

ANOTHER STORY

(Book by Kseniya Simonova)

The first seven chapters of the book

To understand what kind of book it is

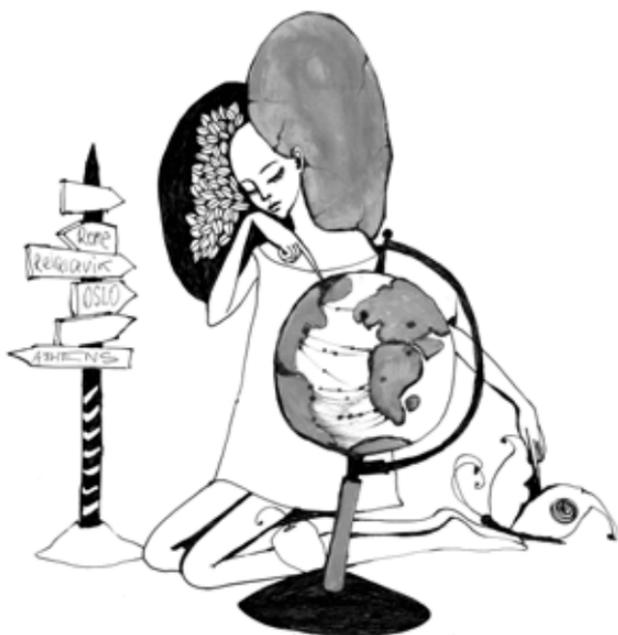
Illustrations by the author

Original language — Russian.

Translation into English by Kseniya Simonova.

The book «Another Story» was created during 2010-2012 by Kseniya Simonova — the winner of the famous show «Ukraine's Got Talent» first audition, the Honored Artist of Ukraine, the Honored Artist of Crimea. The book was written in very easy manner, with humor and irony. Kseniya describes her own Way of an artist — from ordinary girl from tiny city of Evpatoriya to the world-famous artist and performer. Kseniya opens the secrets of how she got to the show «Ukraine's Got Talent» and won, she tells lots of curious and touching «backstage» stories, and also about her special vision of art. This Way is described not with pride and self-approval, but with love and humor. The first rule of Kseniya is not to give up your Way.

ДРУГАЯ ИСТОРИЯ



Prologue



This story is simple and at the same time, very complicated. It is full of accidents which finally appear to be Ways. It is a story of a person who always wants to get one thing but receives another. This makes her happiness...

My name is Kseniya Simonova.

I came to a casting of a big talent-show organized by the leading Ukrainian TV-channel, and won. I didn't fight for it, this wasn't my goal. I came there to have a rest. And received a million.

I draw with sand more than four years. Today this is my main function but it wasn't like this all the time. At the show I have shown three sand stories — about circus, about war and about parents.

I have much more stories. And even more stories which nobody will never see — stories that I draw, erase and forget...

Picture One

Night

June 2009, Kiev



— I will sing for you if you wish, — Julia says. — I wrote the lyrics and the music myself.

She sings, I listen. I close my eyes and see a tiny Ukrainian style house in the mountains, and behind it — endless green fields.

We sat in the armchairs, face to face on the balcony, under us was the forest, and the night easily walked through us.

Julia Kuvshinova, a singer from Nikolaev, got to the final of the show «Ukraine's got talent» a month ago, and I did it quite recently. I did not care about the final. I listened, and I liked it.

My childhood

22nd April – 1992, Evpatoriya



I was born in Evpatoriya, it is written in my birth certificate.

But actually the hospital in Evpatoriya was closed for repairs that night. My mother was taken to the nearest hospital, in the small town called Saki, by a broken military bus, given by the base where served my dad. Mom says it was fun.

I was born in the morning, and mother said I was a full reflection of my dad, very alike.

When she was receiving my birth certificate, she asked to write there that I was born in Evpatoriya instead of Saki, because Saki sounds rather clumsy in Russian.

