Маріуполь

A play in 3 acts

By F. de Lancelot

Liminaire

Préface

Ecrire dans une langue qui n’est pas sa langue natale est un exercice périlleux, d’autant plus pour moi qui, bien que contraint de l’utiliser au quotidien, n’apprécie pas tellement parler anglais.

Mais écrire une pièce dont le thème central est le langage dans une langue qui n’est pas la sienne… c’est presque une mise en abîme.

Certains passages ont été pensés en français avant d’être traduits ; d’autres ont été écrits dans un anglais si maladroit qu’il aurait mieux valu les écrire en français.

Quand aux passages en Russe et en Ukrainien, ma connaissance des langues slaves est bien trop faible pour me risquer à composer quoi que ce soit.

And writing this play in French would have make no sense.

Alone, it would have not been a play, just a joke.

I am very grateful to all those ukrainian girls who are surrounding me from afar: Ira, my favorite; Yara, listening to me talking alone; Marta, all those years studying translation has finally been useful.

Diakuju à vous toutes.

Les sources d’inspiration d’un travail d’écriture sont toujours multiples et parfois inconscientes.

Pour l’écriture de cette pièce, le souffle, l’élan générateur qui m’a poussé à aligner les premiers mots, c’est comme bien souvent chez moi, une fille.

A girl who has somehow introduced me to the russian rock, to the ukrainian music and to this soul particulière qui vibre de l’autre côté du rideau de fer. And against all expectation, this girl is une Biélorusse russophone.

Merci Lina.

Dramatis Personæ

* Paul, a 31-year-old musician (piano, guitar, vocals). French.
* Stepan, a 67-year-old man. Ukrainian.
* Natalia, a 30-year-old woman. Ukrainian.
* Lena, a 24-year-old pregnant woman. Ukrainian.
* Dmitro, a 29-year-old man, Lena’s husband. Ukrainian.
* Yegor, a 22-year-old soldier. Russian.

Décor

The stage is bare, the furniture worn and aged. The back of the stage is empty and shrouded in darkness. All furniture is positioned downstage.

Stage right (côté jardin): a door at the back wall and an upright piano set in profile, near the front.

Downstage centre-left: a dining table with four chairs.

Upstage centre: a samovar with several tea glasses on a small side table.

Centre-left: a three-seater sofa with a blanket.

Stage left (côté cour): another door.

Something working as a small kitchen counter will be used later on the apron.

Prologue

(All the lights are turned down.

We can barely make out the shadows of the set on stage.

From behind the curtains, we hear Paul’s voice.)

Paul (voice-over)

What was I seeking, coming to Mariupol in that end of February of 2022?

The entire world announced a Russian invasion — and though no one quite believed it, reason said I should have stayed in France.

Or at least waited.

So, what was I hoping for?

To become an artist under the bombs?

To prove to the world that I stood above fate?

To show how an idealist romantic I am ?

Truth is, I didn’t really think it through.

I just had one good reason to come to Mariupol.

Act I

Scene I

Stepan, Natalia

(The stage is still shrouded in darkness.

Sporadic gunfire and shelling rumble in the distance.

Stepan is entering the stage by the côté cour door.

Natalia is almost invisble, wrapped in a blanket, on the couch.)

STEPAN

(in ukrainian) Ластівко, please don’t stay like that in the dark.

(No answer. Stepan lights a few candles. The stage gradually lights up.)

STEPAN

(in ukrainian) The пряники just came out of the oven — want one?

NATALIA

(in ukrainian) No, thanks. I’m fine…

STEPAN

(in ukrainian) Come on, you’re not going to drink your tea without a cookie.

NATALIA

(in ukrainian)I don’t feel like tea…

(There’s a knock at the door, interrupting Natalia. She panics. Stepan sets down the tray and walks towards the côté jardin door.)

Natalia

(in ukrainian) Don’t open it…

Scene II

(Stepan opens the door slightly and peeks out to see who knocked.)

Stepan

(in ukrainian) Hello, sir. May I help you?

Paul

Доброго ранку. I am sorry, I do not speak your language. Do you by any chance speak English?

Stepan

Americans are jealous of Russian invasion, so they also come to claim their share?

Paul

Oh ! no, sir. I am not American, I am French.

Stepan

I can hear by your speaking that you are French, but what’s the difference?

Natalia

Дід! Now that you have opened the door to a total stranger during a war, you have to be polite.

Stepan

You are right, ластівко, you are right… Please, юначе, come in, it is cold outside. My name is Stepan, and this is my grand-niece, Natalia. You are welcome in this house.

Paul

Thank you for your accueil. My name is Paul.

Stepan

Please sit and make yourself comfortable, Paul. Do you want some tea? Water is warm and заварка is ready.

Paul

Oh, no thank you, I am fine.

Natalia

He means yes, of course he wants tea, it’s cold outside.

Stepan

Good, good. Do you take it strong, or maybe lighter ?

Natalia

He takes it light, Did, he takes it light.

Stepan

Дитино, let the man talk for himself.

