up.*)

Maryna (*comes out*). You tired?

Maksym. You might say that.

Maryna. Sorry. How about this sweater?

Maksym. Let's take it. It's my gift for you.

Maryna. Thank you! (*Kisses him.*) I really like it. It will match with different things. Let's find something for you now!

Maksym. No, no! Don't get started! I don't need anything, I have everything I need. I'll go pay for this! (*Takes sweater, quickly leaves.*)

Scene 5

That same evening. Maksym and Maryna sit at a table in a coffee shop. Music plays quietly.

Maryna. And this is their – how did you put it? – strike group right on our border?

Maksym. Yes, they are stretched out along the entire border, everywhere. It's hard to tell where they aren't. There are almost 200,000 troops.

Maryna. Have the Poles closed their consulate and embassy?

Maksym. Not yet.

Maryna. They must know something. They wouldn't risk their citizens.

Maksym. I hope so.

Maryna. You say it's been like this since last May?

Maksym. Even before, they could have hit us in May and June. Everyone was afraid then, too, but they didn't strike. They even seemed to pull back a little. Then they returned in the fall.

Maryna. Why did you say nothing for so long?

Maksym. We went through so much with your health after 2014. You react to these things so emotionally. And then there was Covid, with all you medications. This is the last thing you needed for total happiness. Figure I gave you six months of peace.

Maryna. You're such a fool! I felt this tension all along. I just didn't know where it was coming from.

Maksym. You know, I have absolutely no sense of danger. Whoever I talk to has the same reaction. In 2014, remember, I was the first to say it: Pack your backpacks just in case. And here – nothing. Nothing at all. Oksana Zabuzhko, by the way, just wrote the same thing on Facebook.

Maryna. Well, Zabuzhko is no authority in this regard. All right, what are we going to do?

Maksym. That's what I wanted to ask. Tasia is climbing the walls there, she wants us to drop everything and come. Our girl is worried. I told her we have jobs, a home, and lots of things to do here. She doesn't want to hear any of that: "It's not safe there, come to my place immediately."

Maryna. Well, planes are no longer flying, you can only take a bus.

Maksym. Are you serious?

Maryna. When do they plan to attack. Tomorrow?

Maksym. That's what the Americans say, not me, it's American intelligence.

Maryna. And only late tonight you tell me everything...

Maksym. I didn't want to spoil St. Valentines Day.

Maryna. Oh, thank you so much. Now I have a decision to make.

Maksym. I suggest we discuss it and make it together.

Maryna. You know what? I won't decide anything. I will rely entirely on you in this situation. After all, you're the one who decided to delay the conversation to the last. You didn't pack anything. And we live in a city almost right on the border. I have a concert coming up, I have final rehearsals going on. A lot of people depend on me. God only knows what we still need to do to make any progress. And I'm a woman, I want a dress, okay? Enough, now. I've denied myself everything for years. So I will wear this sweater, and the dress Tasia wouldn't take, and I will work and live as usual. How about that?

Maksym. So that's our discussion.

Maryna. What did you expect?

They sit awhile in silence.

Maryna. In fact, I want to say I am ready to rely on your intuition. You have strong intuition. So we'll do whatever you say. I don't want to decide anything. I don't know what to do.

Maksym. I no longer distinguish these voices in myself. Intuition is intuition, but let's pack our bags anyway. Let them be ready just in case. We'll tell Tasia we're not going anywhere after all. For now.

Maryna. You need to buy transparent tape. To seal the windows just in case.

Maksym. Are you serious?

Maryna. Yeah.

Maksym. Okay, good.

Maryna (*removes sweater from bag*). Is this a great sweater or what?!

Maksym (*smiles*). Fabulous!

Maryna. I'll definitely pack this in my suitcase!

News Feed

February 15

"Websites of Ukrainian Banks and Ministries Subjected to Unprecedented Cyberattack."

"More than Half of Ukrainians Ready to Resist Russia's Armed Offensive – survey."