I was growing up as an ordinary child and didn't show any special interest in something. But I liked drawing trying to be like my mother who was an artist. There was nothing extra talented in my drawings

— ordinary eight-pawed cats, beauties in boots and beads, with big mouths, twisted vase and flowers — all that children normally draw at this age. Just some of the pictures had a breath of strange inner Russian ethnics. It came from my grandmother's stories and fairy tales by Bazhov.

Grandmother is a special world for any kid. Children need to spend time with their grandmothers. I don't mean all the time. But they need it. Why?

My grandma, Valentina Razgulyaeva was born on the city of Murmansk in 1940. When she was a year old, the war began (WWII), and her mother Nastassja Andriivna took her to the middle of Russia in the cover of the sewing machine, as in a cradle. They came to a village near Kostroma and lived there for eight years. The only available «developing game» for children there, except the hard work was to climb the Russian stove and to drive cockroaches on the ceiling with a stick. Episode quite in aesthetics of the films by Emir Kusturica. If this Serbian director saw it, I think he would have included such episode in one of his films...

In my grandmother's stories, this village remained for me a fabulous symbol of strange and wonderful Russia with stove, snow, cows and a samovar.



Picture two

Lena

June 2009, Kiev, "Ukraine's got talent" shooting pavilion



— Come here, I want to hug you, — says Lena, wiping away tears, and we are embracing, standing in a dark corner behind the scenes. I have just finished rehearsal of my «War» and again and again realized that it is technically weak. I sadly wandered backstage, and here I was found by Lena.

Lena Matyushenko was a theater actress, mother of two sons. She had a nice husband Sasha, who loves «Spleen» band like me. At the show «Ukraine's got talent» Lena performed as Pugacheva (famous Russian pop-singer. She was an absolute copy, with fully matching facial expressions, gestures and speech. Lena called it

«impersonation» full getting used to the image. Frankly speaking, I sometimes was a bit scared with this similarity, and I followed Lena, like a child who wants to see circus tricks...

And this talented, adult and intelligent Lena is crying, hugging me. She says that the «War» is something unreal. I feel strange, I don't know what to say. She takes my hand and leads me to the dressing room and shows people crying there near the screen where my rehearsal was just broadcasted.

Something begins to turn in my mind, I go back to the stage, and perform my «War» in a new way and with a new feeling.

Music

1985-1994, city of Tambov, city of Evpatoriya

My grandma Valya (that's short for Valentina) worked as a chemical engineer at a large chemical plant «Artie» in Tambov (Middle Russia) for many years. At thirty-five her eyelids began to lower down — such a disease when nothing can help except surgery. The operation simply lifts the eyelids and sews them to the area of skin under the eyebrow. In fact, it saves from total vision loss, which usually occurs after the restriction of sight, but the eye loses its ability close completely. My grandmother did not want to learn to sleep with her eyes open and refused the operation. From my very birth until my grandma's death, I used to see her looking like this — with lowered down lids that she raised with her fingers. It filled her image with fabulousness and warmth.

She didn't live with us in Crimea, didn't want to leave Tambov. She remained in a small apartment in a quiet area of the city. Every year I came to visit her and stayed for a month, and these trips

remained one of the best memories of my childhood.

Sometimes she came to us and stayed for some time, and my life filled with wonders...

I went to kindergarten, I played and made friends. One day, sitting on a bench in the courtyard, I saw my father who was going from the wrong side. Normally, he was going home from the right side, because when the workday was over, the bus of the military service where he worked (I even think, the same one that drove my mother to Saki at the day of my birth) brought him to stop, which was on the right from our house. But this time, Dad was going from the left, and it was strange. He carried a strange box. It was a VCR. That was the day when Movies appeared in my life.

I don't know where he got such a thing which was so extremely rare in USSR, but it was an event that brought together all the people I knew and even strangers. I also had no idea where he was taking the tapes with wonderful films and terrible translation. But this helped my learning English — I knew all the texts from cartoons and movies by heart, and then quickly learned English originals which I could hear well despite the interpreter's voice. Some fragments I keep in the corners of my memory till today.