(Stepan is pouring some zavarka in a glass, and then fill up the glass with warm water)

Unfortunately, sir, I don’t have lemon — but would you like some honey?

(Pauls glances at Natalia, unsure what to say.)

Natalia

Yes, he wants honey, Дід.

(Stepan drops a spounful of honey into the glass, then hands it to Paul.

Paul looks at the tea while Stepan is preparing two more for him and Natalia.)

Paul

Thank you sir, this tea warms my heart.

Five minutes ago, I was still afraid I’d have to spend the night outside. Every other house is shut and empty, or simply destroyed...

Mariupol feels like a ghost city now.

I’m truly grateful you opened your door.

Stepan

What a Frenchman like you is doing in Mariupol in such dark times. You’re a journalist? A diplomat?

Paul

No, I am even more useless than that… I am a musician.

Stepan

Musician? Interesting…

I knew a French guy in Moscow, a musician too.

He was even more communist than the rest of us.

He wasn’t just following the doxa — he believed in it.

Paul

I am actually not surprised about that…

You have been to Moscow?

Stepan

I have been to many places, юначе.

But yes, I was a professor of German philology at Moscow State University for several years.

Paul

Oh, Language teacher… That’s why you speak English so well.

I really struggle with it myself…

Natalia

No, don’t worry, you are perfectly fine.

Would you like some cakes, maybe? They’re pryaniki — traditional ukrainian pastries.

Paul

For what I understand, saying “no” isn’t really an option, is it?

Natalia

If you are not hungry, I can’t force you to eat.

Paul

I am hungry, I am hungry, thank you for the cake.

Natalia

So, tell us, Paul, what are you doing here in Mariupol?

Paul

Well, it’s complic…

(someone knocks at the door.)

Scene III

Stepan, Natalia, Paul, Dmitro, Lena

Stepan

(in ukrainian) зе кляті двері із оупен

Lena

(in russian) Privet, We are sorry to come into your house like that, but it seems it’s the only place in the area that is not into rubles or locked up.

Natalia

We don’t speak Russian in this house.

Lena

Oh, I’m sorry, we don’t speak Ukrainian.

Natalia

Then It will be English.

Stepan (for himself)

We can not use the language of the master from the East, so we use the language of the master from the West...

Natalia

(in ukrainian) Oh shut up, Дід!

Lena

I really hope we are not bothering you. I am sorry, my name is Lena, I am pregnant and I can not walk any further.

This is my husband, Dmitry.

Dmitro

Good evening everyone, sorry to intrude.

Stepan

Please come in, there’s enough tea for everyone.

Take a seat and get some rest.

Lena

Thank you, sir. Дякую.

Natalia

Me it’s Natalia, I live here too.

Lena

Nice to meet you, Natalia

Paul

Hello, my name is Paul, I’m from France and I’m like you, looking for a shelter before the cold of the night is coming.

Lena

From France? What are you doing in Mariupol?

Paul

Well, it’s complicated.

Lena

It is always complicated with you, French people, no?

Stepan (ready to serve tea)

Please Девушка, hold your glass. How do you want it, strong?

Lena

I usually drink it quite light, thank you.

Stepan

Light tea for the pregnant lady. Do you want some honey?

Lena

Yes, please. Thank you.

Stepan

And you, sir?

Dmitro

I like strong tea.

Lena

Strong? Are you sure? It demands some courage.

Dmitro

I am sorry, I ask you to apologize my wife, she is upset against me.

Lena

Upset? I am upset? And would you please explain to our lovely hosts why I am upset? I am sure they are curious to know why you need to apologize about your wife being upset.

Dmitro

We have some kind of disagreement. But it’s alright, I…

Lena

It’s alright, really? Are you sure about that?

Dmitro

Please, Lenouchka, I don’t think our hosts are interested by that.

Lena

So you will be a coward until the end, right? Even coward about being a coward.

(She stands up and walk around the table.)

Dmitro

I am trying to bring my wife and our kid to come into a safer place, because Mariupol is no longer a place where to raise children.

Lena

You want to run away from Ukraine to not get enroled. You prefer to abandon your own motherland just to be safe and watch your country burn and your people die from afar.

Dmitr

Lenouchka, come on, it is not that simple…

Lena

Of course it is that simple.

Do you think they will stop after Mariupol?

I will not abandon my land to blyat russkiye.

Dmitro

(in Russian) Lenouchka, please stop doing this…

Paul (interrupting)

Mister Stepan, is it a piano that I see there?

Stepan

This is my wife’s piano, yes. She was a music teacher.

(Paul stands up and walk nearby the piano.)

Paul

Oh, really? What an amazing family you are: the university philologist and the music teacher.

Can I touch it?

Stepan

The piano? It is probably not tuned anymore, but please, feel free to use it.

Paul

Sorry, maybe I am a bit shy. It will not upset you that I touch your wife’s piano? She is not here? What happened to her?

Stepan

Thyroid cancer. Nothing to do with Chernobyl accident, for sure...

Та хай вже.

Please, use the piano, I will be glad to hear its sound again.

Paul

Maybe later. I feel like this instrument is full of stories and memories, it is a bit intimidating to play on it.

