ON THE OTHER SIDE

Artem CHEKH • Beata KURKUL
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Based on the interview with Olena Maksymenko

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Reintegrating ex-combatants into society is almost always a challenge. It is difficult for these people, their families and society in general. Andriy is one of many who, after returning from the active combat zone in Eastern Ukraine, has to decide how to live on. If he goes right, he breaks his sword. If he goes left, he loses himself. If he goes straight, he finds new friends. A lot of children friends...

Comics series

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Our brother is dying…

He is bleeding from his carotid artery! And his hip! Sokyra, apply a tourniquet to his leg!

Our brother is dying.
Dad, I guess it's time to say good-bye. I may not leave here...

Meet you at the premiere!

Meet you on the other side!

Andriy, the three hundredth!

My leg!
Is there a leg left? You'd better shoot me if there is no leg left.

You have your leg!

Dad, I guess it's time to say good-bye. I may not leave here...
THAT'S ENOUGH! They already gave me my shots! Can I go back now?

No, you can't! Vania, call Piluha to get the machine ready.

DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY SERIOUS PATIENTS WE HAVE? You need to wait, soldier.

I'm just bored here. Can I go?

You are not going too far?

If hell is real, then it's here.

Kostia, hell is only in your head.

That's enough! They already gave me my shots! Can I go back now?

No, you can't! Vania, call Piluha to get the machine ready.

You are not going too far?
What a tough case! A real lego constructor...

What about you?

Meet you on the other side!

Just teasing. Tomorrow you'll leave for Kyiv for surgery.

Hey, transformer! Have you assembled yourself?

What a tough case! A real lego constructor.
I also went cycling…

I used to be a mountain hiker.

WELL… YOU WON’T BE HIKEING TOO FAR ON CRUTCHES.

Let’s talk about it.

Rehabilitation is a slow process. Were you into sports before?

No one can answer that, Andriy. You’ll walk with crutches.

WELL, YOU WON’T BE HIKEING TOO FAR ON CRUTCHES.

I USED TO BE A MOUNTAIN HIKER.

I also went cycling.

Let’s talk about it.
Hey, mate, I'm thinking about visiting all my friends on my bicycle. I can start with you, Sokyra. Ok, you'll see me soon.

Oh no, mate! She left, Andriy, and took the kids with her. And she's right. Why would she live with a loser?

Don't worry about me. I'll make it. I'm just drinking out of boredom, but I can stop.

How can I help you?
No, I'll never talk to a psychologist! Won't you stay?

Hrynia, mate, I know a guy, he is a great psychologist. Maybe you can try talking to him?

Sorry, I need to carry on with my journey!

Maybe you need to control yourself, mate? They're scared of you.

I just lose it sometimes when I'm overwhelmed. It gets scary, and then they get scared, but I feel so guilty when I wake up the next day. But let me show you something.

Check this out!

Isn't it too much? What if your kid finds it?

Hrynia, mate, I know a guy. He is a great psychologist. Maybe you can try talking to him?

I'll stop drinking. I must or I'll get weird.

No, I'll never talk to a psychologist! Won't you stay?

Hrynia!

He won't. He never comes here.
And all around the airport…

Oh, he can. He’s travelled all around the world.

I want to show the film about the airport there. The film about us. About you and Sokyra… and we can ride bikes from Seattle to Los Angeles. I’ll show you America! I’ll show you the world!

Hmm?

Director! I’ll visit you soon. I reckon I’ll be at your place in two days.

I was just about to call you. Do you fancy a small trip across America?

I’ll show you America. I’ll show you the world!

Oh, he can. He’s travelled all around the world.

And all around the airport…
Have a good time and take care. It's undamaged, that's what matters.

Isn't it a nice control tower, director? It's undamaged, that's what matters.

I have another feeling, like I forgot something important. Doesn't it feel like deja vu?

SOMETHING EXTREMELY IMPORTANT.

Well, their coffee sucks.

Departures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Flight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:15</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>LO 0367</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:45</td>
<td>Baku</td>
<td>PS 0602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:50</td>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
<td>PS 0518</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Have a good time and take care.
Besides, Andriy has a dream…

And, of course, there would be no film without Andriy, who now has a titanium plate in his leg.

I know what important thing that I forgot. My bicycle. Just imagine if I could ride right across America.

The world is your oyster. All your dreams and wishes are in your hands! You deserve it.

I deserve it.

And, of course, there would be no film without Andriy, who now has a titanium plate in his leg.

I deserve it.

Ok, the screening is soon. And it’ll take us at least an hour to walk to East Village.

Would you have believed, then, sitting in a flooded dug-out, that you would see these views in a year?

...Besides, Andriy has a dream.
It's amazing!

Do you remember a guy with a belly yesterday at the screening?

Now you have money for a bicycle and a trip!