I went to school and despite good learning, made teachers mad with my behavior. It is very frustrating for my mom, but I did not know how to behave differently. I was fed up with a collective discipline, the collective and obligatory work. It was 1992, the Soviet system failed but the rules were alive. I didn't like it.

When I was in the third year at school, my father has borrowed some new cassettes, pulled them to the «Sharp» recorder and brought to my room. That night a new strip of my life began. I received Music.

These cassettes were Roxette, Madonna, Dire Straits, Scorpions

and Elvis Presley. My imagination started its crazy work. Every day I sat in the classroom with my head full of music. I hardly could notice my teachers' angry faces, I didn't care.

That year my parents took my grandmother from Tambov to Evpatoriya.



Picture three

Little Spartans

June 2009, Kiev



— Guys, can I take a picture of you? — I asked Jura and Karina from Berdichev. They agree seriously. I say :

— I want to show the picture of you to my little son, he will be happy.

— How do you draw with sand? — Jura asks me.

I don't know what to answer. Hands, just hands ...

— How do you make acrobatics with Karina? — I ask him in turn.

He nods with an understanding expression, this small Jura, and continues his rehearsal.

When I saw what Karina and Jura did at the show, I couldn't find words. I asked my husband: «Did you see that? » Since that day I knew who were my favorites at the show «Ukraine's got talent». These kids talked, ran, played like normal kids but I've never seen children with such muscles. These kids seemed young Spartans who came to the show just to play.

My grandmother

1985, 1994, Tambov, Moscow, Evpatoriya



My parents bought a small apartment in a new house near the place we lived, and grandma moved there. I was happy to spend weekends in her tiny nice flat.

...When my mother was pregnant with me, she and my dad moved to Evpatoriya from Tambov. Grandmother was 45, and at this age she was diagnosed with cancer. The doctors said she had no chances. Grandma decided to fight.

She collected some money and went to Moscow. I don't remember the name of the hospital where she wanted to go, but it was almost impossible to be treated there for an ordinary person. The doctors examined her but politely refused to provide with chemotherapy because there were no places in the hospital. It was true, the cancer-sick patients from all Soviet Union wanted to be treated there. Grandma stayed for the night at the hospital doors, sat outside and decided to wait for a miracle. She sat on a bench, sick and exhausted, and the first ever prayed.

She fell asleep sitting on the bench for a while. In her dream she saw a strange icon flying over her head while she was lying in a hospital bed. She has seen so little icons in her life, but remembered the one she saw for all her life. The icon flew horizontally over her — from the feet to the head and directed to the window. Grandmother was laying and watching it leaving, she wanted to hold the wonderful icon, but could not raise hands because of her weakness. When the icon was almost out of sight and she could only the frame, she heard a Voice: «Hold! Hold the icon otherwise you will die!». With the last effort grandmother captured the icon and woke up.

In the morning she was accepted in the hospital and the doctors started to prepare her for the chemotherapy. That night a woman in one of the rooms and my Granny as given her place. It was on November, 6th. That day was celebrated as a Day of Mother of God's icon «Joy of All Who are in Sorrow». Later, after a course of chemotherapy and radiation therapy, when she was allowed to go out, my grandmother went to a small temple and saw the icon from her dream.

— What is the name of this icon? — She asked the temple worker.

— "Joy of All Who are in Sorrow", — she answered.

So a Miracle came to our life.

Picture Four

Alla

June 2009, Kiev



— Guys, I have a new neighbor now! — Kate the Droplet tells us. — She's very beautiful and she has a lot of makeup.

— Who is she? — We ask.

— Alla...

We gave Kate a nick «The Droplet» because she was performing her acrobatic sketch with a blue drop drawn on her face. But I knew that the reason was not the picture on the cheek but her strength. At her 13 years, Kate sat on the twine and stood up of it with ease of wave motion — things which an acrobatic star Anatoly Zalewski made in adulthood. It was incredible. Kate was a girl with particular force

and charm. She spoke Ukrainian with an admixture specific slang inherited by her native town, and it was so nice that a few days after meeting her all of us, leaving on the same floor with her, began to speak like Kate.