Stepan (laughing)

Frenchboy, you’re just as gay as expected.

Paul

What’s that supposed to mean?

Stepan

It means you are a голубчик, a sweet boy.

Even in peacetime, you wouldn’t last a month here.

Paul

I didn’t planned to stay that long. I was hoping to find… to… to do what I have to do more easily.

By the way, why are you still staying here? I am sure leaving is not an easy decision, but the city is nearly destroyed now...

Stepan

Tell me something, Хлопче. I read recently that France has won more battles than any other country in history. Is that true?

Paul

I don’t know, but yes — that might be true. Why?

Stepan

And if I remember correctly, Napoleon was very proud of his fearless French soldiers, wasn’t he?

Paul

I suppose he was.

Stepan

So proud that he won many battles and even marched down on Moscow, right?

Paul

Well, the city wasn’t defended anymore, but yes, I guess he kind of did. What’s your point?

Stepan

At the beginning of World War II, you surrendered rather quickly, didn’t you?

Paul

It’s more complicated than that — but yes, at some point, we had to capitulate.

Stepan

And you submitted politely to the invader. You even have a word for that in French — collabo, is that right?

Paul

There weren’t only collabos in France!

Stepan

Of course, of course, юначе. But even if France won so many battles, what the world remembers is that France surrendered.

Maybe it’s unfair — but that’s what remains: France surrenders.

Paul

So what?

Stepan

So... Ukraine will not surrender. Ukraine will not be remembered for surrendering.

You asked me why we stay here. Natalia stays because it’s her land. Even if the buildings fall, the ground remains.

Natalia

Well… 10 years ago, I was living in the countryside in Luhansk oblast.

But in my village, there is nothing left, not a single building. Even the ground is dead. The war burnt down everything.

(la gorge de Natalia se serre, les larmes sont près de couler)

And after those months of Russian occupation, 10 years ago, even if the land has been freed, I couldn’t stay there anymore… I just couldn’t.

(a few seconds of silence)

So I have moved to my uncle’s house, here in Mariupol.

Paul

I see... I am sorry to hear such story. I had no idea situation was that intense in Eastern Ukraine…

And you, mister Stepan? Why do you stay? Same reason?

Stepan

I was born and raised in the Soviet Union, хлопче. This war isn’t mine.

Natalia

Дід! How can you say that? How can you…

(after a few seconds of silence, Lena rebondit)

Lena

All what I will remember is that Ukraine will not surrender.

Do you hear that, Dyma? Ukraine will not surrender.

Dmitro

Oh leave me alone ! Sometime I wonder if you do not wish that I die, you seem to be much more happy on your own…

Lena

You really understand nothing, Dyma, you never have…

(a few seconds of silence)

Paul

Quel est l’élan d’amour qui paierait ma mort ?

On meurt pour une maison. Non pour des objets ou des murs.

On meurt pour une cathédrale. Non pour des pierres.

On meurt par amour de l’homme, s’il est clef de voûte d’une communauté.

On meurt pour cela seul dont on peut vivre.

Lena

What does that mean, Frenchman?

Paul

It’s a quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupery, that sounded relevant for me in the context. Basically it says:

What surge of love could ever make my death worthwhile?

One dies for a home — not for objects or walls.

One dies for a cathedral — not for stones.

One dies out of love for Man, if he is the keystone of a community.

One dies only for that which makes life possible.

Lena

You see Dyma, French guy is smarter than you, he understands.

Dmitro

Of course, I can’t quote Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, so I am stupid.

Lena

I do not say you are stupid, I say you are a coward.

Dmitro

Because I don’t want to be smashed by a shell?

Because I don’t want to fight for a country that despise my language?

Because I want to see my child growing up?

Blyat! What do you expect from me, Lena?

Lena

Honestly? I expect nothing anymore.

(She Stands up andwalks away from the table to the couch near Natalia.

As she sits with upset, with no délicatesse, to make some space, she tears up by mistake the blanket, uncovering Natalia’s arm.

Appears on Natalia’s naked arm several cigarette burns.

Happens a few seconds of silence during which ones no one talks.)

Paul

What is this on your arm?

(Natalia covers her shoulder again with the blanket)

Natalia

Cigarette burns.

Paul

Sorry, what? Cigarette burns?

Putain, quoi? What? How?

Dmitro

How? Looks like French guy isn’t so smart after all.

Lena

Tell me, Paul, what do you think happen to women when Russian soldiers take a village?

Paul

I can imagine…

Natalia

I hardly doubt you can imagine, Frenchboy, I hardly doubt…

Paul

Well, I…

(Paul stays silent for a few seconds)

Ok, I think I am ready to touch the piano.

When I don’t know what to say, I like to hide behing music.

Stepan

Голубчик…

(Paul sits at the keyboard and try some keys)

It is actually still quite well tuned. May I play something ?

Natalia

As long as it is not Russian music, of course.

Paul

Maybe I have a French song about the nostalgia of the Land.

Would you like to hear it?

(As no one is answering, Paul is starting to play on piano and sing Je viens du Sud, by Michel Sardou.)