By the way, I wanted to tell you that dreams sometimes come true.

Do you remember a guy with a belly yesterday at the screening?

It was Stanley Karpenko. He was of a great help to our front line...

Many people say that the armed conflict has changed them, but my changes are just physical.

It's all in your head.

Many people say that the armed conflict has changed them, but my changes are just physical.

It's amazing!
We are already here! Meet you on the other side!

Sir! It’s going to be really hard. Almost impossible.

It’s not usual for me to give such discounts, but I admire your resolve, sir! This stallion can carry any load! It has been through a lot, but it is none the worse for it. A new bike like this costs the same as an average family car.

So, you’re going to Florida first?

Washington, Atlanta, Orlando...

Take care, mate!

Meet you on the other side!

We are already here!
At least his kid wasn't around. Their neighbours said he had already threatened to blow himself up. It's so awful!

Welcome to Ukraine. Five months.

How long were you in the USA?

What have you done, mate?
Honest? So you think blowing yourself up with a grenade and leaving your wife and son traumatised for life is a sign of dignity? How can you even say that?

Yes, we all have a choice. At least Hrynia was honest. He never lost his dignity.

Everybody has a choice. You also have it, Sokyra. Just think about it.

He had no other choice. I feel so sorry for his family.
I can see your leg is coming along just fine!

We cycled all the way from Ivano-Frankivsk. But I guess it’s not a lot for you. By the way, meet my wife Yarka. Well… soon-to-be wife. But as far as I know, you’ve already met each other.

I don’t know.

Thank you, mate. I’ll think it over.

Well, why not?

Andriy!

I know that we are not close friends, but your service is over just like mine. So why don’t we meet under more pleasant circumstances?
HEY, COME ALONG WITH US TO IVANO-FRANKIVSK. I WANT YOU TO MEET SOMEONE! I AM SURE THAT'S WHAT YOU NEED!

I haven't thought about it. I just live my life. But there are some things that inspire me. Some people. They do such things... they give meaning to life.

IT DIDN'T CHANGE ME ONE BIT. ASK ANYONE, AND THEY'LL TELL YOU THAT I'M STILL THE SAME.

EVERYBODY SAYS, "OH NO, I'M THE SAME." BUT WHEN YOU DIG DEEPER, YOU SEE THE DARKNESS BeneATH.

YARKA AND I ARE GETTING MARRIED AFTER WE GET Back HOME. WHAT ABOUT YOU? HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT A FAMILY?

EVERYONE ASKS ME ABOUT A FAMILY ALL THE TIME. BUT I AM USED TO JUST TAKING CARE OF MYSELF.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN A LONER? OR DID THE ARMED CONFLICT CHANGE YOU?

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EVERYBODY SAYS, "OH NO, I'M THE SAME." BUT WHEN YOU DIG DEEPER, YOU SEE THE DARKNESS BeneATH.

OH, THE MOUNTAINS, MY MOUNTAINS!

DO YOU HAVE A DREAM, ANDRIY?

I haveN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT. I JUST LIVE MY LIFE. BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT INSPIRE ME.

WHAT ABOUT THEM?

SOME PEOPLE. THEY DO SUCH THINGS. THEY GIVE MEANING TO LIFE.

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DO YOU HAVE A DREAM, ANDRIY?

I haveN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT. I JUST LIVE MY LIFE. BUT THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT INSPIRE ME.

WHAT ABOUT THEM?
Hi! I've read about you. You've travelled across America on a bike! So, let's grab a bite somewhere?

Andriy, meet Masha and Myshko. Myshko was in aerial reconnaissance, but as you can see he acts on the stage now.

Hi! I am Andriy.

Good mistress accost, I desire better acquaintance.

My name is Mary, sir.*

Hi! I've read about you. You've travelled across America on a bike! So, let's grab a bite somewhere?

*Twelfth Night by William Shakespeare, Act I Scene 3
I must admit, one cannot help feeling inspired by your example, but just don’t see myself on the stage. Just want to find my thing, something I’ll really be keen on…

Six thousand. That’s why three hundred sounds like just a quick breath.

There’s no need to understand. All you need is to feel. And, above all, it’s up to the actors to feel. Hey, maybe you fancy trying out and acting on the stage?

Andriy likes to travel. He decided to ride his bike all the way home. It’s three hundred miles. What mileage did you cover in the USA?

There is no need to understand. All we need is up to the actors to feel. I mean, almost nothing. I confess, I was amazed. Those amateur actors on the stage… and they spoke English. To be honest, I understood almost nothing.