We lived in the sanatorium «Mayak» («Lighthouse»), we became friends — the entire floor — me, my husband, Kate, her coach, Joseph Patarashvili — tribal dancer from Kharkiv, a boy called Valik Halushko and his mom. We were semifinalists of the fourth semifinal, prepared together, lived together, ate together, in the evenings we met in the lounge, watched TV, drank tea and chatted.

And so Alla came to us. Alla Kushnir was performing in the fifth semifinal, she was a belly dancer. She came to our lounge wearing a luxurious silk robe embroidered in oriental style, in incredibly beautiful shoes, bracelets on her hands... When she saw me, she said:

— Oh! You love fancy dresses too...

Since then our strong, warm friendship began.

Alla danced every day in the lobby, I watched and admired. I knew for sure who would be the hero of some of my next sand stories. Looking at Alla, I got a double pleasure — as a spectator and as an artist.

— Let's go and play badminton — Alla tells me.

We take the rackets and go to the «Sokol» sanatorium, there is a lawn there. We go — Alla in her oriental dress with gold and me — in my acid-yellow pantsuit and bright hat. The people we meet stare at us. We are playing, and my husband is sitting in the gazebo and laughing out loudly. Suddenly Alla throws out her racket and smiles. I hear some tiny dog barking. Alla winks at us starts barking with a thin voice too. I fall on the grass laughing. The sun is so hot...

My best birthday

1998-2000, Evpatoriya



Grandmother lived thirteen years after the operation — a very long period for a person with her illness. She died on November 6, 1998, on the day of the icon «Joy of All Who are in Sorrow». Six years later, exactly on this day, November 6, 2004 my little sister Anastasia was born. The miracle continues till today.

Granny's death turned the page of wonder in my life, and a «difficult age» came. I was thirteen and nothing was interesting for me except sitting on the couch and watching movies. I lived like a crab under a stone, and I liked that kind of life. Coming home from school, I jumped on the sofa and cut turned on the movies. The art school, tennis — were only episodes in this life from film to film, strange life of teenager indifferently walking in a fog.

My happiest birthday for all the time I was in school, was the

following.

It's Saturday morning. Dad says:

— No school today. Happy birthday! I promise that this birthday of yours will not be like anyone else. Maybe not the best one but at least you will remember it.

— Cool! — I say.

We quickly have breakfast and go through the field to a distant garage cooperative. There are two Dad's garages there. In one of them our car stands, and in another one... I've never been in another one.

We go and the gloomy sky is over us, dripping small spring rain on our heads, and I am already fifteen. That year me and my Dad became big friends, he seemed to inherit some part of my grandmother's warm and kindness, he suddenly became an excellent cook baking amazing cakes in the oven, he invented funny things... He became good and comfortable, as if had never been tough and strict. I felt happy with him, enjoyed talking about physics and chemistry, trying different apparatus, systems, dreaming of space and space satellites. I love poking around in strange mechanisms which he invented; while walking to the garage, our favorite game was when one names a country and another — its capital...

We pass the garage door of our first garage I knew well, and move on. This garage cooperative was very similar to an old town, with narrow streets and labyrinths. There lived the magical dogs with funny names — Tolsty, Moska and others, the men with instruments walked up and down and something mysteriously rang.

When we went to the door of another garage which was unknown to me, we stopped and Dad smiled at me mysteriously.

He took out a huge bunch of keys, spent a long time opening the old lock, and then the door — suddenly! — opened.

Inside the garage I saw... on a massive trolley with small wheels there stood... a boat!

I was stunned, I was totally blown away but I nodded and touched black rubber nose of the boat.

— And now, like a real sailor... You're a sailor, aren't you? That's it! Take the compressor and let's paint it.

