

SASHA: You know what it was like back then. When the leader is sick, the country is sick.

SLAVA: And what if the leader is dead? don't have to be a genius to work that one out.

SASHA: I like to think this place goes beyond the mainland, beyond the politics of the Party, and the men who lead it. Here was something more hopeful, true to Lenin. What I wouldn't do for this place to be filled with life again... So many things could still be done. What is still needed is that spirit to fix things.

SLAVA: That's what I believe in, that things can still be fixed, that democracy, that Russia, can be put back together.

Something about SLAVA's words irritates SASHA.

SASHA: And how has that been going so far?

SLAVA: Hm?

SASHA: Your project, that dream: democracy. How is that going?

SLAVA: I mean, you know...

SASHA: Know what?

SLAVA: You know what it's like. I don't need to talk about it.

SASHA: Maybe you do.

SLAVA: What are you getting out of this? Hm?

SASHA: I just want to hear about it.

SLAVA: I saw most of it on the television. I saw the tanks in Moscow, President Yeltsin at war with his own parliament, and still no one could afford anything...

SASHA: That was in 1993?

SLAVA: Yes. There was no work. If you worked for the government, like a lot of people, they sometimes didn't pay you for months. What we earned was earned at the markets; people selling everything, from wedding rings to furniture, only we sometimes we didn't make enough money. There were hungry nights where we wouldn't eat. It was hard then, hard to imagine a future.

SASHA: You were young.

SLAVA: I was.

SASHA: You could have got married to someone rich!

SLAVA scoffs at the comment.

SLAVA: I was 17, I thought I knew what the world was like, but I didn't have a clue. At night we would sometimes light fires outside, on the wasteland belonging to an old tyre factory, and my friends and I would burn our red scarves, and our red badges, and our little Lenins, all into the fire. We all seemed to think that we didn't have to be defined by where we had come from, that we had broken away from the past. We were proud of ourselves for it.

SASHA doesn't take the bait. He judges her in silence.

It felt like we were dancing in the ruins of the world. Dancing and dancing and not caring. It felt like it was all ours.

SASHA: Strange... Sounds like you had nothing.

SLAVA: Yes, but it felt like we would soon have everything. Perhaps you had to be there at that time. Oh, how we cursed it all, our history, our leaders. Thank you *Perestroika!* Thank you *Glasnost!* For all the pain you gave us.

SASHA: And your friends, what happened to them?

SLAVA: My friend Dima would join the army. He ended up dead, killed in Chechnya. Masha, my best friend, she's now in Estonia, works in a hotel and sends money back when she can. The others stayed and waited for the money to come in - but it never came. We got *Exxon*, we got *Adidas*, but we didn't get rich. The money was always somewhere else. I'd be stupid not to feel betrayed. There we all were... dancing together. I still get angry just thinking about it.

Beat. SASHA moves towards the bottle.

SASHA: Drink?

SLAVA: No.

SASHA: Rude.

SLAVA: It isn't, I'm just saying no.

SASHA: Would you have me drink alone, like some kind of alcoholic? Come. Let me get you one.

SLAVA: I'd really rather not, at least not right now.

SASHA: Why?