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Mrs. Lopez

World Literature-Honors

6 April 2022

### Finding Home

Mother and father were nervously fixing their coats and readying their bags. Our parents had to prepare themselves to go to any local place to find helpful supplies like food, batteries, and other things like that. All because we weren't sure if or when this war with Russia would begin.

"I really don't think you guys should go right now.", I tried to reason. I was still very wary about their plans. I did not want anything to happen to my parents.

My words made mother frown as she fixed my brother and I with a sad look. Father on the other hand still seemed very adamant on going.

"Nonsense! Everything will be fine. We'll leave you and Ivan here, go to find our supplies, then come back home." father stated.

Ivan and I really had no say in the matter, so mother and father slowly opened the front door to peek out. They looked at each other then walked out, making sure to lock it behind them. I subconsciously patted my pocket and was relieved when my spare metal key jingled. I could hear Ivan shuffling over to the couch and I moved to sit down as well. It was going to be a while until they were back after all.

At this point, it has been about four or five hours. We have still heard nothing from mother and father. Not even a phone call. I could tell Ivan was getting worried by how he kept glancing at the door. I tried to calm my worries so I could be a reassuring older sister for him.

Right as my mouth opened to speak, there was the loud bang of guns. I ran to the window and in the distance I could see people scrambling from their homes and the sight of planes in the air. Some homes were even on fire. Far too close to our own. We can not stay here.

“Ivan grab our bags!” I yelled out to him.

He stood there in shock for a few seconds then complied and was back in a matter of seconds holding two duffles. It was a good thing we were smart enough to pack earlier in case something like this happened.

It was hard to think in an emergency situation like this, and I tried to come up with where it would be the safest for us to go right now.

Our home was in Kramatorsk, Donetsk in eastern Ukraine. There were many places we could attempt to go, but there was no guarantee they would be intact due to the start of the war.

“What do you think about heading west?” I asked Ivan, unsure.

From where he stood next to me, I could see him thinking it over in his head. Slowly, he nodded and headed towards the front door. I frantically sent a text to my parents about how we were doing and where we planned to go. There wasn't much of a point in calling. We unlocked the door and hurriedly set off.

We had walked for a while now, using my phone to tell which direction to go. Ultimately, we decided to not rest when night came. We couldn't take the risk and desperately needed to find shelter as soon as possible.

By the time it seemed like we would collapse from the exhaustion of walking, Ivan pointed out a home that could be seen with its lights on in the neighborhood we found ourselves in. Walking over to it was risky. What if they thought we would attack them or steal from them?

Nevertheless we needed somewhere to stay. I could hear Ivan hoping under his breath for it to be safe.

Once at the door, I took charge and knocked on the solid door. Footsteps could be heard from inside and the curtain slightly parted to the side. I gulped and reached for Ivan's hand. A few seconds later, the door creaked open. It was an older woman, but I could see kids behind her. I was still ready to bolt out of there if needed.

I opened my mouth to talk to the lady, "We were in danger at our home east of here. My little brother and I really need a place to stay. There aren't many places available to us."

The lady immediately opened the door wider and stepped out of the way.

"Oh, of course you can stay here children there's plenty of room." the kind woman offered.

Before I could say anything, Ivan pulled me into the house by my hand. His naivety bothered me, but I let it slide. The lady had shown where to place our bags then introduced herself as Kateryna. She then proceeded to point to her husband, Aleksandr, and two daughters, Sash and Anastasia. Ivan had readily told them his name then told them mine was Maryia.

I still wasn't quite sure if we should be trusting these people. However, after being there for a few days now and being showered with such kindness I could feel a shift in my opinion on these wonderful people. At some point Ivan and I had mutually agreed this was where we would be staying for quite a while. Perhaps until the war itself had ended and Ukraine was back in its normal state.

We were still quite worried for our parents and a day didn't go by where I didn't try to get in touch with them. However, this once foreign house really did begin to feel like our own family

home. It felt like a family of people who all understood what the others were going through at this time of danger. I was happy to have found such giving people.