J'ai dans le cœur, quelque part

De la mélancolie,

Mélange de sang barbare

Et de vin d'Italie,

Un mariage à la campagne

Tiré par deux chevaux,

Un sentier dans la montagne

Pour aller puiser l'eau.

J'ai au fond de ma mémoire

Des lumières d'autrefois

Qu'une très vieille femme en noir

Illuminait pour moi,

Une maison toute en pierres

Que la mer a rongée

Au-dessous d'un cimetière

Où les croix sont penchées.

Je viens du Sud

Et par tous les chemins,

J'y reviens...

J'ai dans la voix, certains soirs,

Quelque chose qui crie,

Mélange d'un chant barbare

Et d'un ciel d'Italie,

Des colères monumentales

Que les vents m'ont soufflées,

Des discours interminables

Après le déjeuner.

Je viens du Sud

Et par tous les chemins,

J'y reviens...

I have somewhere in the heart

J'ai quelque part dans le cœur

Some Melancoly

De la mélancolie,

The willing to put in time

L'envie de remettre à l'heure

All the clocks of my life

Les horloges de ma vie,

A small path in the mountain

Un sentier dans la montagne

For when I need water

Quand j'aurai besoin d'eau,

A garden outside

Un jardin dans la campagne

For my good old days

Pour mes jours de repos,

An house made of stone

Une maison toute en pierres

That the sea has rongé

Que la mer a rongée

Above a graveyard

Au-dessus d'un cimetière

Where my father is lying

Où mon père est couché.

I come from South

Je viens du Sud

And by all of the ways

Et par tous les chemins,

I come back

J'y reviens...

And by all of the ways

Et par tous les chemins,

I come back

J'y reviens...

While the last chorus is played, the lights fade out.

Act II

Scene I

(The lights fade up. Paul is sit back on his chair, at the table. Everything is quiet, except the sounds of the war in the distance.)

Paul

I didn’t expect to create such silence after playing a song.

Lena

No, no, It was lovely. The original song has a verse in English like that?

Paul

Well, no, I spent too much time at home trying to translate songs and…

(someone is knocking at the door)

Stepan

Блядь, цьому кінця не буде…

(Stepan stands up and go opening the door)

Scene II

(A young man in russian military uniform is standing at the door. He has blood on his face and his uniform seems damaged.)

Yegor

(in russian) Blyat, enfin quelqu’un qui ouvre. Quelle ville de merde.

(he pushes the door to enter, takes a look at the place, and go to sit between Natalia & Lena while speaking. The rest of the room is quiet of stupefaction.)

(In Russian) Sérieux, qu’est-ce que je fous là ?

Ah cool, des gâteaux.

(he picks up some cookies on the table.)

Natalia

We don’t speak Russian in this house.

Yegor

But English is ok? Blyat! No wonder why we had to invade you.

Stepan

Hey, Мальчик. I gently opened the door for you. But I expect you to be polite and behave accordingly, otherwise, you will have to go back in the cold of the night. And you do not seem equiped for such cold.  
Where is your equipement by the way?

Yegor

I don’t know, blyat. Our positions got badly… obstrelyali?

Stepan

Shelled.

Yegor

Yes, that, shelled. I ran away, I have no idea if someone else have survived.

And after 3 hours walking in the dark, I saw the light of your window and I came.

Natalia.

You see, Did, I told you to not light up candles during the night.

Stepan

What is your name, Паренёк? Do you want some tea?

Yegor

My name is Yegor, sir. Yes, I would love to drink some tea, thank you. Don’t make it too dark, please.

(Stepan is preparing a cup of tea.)

Yegor

Yes, lot of honey, nice!

Natalia

So you are drinking tea with the invader, but you are ignoring me when I am talking to you?

Stepan

Lastivko, it’s a talk we already had. There is no one in the surrounding, there is no need to stay in the dark.

Natalia

Yes, no one, sure… except that the house is now full of strangers.

Stepan

And what, Natalia, and what? You want to let them die outside in the cold?

Natalia

(designing Yegor with her head.)

I wouldn’t mind watch him freeze alive.

Stepan

Anyway, electricity will be back soon, no need to talk about candles anymore.

Natalia

De quoi tu parles, Did ? La russie s’applique à méthodiquement raser chaque quartier de la ville. C’est fini, il n’y aura plus d’électricité. Et quand bien même elle reviendrait, il ne resterait que des cadavres pour en jouir.

Des cadavres, et des soldats russes.

(a few seconds of silence, everybody expects Yegor to react.)

Yegor

Hey, don’t look at me like that !

I am in Ukraine for barely two weeks and I did nothing, except taking bomba… shell in my face.

Natalia

Sure, you did nothing…

(she stands up, wrapped in her blanket. As Yegor is half sit on him, she pulls it hardly.)

Yegor

She seems a bit tense.

Lena

Really? You think so? What would she be tense?

(Lena is standing up from the couch and getting back to the table, near Dmytro)

Yegor

(in russian) Blyat, I miss Ufa….

(Yegor is pulling a pack of cigarettes outside of his pocket and put one in his mouth. He tries to find a lighter in his pockets, but don’t.)