Compressor was made of the old vacuum cleaner «Whirlwind». To paint the boat! It is such a fun! We became dirty from head to foot, spraying white gloss on the boat and the walls. Our eyebrows and hair — those that stuck out from under the caps — were covered with drops of paint that instantly froze... When I came home and looked in the mirror, I smiled: «I am a snowman!» Laughed at the mirror, and felt I was happy.

Dad was right: I remember this birthday forever. For now, this is my best birthday...



Picture Five

A Hero

June 2009, Kiev



— Look, it's Dima Khaladji. — My husband Igor tells me. — Imagine, one of the most powerful people in the world is sitting at the next table...

— Cool — I answer. — Let sit next to him.

Dining room of the sanatorium «Mayak» had common tables — you can sit wherever you want. We left our table and come to the Dima's one.

— Is it ok if we sit next to you? — I ask carefully.

— No problem. — one of the most powerful people in the world answers.

We sat down and watched the Hero eat his lunch. Two dishes at one time, with appetite and joy. He didn't show any interest in what was happening around.

Actually, we knew each other a bit — when we came to Kiev as a dozen of new semi-finlists, all who already lived at «Mayak» (the participants of the first, second and third semi-finals) came out of their rooms to meet newcomers. I remember how it happened when we arrived. We all gathered in the lobby and sat on the floor. We were throwing a tennis ball to each other in turns, and each of us who got the ball into his hands, introduced themselves and said something. I said:

— Here is a tennis ball. I play tennis. My name is Kseniya Simonova.

Dima said:

— I am Dima Khaladji. Don't give me anything — I destroy everything I touch.

And gently returned me the ball.

I liked him.

When I saw him on TV at the casting of «Ukraine's Got Talent» in Donetsk, I jumped up from the couch, held up a finger and said:

— Here he is — a real hero! Who said they have disappeared?!

And so, the Hero ate, and we stared at him having forgotten about our lunch. Dima looked at us and said strictly:

— You must eat! Otherwise you'll be weak.

We took our forks. How couldn't we obey him?

Finally, the conversation started, with jokes, rather informally... Dima told about his work in the circus. He told us how he walked up the stairs with oak beam on the shoulders — for training. Then I remembered how Igor and I joked to each other that we should make friends with Khaladji. Because in this case, he might take care of us

and help us carry our heavy sand table on the third floor. We did it every day and were actually totally fed up with this kind of sports. I decided to try:

— Yeh... And we are not sportsmen at all... I mean we are really squeezed out! Every day we carry our table — up and down, up and down — either for the shooting or to the rehearsal... Maybe you can...

— Guys! — Dima interrupted. — This is cool! Wow, you are so lucky! You don't have to invent the way of training! You have a good gym practice for every day!

His eyes shined. He was so happy for us that I could neither argue nor laugh.

Every day he practiced in the yard of the «Mayak» sanatorium. Dima bent horseshoes, tore tires from the truck, broke the logs. Doing this, he became very focused and thoughtful.

When we said goodbye, he shook my husband's hand. Igor said:

— Thank you, Dima, for not having broken my hand.

Heroes are alive. Hooray!



The Past

1996, Evpatoriya



When I was eleven, I've learnt about the tragedy of the Last Russian Emperor Nicholas II Romanov and His Family. It was scary and horrible.

That time, my mother studied at the catechism courses to become a teacher in an Orthodox Sunday school. During her study, she brought home interesting historical and religious literature. I was very glad because at the time I have read and reread all the books that we had at home. I eagerly took up the new ones. One of them was a collection of the letters of Nicholas and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, extracts from the diaries. In the end of the book I found a little historical sketch. From there I knew of a terrible final of a quiet, happy life of two loving people, their children. That has become a thunder struck for me for life. It was such a strong

feeling that I do not remember the details of what I asked my mother about this. I began looking for new materials of this tragedy. I was eleven years old, and no one of the people surrounding me took my questions seriously. I was afraid to sleep at night, waiting in fear for terrible people with pistols and rifles come for me. I knew too little about the period of this episode. I have invented my own myths and horrors of impending catastrophes, and if any of the adults realized that there was a need for me to talk about it, I think I would have felt better.

