

103RD DALMATIAN

Written by

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CHYRON: RUSSIA, 1993

Dark autumn morning. City outskirts, with grey high-rises.

INT. ASYA'S FLAT, LIVING ROOM - MORNING

A small, tatty room. Empty bookshelves, tiny black and white TV on a stool, shabby desk.

On the desk there is a violin in an open case, and a silver framed family photo of a teenage girl, holding a Dalmatian puppy, plus her happy parents.

On a sofa under a threadbare blanket sleeps a fully dressed ASYA (16), pale, malnourished girl, with tousled golden hair. She is hugging tightly a Dalmatian. The alarm BUZZES.

Half awake, Asya switches it off, sits up, rubs her hands. Breathes on them, a cloud of her breathe visible in the cold room. She gently pats the sleeping dog.

ASYA  
Come on, Lovely, time to work.

INT. ASYA'S FLAT, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

ASYA opens a fridge. It's empty, except for half a bottle of milk. Asya shares it equally between her glass and the dog's bowl.

CLICKING with his paws against the parquet, Lovely strides into the kitchen.

ASYA  
Come on, sleepy head.

She passes him half a slice of bread; the dog eats greedily. Asya eats her half slowly, enjoying every bite. Lovely BARKS repeatedly.

ASYA (CONT'D)  
OK, I am ready.

She puts a collar on him, takes her violin, pulls on an ugly heavy coat, turns to the dog.

ASYA (CONT'D)  
Let's have another great day, shall we?

The dog WOOFs.

EXT. STREET MARKET, RUSSIA, LATE AUTUMN - MORNING

Morning, still dark. The clock at the street market entrance shows 9.20.

BOSS (Chechen, 66), a local racketeer, fat and ugly, rambles along the stalls, followed by his three hoodlums.

Unhurriedly, he passes the rows of destitute vendors, their wares displayed on stalls, wooden boxes or laid on the ground: second hand human rubbish as well as home produce.

Shouting, swearing, spitting, arguing is suddenly overpowered by the SOUNDS OF PROKOFIEV'S VIOLIN CONCERTO, well played.

BOSS  
What the fuck?!

His bodyguards shake their heads. Boss grabs an apple from a stall; munching loudly, he makes his way towards music. Finally he reaches Asya, tucked between a book seller and a second hand clothes trader.

Asya plays her violin. Lovely is curled up at her feet on an old woolen blanket. An open violin case with a few coins in it sits before her on a plastic sheet on the muddy pavement.

Cardboard sign says PLEASE HELP AN ORPHAN. When Boss approaches, the Dalmatian lifts his head. The girl continues to play, staring into the music.

One of the hoodlums jumps up to her; strikes the bow down. Startled, Asya looks up at Boss.

BOSS (CONT'D)  
What do you think you are doing?

ASYA  
I'm playing.

BOSS  
Did you pay the rent?

ASYA  
What rent?

BOSS  
When you play in a theatre do you pay for the space?

ASYA  
(Hesitantly)  
Yes.

BOSS  
So here you pay me. Thousand  
roubles.

ASYA  
Thousand roubles?!

Boss points at the dog. One of his hoodlum grins showing off rotten teeth, grabs the dog's leash, jerks it up.

ASYA (CONT'D)  
No, please!

She rushes to Lovely, grabs the leash, but the hoodlum gets a knife out, brings it to her neck. She releases the leash.

ASYA (CONT'D)  
I'll pay. Just don't hurt him.

The hoodlum pulls the Dalmatian; the dog snarls, resists. Asya kneels to the dog. Fighting back tears, she caresses Lovely's head.

ASYA (CONT'D)  
It's OK old boy. Go. I'll fetch you  
later.

Lovely looks at Asya with his beautiful sad eyes, obeys. The hoodlum leads it away.

BOSS  
Today at six. One thousand.

Boss and his retinue retreat. A prematurely aged, ample-bodied BLONDE (35), at the second hand clothes stall, smirks.

BLONDE  
Say good-bye to your dog.

She reaches for an old fur dog hat, whistling. She pulls it on her fake blonde curls. Horrified, Asya squeezes her violin hard.

A scraggy INTELLECTUAL (45) selling books, blows his nose into a dirty handkerchief.

INTELLECTUAL  
Dostoevsky foresaw it all.

On a stall opposite, a man, blind in one eye, with a deep scar across his face rearrange the fish tackle Asya's sight glides over his sign MAGGOTS FOR EVERYONE'S TASTE.

Asya brings violin to her chin, raises the bow...

CUT TO:

The clock shows 12.00. Asya plays. There are a few more coins and a number of crumbled small bills in her violin case. The day is now bright and crispy, a few shoppers stroll between the rows.

CUT TO:

The clock shows 15.20. A bit more coins and notes in the case. Asya plays on. The sky gets grey again, a drizzles scares off most of the shoppers.

CUT TO:

The clock shows 16.40, its face brightly lit in the twilights. The market is practically deserted.

OS

Hot Pies! Tasty pies!

A hawker with a huge plastic bag pushes by, stopping now and then to hand out pies and collect money. Blonde buys ten pies, Intellectual 3.