Someone has some fire?

(no answer)

Fire? For the cigarette?

Stepan

You mean a lighter.

We don’t smoke in this house.

Yegor

Nahui! First time in my life I hear такой хуйни.

(he pulls back the cigarette in the pack, and the pack in his pocket)

Yegor

So, Frenchman, it seems you have no choice. You have to tell us more about the girl you are looking for, otherwise we will soon kill each others.

Paul

Well…

Yegor

Oh! Man! The guy is about to talk!

Paul

You really don’t do anything to be likable, don’t you?

Yegor

Don’t lose focus, I want the story

Ok… So three months ago, there was a concert in Toulouse. My city in France.

And the violin solist was a blond girl from Ukraine. Mariya. She was amazing.

After the concert, we talked a bit, there were really a connection between us.

Stepan

gay

Yegor

I would say faggot, but shhh. What next?

Paul

Nothing much actually… I didn’t asked her for her contact.

She told me she was from Mariupol. So at some point, I just took the plane, hoping to find her. She is a violonist, I didn’t think it would be that hard to find her.

And then, war happened…

Lena

Shto? You mean you have crossed all Europe by plane because you have talked ten minutes with a girl?

Paul

No, not ten minutes. It was really intense, we have talked several hours after her show. It was really special.

Lena

Paul, I am sorry, but I will have to agree with the kapsak. You really are a faggot…

Paul

Maybe… But I actually did find her address. She lives not so far from here. But this cyrillic alphabet is quite confusing for me.

And anyway, she probably have already left the city.

Yegor

That’s amazing, man, thank you for the laugh. Best story ever.

Paul

That’s why I didn’t want to talk about it… I expected such reaction.

Lena

Even your name is Ukrainian — but your spine is not.

Dmytro

Actually, on my passport, my name is Dmytri. My father gave me this name.

On croit mourir pour la patrie, on meurt pour des industriels.

quand il sera confronté aux exactions de l'armée russe, le soldat russe rétorquera que l'Ukraine a aussi bombardé son propre peuple et détruit ses propres villes.

Qu’est-ce que vous croyez ? Que vous êtes mieux que nous ?

Vous aussi, vous avez bombardé vos propres enfants.

Vous aussi, vous avez bombardé vos propres villes.

Démocratie

Cela introduit l'idée tragique que le peuple n'est pas toujours du côté du juste, que les opprimés peuvent eux-mêmes choisir l’oppression.

La démocratie est fondée sur la liberté de choix.

Mais que faire quand les choix du peuple sont destructeurs ?

Peut-on accepter que des peuples choisissent leur propre perte ?

Elle donne la liberté même à ceux qui la rejettent.

Yegor

Mais arrêtez, l’Ukraine ça n’a jamais été un pays.

Paul

C’est un peuple, une langue, une terre, une culture, et accessoirement une entité politique. Pour moi, il y a tout d’un pays.

Yegor

Ouais, comme l’Ingouchie ou le tatarstan, ça n’en fait pas des pays pour autant.

Stepan

The old soviet dream… all the countries from Rekjavik to Vladivostok under the collectivist idealism of Moscow.

It’s funny that you, the young generation, is still dreaming about that.

Tell me young boy, amongst all the kids that died in your battalion, how much were from Moscow or Saint-Petersburg?

Yegor

In Moscow they have enough money, they don’t need to they don’t need to… пойти в армию..

Stepan

To join the army.

Yegor

Yes, that.

Stepan

Oh, so here is the goal of this war: more lands under Russian rules, so Moscow can have Azovstal and the coal mines under its control.

Yegor

You are wrong, that’s not that! We fight to free the people of Ukraine from his nazi government.

Stepan

Haha haha. The famous nazi government. What a funny joke. Do you even know what Nazi means or are you just a parrott?

Come on, be serious, boy.

(he is standing up and approach the samover)

Anywone who wants more tea?

Yegor

You are bombing your own people for almost 10 years! Don’t pretend it’s not happening. I saw the picture of Donetsk, of Luhansk. I saw the people lying dead in the streets. I saw…

Lena

Parce que vous êtes venus ! Parce que vous avez semé le poison dans nos têtes !

Dmytro (whispering)

They came because we kind of called them…

Lena

Des putains de Russes qu’on aurait du déporter depuis bien longtemps. Chaque Moskal qui foule le sol ukrainien est une souillure.

Dmytro

Lena, tu sais que mon père est Russe…

Lena

c’est probablement de là que viens ton gène du lâche.

(Dmitro se lève de la table et va s’asseoir sur le canapé, à côté du russe)

Yegor

et vous rêvez que ce foutoir reste un pays indépendant ? Mais ça n’arrivera pas. Dans 3 semaines Kiev capitulera, sa junte sera emprisonnée et les choses rentreront dans l’ordre. Vous n’en avez pas marre de voir votre ville rasée pour protéger des gens qui ne l’ont jamais vue ?