However, my child's brain was trying to cope with a sudden horror and was looking for the ways out. I tried to write poems about it, but managed to write only one short poem.

Since then, the study of history, especially the history of the Russian Empire, became my real need. I thought and still think that the best way to fight a rational fear is the knowledge and study of the object carrying the fear. So, summarizing my memories of that time, I can say that fifteen years of studying the history of the Romanov dynasty period I have spent from my eleven till nowadays were the result of the fight against childhood fears. I can call this result successful.

My school teachers eyes were very surprised when I started to talk about what I was studying at home. I can't say that they met this with understanding and warmth, but nobody remained indifferent.

Today, I am not very interested in books written by historians, except those that were written in Imperial Russia. Not because I have read many books on the subject though I did. Subjectivism has become a boring attempt to look clever, it is my own opinion on the historical subjectivism I find in most books. Though, I must say there are some good modern editions. Today for me memoirs are more interesting and valid. It is interesting to read the investigation

report of the Romanov's murder written in 1919 by the investigator who came to their empty house in Yekaterinburg and didn't find anyone and anything except the blood spots. Because he wrote what he saw without showing any opinion I believe that to know history is physically necessary. At least to be able to appreciate the present.



Picture six

Crazy June

June 2009, Kiev, Chisinau



Having suddenly become the finalist of «Ukraine’s Got Talent» show, I realized that I would die if I will not see my son. Without saying a single word to the organizers, my husband and I jumped into our old car and went to Moldova, having driven the distance from Kiev to Chisinau in unbelievable time of seven hours.

When we went to the live shows in Kiev, we had to make one more uneasy step – to take our little son Dima to grandma. Dima was a year and a half and I must say that he heroically overcome his first moving from country to country, crossing three borders, customs

and so on. But living without our little boy was a hard time for us. That's why when I knew that I was in the final of the show, I was even a little upset because our separation with Dima was prolonged for two weeks.

So while the participants of fifth semi-final were preparing for their performances, we rushed to Chisinau.

Three happy days with our son passed quickly, and we were on the road again. Our old bus could not resist such a rhythm, and got broken after the border we happily crossed. Half of the day Igor fumbled on the road trying to mend the car, his white shirt, which I bought him, turned gray forever. By evening, dirty, but happy, we finally moved on. It was our second wedding anniversary.

Remembering how we celebrated this day a year before that, we laughed. That day last year, our first wedding anniversary, we took a boat and went into the stormy sea, with friends and bottle of rum aboard, it was cold, funny and cozy. That day we decided that it would be every year on June 1 — this kind of celebration. But here we were, at the second year anniversary, on the road, in the dust, trying to fasten the wheel to our old «Chrysler». Despite this, we were happy and came to rehearsal in Kiev with a slight delay, and no one noticed.

The main question was: what can I show in the super-final? After the sand story about war which received more than 2 million views per day on YouTube, the audience wrote us thousands of letters, most of them said that they want to see some happy story this time, or at least a kind of thriller...

But I wanted to create a story based on «The Little Prince» by Antoine de Saint-Exupery. I created a story and Igor shot it on the camera — it was the raw variant. But it didn't further. I am still a bit sad about it though I am happy we finally managed to create and

show something more global...

In three days before the super-final of the show, we received an e-mail from a woman who asked me to help a seven-month girl Nastya who suffered leukemia. She was a volunteer and asked us to create a story in sand about the girl's trouble, so that parents would be able to put it in Internet and charitable resources and collect money for treatment. The treatment was very expensive and the family didn't have the needed sum of money. We were a bit shocked — we had never done anything like this. In addition, we had to get ready to the final of the show.

But then I saw the girl's photo... And having locked our room from inside, we shot a story which appeared into our first charity social film called «Nastya». I think, if the editing process took us a bit longer, the organizers could throw us out of the show because in that case we could be late at the general rehearsal for the live broadcast... But we came.