ASYA

How much?

PIE SELLER

Meat pies 10 roubles, cabbage pies  
5 roubles, potato pies 3 roubles.

ASYA

No, thanks.

The seller shrugs her shoulders in disdain. Asya slowly sips the water from her bottle.

BLONDE

(Chewing loudly, with an  
open mouth)

I watched a cartoon once, about a  
woman who made a dog coat. Same  
kind of dog as yours.

Asya pretends to ignore her.

BLONDE (CONT'D)

Your dog is probably dead by now.

INTELLECTUAL

Will you kindly leave her alone,  
please.

Blonde shrugs. Asya finishes her pie, picks up the violin, starts playing Schumann's violin concerto.

Listening to the gorgeous music, the intellectual wipes off tears under his glasses. The Blonde switches on a small radio, creating cacophony.

A shrieking cry muffles all sounds.

OS

My purse! He stole my purse!

At a distance Asya catches a glimpse of commotion. A small gypsy boy (7) runs towards her, chased by a large woman (40s). Somebody trips him, the boy falls. The woman catches up, grabs the boy by his curly black hair.

WOMAN

Give me my purse back, you little bastard.

She repeatedly punches him across the face, the boy's nose bleeds. Schumann's violin sonata got mixed with boy's wailing.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(Punching)

Give! Me! My! Purse Back!

Asya stops playing. She runs. She runs along the old clocks, broken dolls and shriveled potatoes. She reaches the police station, rushes to a young handsome policeman (21) at the door.

ASYA

Please, help. She will kill him.

Asya grabs the lieutenant's hand. He looks her up and down.

POLICEMAN

You're the violin beggar, aren't you?

She pulls him forcefully by the hand.

ASYA

Please, come with me.

Soon they arrive at the scene. The woman holds the bleeding boy tightly, resting her arm.

POLICEMAN

What's going on here?

WOMAN

The little shit stole my purse.

BOY

I stole nothing. Look.

He shows off his pockets.

WOMAN

He threw it away as evidence. Two  
hundred roubles I had.

The policeman throws a quick glance at Asya, grabs the boy  
out of the woman's hands.

POLICEMAN

Come with me.

WOMAN

No, I'm not letting him go before  
he pays me back.

Policeman ignores her, takes away the boy.

Asya resumes playing.

CUT TO:

The clock shows 17.30; it's dark again. Looking exhausted  
Asya carefully counts the money, then packs her violin.

CUT TO:

Asya approaches a black Land Cruiser, its doors are open.  
Boss is inside it, on the back seat. Asya passes the money to  
one of the three hoodlums standing before the jeep.

BOSS

You are two hundred and fifty  
roubles short.

ASYA

I'll bring you the rest tomorrow.  
Please give me my dog back.

BOSS

Nope.

ASYA

Please I beg you, I have no more.

BOSS

You can give me a blow job.

Hoodlums smirk. Asya gets into the jeep.

CUT TO:

Asya is pushed out of the car forcefully, she falls into the mud. She wipes her lips.

ASYA

Where is my dog?

BOSS

You're still 50 roubles short. You have fifteen minutes left. Run!

Asya darts back through the market; vendors pack up, rubbish flows by. She rushes to BLONDE.

ASYA

Please, give my 50 roubles. I'll repay you double tomorrow.

BLONDE

Anyone can play violin. Go get yourself a real job.

She turns her back to Asya. Asya hurries to the Intellectual.

ASYA

Give me 50 roubles. Please. It's not a lot. I'll pay you back.

INTELLECTUAL

It reminds me a Dostoevsky scene...

ASYA

(Screams)

PLEASE!

INTELLECTUAL

I haven't sold a single book today. I have nothing, sorry.

Asya turns to the scarred man. He points at her violin.

ASYA

You want it?! Here.

She passes him the violin. He takes it and he places a grenade on the counter. Silently, he imitates yanking off the pull ring with his index finger.

ASYA (CONT'D)

I need 50 roubles. Only 50.



The scarred man gazes at her silently; Asya eyes well up. She takes the grenade, aimlessly puts it in her pocket.

Somebody taps her on the shoulder. She turns sharply. A gypsy boy throws a 50 rouble note at her, runs away.

Asya picks up the money, rushes back to the jeep.

BOSS

You're 6 minutes late. But I'm a kind man.

He throws a leash with a collar at her feet. Then points at the EAT MEAT restaurant.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Hurry, it might be still alive.

Asya picks up the leash, rushes up the entrance; the door man pushes her off. Asya falls face down in the icy slash.

LOUD LAUGHTER. Boss approaches the restaurant.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Back entrance, you piece of shit.

He disappears inside.

Asya races to the backyard. There by the garbage bins, still alive, lies her skinned Dalmatian, raw bleeding mess, eyes full of mad pain.

Asya stares in shock at her dying dog.

She turns and stumbles out of the yard, and along the restaurant. In its lit windows Boss is drinking vodka with his cronies.

She continue striding along the windows, gazing at Boss. He notices her, frowns, signals to his guards. Next moment Asya breaks the glass with her fist, throws the grenade inside...