Natalia

Pisdec kapsak…. You understand nothing. We don’t fight for Kyiv. We fight for the right to live free on our land. We fight so we can keep our culture, our language, we fight so our children do not have to live in such poverty that they have to risk their life for some money, like you do. But after so much generations of submission to the Kremlin, your atrophied brain is not able to understand that anymore. All you can do is dying for Moscow.

yegore

And you dying for Kiev.

Lena

For Kiyv. And we don’t fight for Kyiv. We fight to survive, we fight for freedom. But as she said, you can’t understand that.

Dmytro

Fighting, fighting… That’s easy to say when you don’t have to hold a weapon on the frontline

Lena

I can’t believe my kid will be raised by a coward.

Dmytro

but at least he would be raised by a man alive….

Lena

Tss, you dare call this a man alive.

Paul

Maybe, we should calm down a bit, it’s not the time for…

Dmytro

And you, the Frenchman, what are you doing here? You certainely are not here to take weapons to defend Ukraine, right ?

Paul

I arrived there 2 days before the invasion started, I…

Lena

I see, just in time to exploit victims of the war, right ?

Paul

What? No, not at all.

Lena

what are you doing there, then?

Paul

hm, tourism…

Dmytro

I see. The whole world is announcing Russian invasion, so you think it’s the perfect time to visit Ukraine. Lena, tell me, what do you think a foreign man would do in Ukraine when he says tourism?

Lena

My poor guy, if you wanted girls, you should have come to Kyiv, Mariupol is not a place for you.

Paul

Hey! Stop that! I am not here to pay some random girls.

Natalia

Sure, sure my friend. They will see your French passport and they will fall for you. I see you have a very positive view of Ukrainian girls. But probably you should have gone to Moscow, the capital of whores, it would have worked better for you.

Paul

I don’t understand how the conversation went this way. I am not here for that.

Yegor

So tell us, man, what are you doing there, then? Now I am curious.

Paul

I… I can’t tell.

Dmytro

I see. You can’t tell, but it’s not related to girls, right?

Paul

It’s… it’s complicated.

Stepan

There is no shame in loving Ukrainian girls young boy. But are you sure you are strong enough to handle them?

Paul

The one I want is different.

Lena

Oh! So little Frenchman got his heart stole by a sweet Ukrainian girl? She will eat you alive my friend. Run away from the bombs, run away from the girls, stay eating your baguettes in your little country, it will be better for everybody.

Paul

I don’t want to talk about this anymore.

Olena

you are right, let’s talk about my coward husband instead.

Paul

Putain… Maybe I am indeed not ready to handle an Ukrainian women….

I should have stay in Ufa. There is not money, but at least people there is not annoying like you…

Paul

I try to say that as respectfully as I can, but I think I can say everybody in this house would agree that you should have stay in Ufa, yes.

Yegor

Tss… And you, you shouldn’t have stayed in France? Eating лягушки and croissants?

Stepan

Frogs, eating frogs.

Yegor

Grandpa doesn’t like we mess up with language.

Stepan

It is interesting to know that 10 years ago, the seeds of this conflict were rooted into language.

Yegor

Ну и что? When you speak the dominant language, you don’t need to learn the useless ones, grandpa.

И что? You are so proud to speak 2 languages everybody should do the same?

Natalia

You should probably shut up, moskal. He speaks 6 languages fluently.

Stepan

When you don’t speak the same language as your neighbour, an invisible border appears. We see this in Belgium

Stepan

On the other hand, if we haven’t fought back and just accepted our fate like Belarus did, there wouldn’t be such war….

Natalia

Did! How can you say such thing!

Lena

Pizdec, it seems you are not alone, Dyma.

What am I doing here anyway?

She stands up, takes the way to the door, Dmytro tend un bras dans le vide pour essayer de la retenir, en vain.

Alors qu’elle ouvre la porte, on entend la lourde détonation d’une bombe. Elle crie et ferme la porte, et Dmytro la prend dans ses bras.

Now I’m afraid it will last for several years…

Chechenya, 10 years, Afghanistan 10 years, Ukraine…

le vieillard dit que si on avait accepté la soumission à la Russie, il n'y aura pas eu cette guerre. La femme enceinte est furieuse et veut quitter la maison, mais à ce moment là une bombe tombe à proximité, elle hurle de terreur finalement ne sort pas

Lena

What am I doing here anyway?

Je stocke quelques bouteilles de gaz pour une situation telle que celle-ci.

Je n’ai en revanche plus beaucoup de bois ni de charbon. Suffisamment pour faire tourner le samovar, mais probablement pas pour alimenter la cheminée plus de quelques semaines.

Vous avez toujours l’électricité dans la cuisine ?

Non, et le gaz de ville lui non plus ne fonctionne plus, ce qui n’est pas surprenant.

Il faut croire que 40 années sous le joug soviétique m’ont inculqué quelques éléments de survie.

oh, mais donc il ya du feu dans la cuisine ? Cool

everybody

Stay sit !

Natalia se propose d'aller faire la cuisine car les gens doivent avoir faim. Paul comment à parler de la cuisine française tandis que le rideau se ferme.