"World Bank and International Monetary Fund Transfer Some Employees from Ukraine."

February 16

"As of Morning Nothing Unusual at Borders – Ukrainian Minister of Defense."

"US Intelligence Does Not See Russia's Promised Withdrawal of Troops from Ukraine."

"Waters of the Black and Azov Seas Classified as War Risk."

Scene 6

Maksym wakes up **Maryna**, who was sleeping.

Maksym. Wake up, sleepyhead, you'll oversleep everything!

Maryna. What? What happened?

Maksym. That's the point, nothing! Nothing happened!

Maryna. What?

Maksym. We're alive! No one attacked us! Clear sky, birds singing. Let's go for a walk!

Maryna. Today is a work day.

Maksym. Let's say to hell with it and go for a walk. The weather is great. Let's go!

Maryna. I haven't seen you like this in a long time.

Maksym. Yes, this is such a joy: to wake up in the morning and feel how alive and warm you are.

You're alive, and you're here. With this sky, and these birds. We have to enjoy life in the here-and-now. Everything else comes later. Come on!

Maryna. What time is it?

Maksym. Almost ten. I'm telling you, you'll oversleep everything!

Maryna. Oh, is today Wednesday?

Maksym. So?

Maryna. I have a one-on-one rehearsal at eleven! I have to get cleaned up. (*Picks up smartphone.*)

Why didn't the alarm go off. I can't figure it out.

Maksym. Turn it off!

Maryna. No, no, I can't. Let's go somewhere tonight.

Maksym. You'll be tired tonight, and I have several talks with foreigners tonight.

Maryna. Well, you see?

Maksym. So we work? Then let's get to work! That's not bad too! Get to work!!! (*He goes out, humming.*)

Maryna (*looks after him with a smile*). Max!

Maksym (*returns*). What?

Maryna. Nothing. I just wanted to see you again. We'll be apart all day.

Maksym leans over and kisses her.

Hey, there! (*Runs hand through his hair.*) Now – to work!

Both smile happily.

News Feed

February 17

“British Defense Ministry Announces Possible Directions for Russian Army Invasion of Ukraine.”

“Lithuania Transfers Some Embassy Staff from Kyiv to Lviv.”

“Ukrainian Military Undergoes Combat Practice with Bayraktars and Javelins.”

February 18

“Putin Signs Decree Calling Up Russians from Reserve for Training.”

“British Embassy Temporarily Moves to Lviv.”

February 19

“Biden: I am Sure Putin has Already Decided to Invade Ukraine.”

“Russia Compiles Arrest and Kill Lists for Ukraine Invasion – Media Data.”

February 20

“US Intelligence Claims Russian Commanders have Already Received Invasion Order.”
“France Advises Citizens to Leave Ukraine.”

February 21, 2022

“Putin Signs Decree Recognizing Independence of Donetsk and Luhansk 'Republics'.”
“Polish Prime Minister Compares Putin's Decision to Aggression Against Ukraine.”
“EU Head of Diplomacy Promises Strong Reaction to Russia's Actions.”

February 22, 2022

“Zelensky Signs Decree on Conscription of Reservists.”
“Russia Evacuates Diplomats from Ukraine.”
“Putin Receives Consent of Russian Parliament to Employ Army in Donbas.”
“Kyiv Considers Severing Diplomatic Ties with Russia – Zelensky.”
“US Evacuates Diplomats from Ukraine to Poland.”

Scene 7

Maryna, Maksym, Tasia speak via Messenger.

Tasia. Mom, Dad, pack your bags quickly, and come here! No more commentary!

Maksym. We're already packed. Mom's been at it for two days. You should see her suitcases!

Maryna. Don't worry. If anything happens we will not fly, the bus can handle this bag easily. And keep in mind, I only packed essentials.

Maksym. I don't doubt that.

Maryna. If there's something you don't like, do it yourself. Or throw away some of your stuff.

Tasia. Okay, quiet! Break! You're packed, that's good. Let's plan your route.