In one year we’ve managed to stage Shakespeare in Early Modern English. Half of our actors have PTSD, but the play is excellent therapy! It really helps them, I mean us. And, most importantly, it really helps them on the other side through the culture and continuous occupational activities.
Hey, Sokrya, I have a question for you. Would you like to work for the good of yourself and others? But you will need to quit drinking...
WELL, IF WE NEED THEM, I CAN HELP. I'M HANGING IN THERE. AT LEAST, YOU GOT ME OUT INTO THE FRESH AIR.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S SUCH A GOOD IDEA. WE HAVE BEEN HERE FOR MORE THAN A WEEK, BUT WE HAVE DONE ALMOST NOTHING TO THIS SMALL HOUSE. MAYBE, IT'S A MISTAKE. MAYBE IT'S JUST UTOPIAN RUBBISH.

BUT YOU STOPPED DRINKING, THAT'S THE MAIN THING.

I'M HANGING IN THERE.

WE NEED PEOPLE. A LOT OF PEOPLE.

AT LEAST, YOU GOT ME OUT INTO THE FRESH AIR.

WELL, IF WE NEED THEM, I CAN HELP.
Oh, you really need that! Trust me!

I have to finish off some routine stuff here, but I hope I’ll be back soon. Don’t do anything stupid.

I’m making calls today. You said we need people.

I don’t quite understand what I should sign, and, most importantly, why I need to do that.

I have all the documents. And the last signature I need is yours.

I quit, mate. At least I’m hanging in there. It’s not for me. It’s for Andriy. And if you fell excited about the idea, be our guest.

All the work we do here is on a voluntary basis. There is enough work for everybody, and we’re all friends here. So, I’m waiting for you.

I trust you, mate.

I have to finish off some routine stuff here, but I hope I’ll be back soon. Don’t do anything stupid.

Oh, you really need that! Trust me!

Bureaucrats.
SOKYRA, NOT AGAIN! YOU PROMISED!

The papers are ok. These Prypiat ruins are here only for now, but soon we just need to find some more people and financing.

Hey, did you ask for help?

Hey, did you ask for help?

Huh, it’s fantastic!
No, just asking...

you need to know about people you work with.

Olena? She worked as a volunteer with us.

She was really enthusiastic about this camp idea.

Why do you ask? Did you like her?

This psychologist... where is she from?

That's why they call me Sokyra!!!

Do you not need psychologists in your camp?

Are you a psychologist?

This psychologist... where is she from?

Olena? She worked as a volunteer with us. She was really enthusiastic about this camp idea. Why do you ask? Did you like her?

No, just asking... you need to know about people you work with.
How did it happen?
I see, mate. We'll be there soon.

What's happened?
The Director shot himself.

I like your confidence. Let's go?

There is enough work for the whole winter. This place will be perfect by spring.

Everything is ready. We could have let some kids come today.

The Director shot himself.

What's happened?

How did it happen? I see, mate. We'll be there soon.
You can't hide in yourself all the time. You know, you cannot escape it. And you cannot hide from me. I think your place now is in the camp. You said yourself that there is enough work for the whole winter. If you want, I can go with you.

I'm not hiding from you this winter. It makes me shiver inside. Nowhere! Nowhere to hide!
I often remember the director’s words about honesty. You know, I associate death and dignity only with war. Honesty is different on the other side.

What about the rafts? It was me, who else!

I hate these pseudo-philosophical conversations. They bore me. Better show me what you’ve done here.

Do you mind if we keep you company? I can’t stay in the city. It’s weighing me down.

Sokyra!

If heaven exists, it’s definitely here. I don’t know when I’ve ever felt this good. I wake up in the morning, do some work, chop firewood, fetch water, then just lie with a book or a film.

If so, mate. It’s as cold as hell here at night. But we are used to it!

Of course, mate. It’s as cold as hell here at nights. But we are used to it!

I often remember the director’s words about honesty. You know, I associate death and dignity only with war. Honesty is different on the other side.

I hate these pseudo-philosophical conversations. They bore me. Better show me what you’ve done here.

I guess Sokyra will be glad. Ever since he settled here, he obviously misses communication.

This one can cope on his own, but I’ve missed him.

Of course, mate. It’s as cold as hell here at nights. But we are used to it!

The poor excuse for an engineer who designed this rope park forgot to take something into account. So everything has to be finalised in the field.

The poor excuse for an engineer who designed this rope park forgot to take something into account. So everything has to be finalised in the field.

Who designed it?

It was me, who else!

Who designed it?

What about the rafts?
You'll do fine.

...But I am sure that's where I belong.

I'm not sure it's going to work out...

What about your kid? Will he come?

Oh, he can't wait to come! My wife has just called me today. She is packing his bags as if he's about to join a hiking expedition to the far east.

The rafts are on the way. They'll be here next week.

Friends, an important, challenging, and demanding period is about to begin for all of us. But I believe we can make it work!

What about your kids? Will they come?

What about your kids? Will he come?

I'm not sure it's going to work out.

But I am sure that's where I belong.

You'll do fine.
I'll do fine.