Scene IV

Natalia est dans la cuisine, on la voit préparer un bortsch. Elle coupe la viande avec un grand couteau de cuisine qui reflète la lumière. Une fois qu'elle a fini, elle prend le temps de l'aiguiser, de façon presque obsessionnelle, tandis qu'elle laisse mijoter le bortsch.

Scene V

Natalia

When you start talking about food, Frenchman, you never stop, do you ?

Paul

Oh, you haven’t been away for so long

Lena

Well, yes, she did…

Dmytro

She did…

Yegor

Blyat man, I have my head hurting because of your talk now.

Stepan

This was a very interesting discussion, Paul. Well… A very interesting monologue.

alors que Paul parle encore de nourriture, Natalia revient avec de la nourriture, ainsi que le couteau de cuisine posé sur le plateau. Elle donne à chacun un bol de bortsch, l'air de rien, en faisant le tour de la pièce, aimable et souriante.

Quand elle arrive face au soldat russe, elle lui demande

Natalia

vous aussi, vous voulez un bol ? Vous n'avez pas encore suffisamment pris à ce pays ?

Mais au lieu du bol, elle prend le couteau

Vous n'en avez pas encore assez fait ?

Tout le monde se tait face à l'événement

Natalia

Imaginez la situation inverse, si j'étais seule au milieu de 5 soldats russes, que se passerait-il à votre avis ?

Paul

oui, je peux imaginer la situation...

Natalia

eh bien imagine 10 fois pire. Tu m'entends ? Imagine 10 fois pire que ce que ton esprit de bourgeois parisien peut concevoir, et tu auras une idée des choses que j'ai pu vivre

Natalia reste debout, le couteau en main, face à Yegor.

Silence absolu — tous sont figés.

Stepan s’approche lentement.

Il ne parle pas d’abord.

Il tend simplement ses deux mains ouvertes, doucement, en signe d’accueil, de confiance nue.

Natalia abandonne son couteau pour quelques secondes. Elle le pose sur la table. Réfléchis à ce qu'elle allait commettre. C'est alors que le soldat russe sort une cigarette de la poche de sa veste et commence à l'allumer. Blyat, j’ai bien cru que j’allais y passer.

Blyat, c’est vrai, personne n’a de feu.

Natalia, qui a été torturée avec des brûlures de cigarettes perd le contrôle, reprend le couteau et le plante dans la gorge du Russe.

Act III

Recouvrir le cadavre — prière

Moment d'effondrement silencieux.

Très lent, solennel.

Dénouement post mort du soldat russe.

Dmytro déclare qu'on ne peut pas laisser l'homme comme ça. Il demande à Paul de l'aider. à le transporter. Pendant ce temps, Olena attrape un drap qui trainait, elle le déplie et l'étend sur le corps du soldat.

Pendant ce temps, Stepan retire le couteau des mains de Natalia, qui est agenouillée au sol, et l'emmène s'asseoir sur le canapé.

Discussions sur la fuite

Paul, Dmitry tentent de convaincre Lena.

Luttes silencieuses.

Reprise nerveuse.

Paul déclare : le jour se lève et les bombardements sont de plus disparates. On ne peut plus rester ici, je pense qu'il est temps de partir.

Olena demande : partir où ?

Paul répond : Loin des bombes. Loin de... (posant les yeux sur le cadavre) loin de tout ça...

Olena répond : c'est hors de question, non, je.

Dmytro intervient en russe : le Français a raison, Olena, on ne peut pas rester ici. (il attrappe le bras de sa compagne)

Olena dégage son bras : Non ! jamais, je....

Dmytro la serre contre lui, lui murmure des mots en russe, puis regarde Paul "French guy, open the door" Paul ouvre la porte, Dmytro continue de parler en russe et dirige Olena vers la sortie.

Celle-ci résiste, mais Dmytro reste inflexible et la gifle. Il lui dit en russe ça suffit maintenant. On part.

Stepan regarde Natalia qui ne bouge pas. Il lui dit en Ukrainien "Va, ma fille, va, tu as la vie devant toi. Tu n’es pas encore morte" Tu te penses morte, mais tu ne l’es pas. Paul intervient "tu ne peux pas rester ici. Tôt ou tard l'armée va arriver et.... Viens avec nous, il n'y a pas d'autre solution."

Stepan force Natalia à se lever et la dirige vers la porte.

Il ne reste plus que Paul et Stepan pour le dialogue final

J’ai été une femme à Donetsk.

J’ai été une femme enceinte à Donetsk en réalité.

Tu veux savoir ce qui arrive à une femme, enceinte ou pas d’ailleurs, qui rencontre un peloton de soldats russes ?

C’est ça que tu veux, finir comme moi ?

Je ne viendrai que si tu viens avec nous.

Did ?

Stepan hoche la tête négativement…

Fuite progressive

Lena, Dmitry, Natalia, Paul partent.

Stepan reste seul.

Paul (hésitant, presque murmurant) :

Viens avec nous... il n'y a plus rien ici.

Stepan (très calme, un léger sourire triste) :

Tout est encore ici.

Le piano...

les ombres...

et moi.