Maryna. Not so fast, sweetheart. I have a concert at the end of this week. Once I've performed we can talk.

Tasia. I don't understand. Are you reading the news?

Maryna. We are. More precisely, your father reads it and tells me the main points.

Tasia. And nothing worries you?

Maryna. Look, you have no idea. When you listen to everything, it sounds really scary. But if you just go outside to do some chores it's completely different.

Maksym. The main thing is not to panic. By the way, so that you know, no one here is panicking.

Maryna. People are living normal lives.

Maksym. Only all the guns are sold out.

Maryna. Don't scare her!

Maksym. Oh, come on! So that you understand what is going on with people right now: the only scarce commodity we have is guns.

Tasia. Did you buy one too?

Maksym. I didn't. But I've read up on it. There are lots of problems, you need all kinds of permissions. That is, the process takes about a month. I figured there was no point getting started now. And they're quite expensive, by the way.

Tasia. So. War is on the doorstep. You're unarmed. And you don't want to come here.

Maryna. That's right.

Maksym. No.

Tasia. Okay. Then I'll come to you.

Maksym. Hey! No! No!

Maryna. Don't be silly!

Tasia. What's the problem?

Maksym. It's dangerous, first of all...

Tasia. So it's safe for you, but not for me?

Maryna. Look, you're in London. It's a wonderful city. A wonderful university. Please appreciate your opportunities, and don't do anything stupid.

Tasia. Oh! There are cheap bus tickets. There's a transfer, and a two-day trip, but...

Maksym. Look, seriously! What are you talking about! Two days here, two days back. Lots of money, and wasted time. You'd have to skip classes. We'll just get our business done here, then come to you!

Tasia. Damn it!

Maryna. What's the matter?

Tasia. What do you mean?

Maryna. You keep looking around. Is someone there with you?

Tasia. Yes. Yes. There is. Okay. Come here! I'll show you. This is Mark. Mark, this is mom and dad.

Maksym. Good evening. Maksym.

Maryna. You should have warned me! (*To Maksym.*) Here, hold the phone, don't show me, I'm not made up.

Tasia. Mom! Don't do that! Come back, please.

Maksym. What are you doing? What am I supposed to do?

Maryna. Well, well, well, Mark. It's very nice to meet you. Maryna.

Tasia. We planned to do this after the engagement. But now it's happened the way it happened.

Maryna. Engagement? And you said nothing?

Mark. We're to be engaged at the end of the week, the twenty-sixth. If we had come to you, we would have arrived just in time for the big event. Tasia wanted to give you a big surprise.

Maryna. Tasia, how could you?

Tasia. I didn't want to jinx it prematurely. I didn't want to jinx it.

Maksym. Who are you so secretive about, sweetheart?

Maryna (*looks at Maksym*). Really. Who could she be taking after? Kids, I'm so happy for you! What a gift!

Mark. I could come for you so as not to distract Maryna from her work, but she won't let me go.

Maksym. And she is right!

Maryna. Tasia, you have stunned me. I don't even know what to say. (*Wipes away a tear.*)

Maksym. Oh, Maryna, don't!

Maryna. I'm so happy! I'm sorry, Mark. (*Leaves the room.*)

Maksym. Now, now...

Tasia. Okay, go to mom, Dad. We'll call you later. You guys are hopeless.

Maksym. Bye, kids! Very happy for you! Nice to meet you, Mark!

News Feed

February 23

“Supreme Rada Introduces State of Emergency in Ukraine.”

“American Intelligence Reports Russian Offensive Will Take Place in Near Future.”

“Spain Recommends Citizens Leave Ukraine.”

“Russia Consolidates All Forces for Potential Invasion of Ukraine.”

“Russia Builds Up Forces on Border with Kharkiv Region and Ships in 45,000 Body Bags.”

Scene 8

Maryna at home, reads a book. Enter **Maksym** in street clothes.

Maryna. Hey, hi!