Ça m’a fait plaisir d’entendre ce piano sonner une dernière fois… Pour toi ce n’était peut e^tre qu’un moyen de détendre l’atmosphère, mais pour moi, c’était quelque chose…

Paul (regardant autour de lui, désespéré) :

C’est une tombe."

Stepan (regardant fixement Paul) :

Mieux vaut mourir chez soi que vivre en étranger."

Paul (baisse les yeux, ne trouve pas de réponse) :

(un simple murmure)

Adieu, monsieur."

Stepan (toujours calme) :

I am too old to run away, my friend.

Don’t worry, I have some kvas hidden in the kitchen.

Dernière image

Paul hésite un instant,

puis sort lentement par la porte ouverte,

sans se retourner.

Mort du vieillard

Stepan reste seul,

Il sort une bouteille de Kvas de sous le canapé, s’assoit sur la chaise de la table

La lumière s’assombrit

Le bruit d’un bombardement sourd,

Après le bruit des bombes et le piano qui s'effondre.

Le fracas d’un piano s’effondrant dans l’obscurité,

Bref cri d’agonie de Stepan

Rideau.

Fin de l'acte III : la ville est détruite. La mémoire est tout ce qui reste.

Épilogue

Monologue final — chanson

voix off de fin "Empruntant le corridor humanitaire, j'ai pu fuir Marioupol, rejoindre Kyiv et finalement rentrer en France. J'ai appris quelques semaines plus tard que Maria était morte, à quelques centaines de mètres à peine de cette maison où j'ai pu trouver refuge. Si j’avais marché quelques centaines de mètres de plus, j'aurais pu mourir dans ses bras.

Or not…

Si j’avais marché quelques centaines de mètres, j'aurais pu affronter un regard d'incompréhension et me faire congédier.

Quelle importance ? Aujourd'hui c'est à peine si je me souviens de son visage, c'est à peine si j'entends encore la mélodie se son violon.

War wipes away everything, even memories…

La guerre efface tout, jusqu'aux souvenirs..."

I left Mariupol through a humanitarian corridor.

I made it to Kyiv, then back to France.

A few weeks later, I learned that Maria had died.

Just a few hundred meters from that house where I found shelter.

A few hundred meters...

and I might have died in her arms.

Or perhaps been sent away —

silently, without even a word.

But what does it matter now?

I can barely remember her face.

The melody of her violin fades a little more each day.

War takes everything.

Even memory.

Paul revient sur scène, seul, une guitare à la main.

Il s’assied sur un tabouret haut. Très peu de lumière.

Il commence à chanter le couplet en français, et lentement les acteurs se rangent derrière lui

Ils se mettent à chanter en chœur sur le refrain.

Океан Ельзи — Обійми

Quand viendra le matin

(Коли настане день,)

La guerre prendra fin

(Закінчиться війна,)

Là, je me suis perdu

(Там загубив себе,)

Au fond, je suis descendu

(Побачив аж до дна.)

Hold me closer, hold me tighter, hold me now

(Обійми мене, обійми мене, обійми)

So tenderly, don’t let me go

(Так лагідно і не пускай.)

Hold me closer, hold me tighter, hold me now

(Обійми мене, обійми мене, обійми)

Tvoia vesna pryide nekhai.

(Твоя весна прийде нехай.)

I ot moia dusha

(І от моя душа)

Skladaie zbroiu vnyz,

(Складає зброю вниз,)

Nevzhe taky vona

(Невже таки вона)

Tak khoche teplykh sliz?

(Так хоче теплих сліз?)

Conflit : Regrette-t-il ou méprise-t-il ce monde disparu ?

Tout au long de la pièce, il traite l'héroïsme et l'idéalisme avec mépris.

Il traite l'héroïsme, la foi, la beauté, l’idéal avec amertume, cynisme, mépris.

Son mépris de l'idéal tout au long de la pièce n'était pas pur cynisme : c'était un masque de douleur et de pudeur.

Le soldat russe : catalyseur dramatique : par sa simple présence, il force chacun à révéler sa vraie nature.

Gogol était un mystique tourmenté : il croyait en Dieu, mais voyait la faiblesse humaine partout.

Il était fasciné par la lutte entre le salut de l'âme et la bassesse terrestre.

Chevtchenko célèbre l'Ukraine comme une mère sacrée, indissociable de l'âme humaine.

la terre n'est pas une propriété : c'est la mémoire du peuple, le sang des ancêtres, le lieu du salut.

Même quand tout est détruit — villes, maisons, familles — la terre reste vivante.

il existe souvent un motif discret — un objet, une idée, un geste, une parole — qui apparaît plusieurs fois, de manière presque anodine, et qui tisse un lien souterrain entre les différents moments de l’œuvre.

Le motif du "visage oublié"

Le motif de "la guerre qui efface"

Доню, бережи себе.

Ma fille, prends soin de toi.

Me I will go to the kitchen make some food for our guests. I will be better anywhere than in this room

(she is walking toward the kitchen door, côté cour)

Stepan

There are potatoes under the sink, Ladivko.

Natalia

I know what’s in the kitchen, Did, I know what’s in the kitchen.