Moreover, after «Nastya» in a few hours I created and shot the story which became my performance for the super-final. It had a name of «Do not be too late!»

It was about parents, about the fact that they always forgive, and about the fact that the children are not always right. This story was technically very hard for me — because of its features, and due to lack of time for a normal practice. But it was easy because I did not set any extra-goals: I did not plan to win, and the theme was precisely the one that touched me and made me cry right at the rehearsals. But I had to fight the tears that dripped on glass and sand and made a risk to destroy the picture. The fight was not easy.

But anyway, the super-final finished and we were able to sleep. And after that we realized that life is beautiful.

I am looking for my Way

2000, Evpatoriya, Simferopol



In ninth grade, I felt I must study to play music, and I begged my mother for permission to go to study piano at an Art school of our city. This was important — to ask my mother, as she worked in that school as head of the department of Fine Arts. The permission was got in the summer, and I decided to master the first four grades of the music school externally during the summer holidays. The first thing I had to get was a piano. We went to the fifth floor and asked our neighbor Luda Malishko to lend us her old piano. Aunt Luda was a brave woman and gave us the piano. I think after that the whole staircase thought «Oh, no...»

I began to learn breaking the silence of our five-stored house playing gammas and compositions.

I have fulfilled the promise given to myself, and mastered the program of three grades during the summer, so when autumn came, I automatically entered the fourth grade. The whole month I regularly went to music school without doing anything else except

studying in an ordinary school. One month after I apologized to my teacher and gave up. I realized that I am going a wrong way: I physically felt a lack of drawing in my life, it was like the lack of the air... Since then I felt a real taste of drawing — I just never thought of that before. By that time, I had already graduated from my art class and went to my mom's class, where she was a teacher. I sat in one class with guys who were three years younger than me. I did not care — I eagerly «swallowed» all that I saw: still life, portraits, sculpture. A happy time began for me, a new time — time of awareness of my own Way...

Having lived without one summer without drawing (I graduated from art school in May), I was determined that I would never leave my Way again. After graduating from the ninth grade, I took a deep breath and told my mother:

— I want to take the exams in the art college.

— This is a bad idea. — Mom said. She was an artist, and that time in our country artists were mostly very poor people. — You can see: the artists do not earn the money here. It is impossible in our time and our reality. Today, a girl must have a university degree, and preferably two degrees. Got it?

I didn't say anything, pulled money out of a piggy bank, sat on the train and went to Simferopol, another city in 70 km from us, which had an art college. I passed the first exam — academic drawing — and came home. I don't remember what I told my parents, how I answered the question about where I was a half-day, but I was locked up for a week. The second examination was in a trouble. Then I took my mother's keys and left, leaving a note: «Do not worry, I'll be back in the evening as soon as I pass my exams». I was sitting in the train and drew the passengers who were sitting nearby, my hand was like a mad, it made dozens of sketches. Some lady came to me and said:

— Will you draw my portrait?

I prepared a new sheet of paper and started drawing. The woman was silently looking in the window. After completing the drawing, I gave it to the woman and apologized for the fact that the portrait is not very alike the original. The lady said thank you and gave me ten hryvnas (for that time it was something like 2 dollars). I looked at the money and could not believe my eyes. That were the first money earned by me as an artist. I saw this sign. I was going a right way.

Looking ahead, I will say that I did not dare to spend that money, and they laid in my desk for a long time, and then disappeared...

Having arrived at the exam, I felt calm and confident. I had money in my pocket, I earned them. How can I fail an exam in painting?

After the exam I went into the corridor and saw my parents.

I wasn't able to come for passing the remaining exams. So I stayed in school to finish the full school program — eleven grades, and to prepare for university entrance. In the eleventh grade I took prizes in three Ukrainian Science Olympiads — in English, in Russian and Ukrainian language specializations; defended two scientific works in the Junior Academy of Sciences, translated Byron, Burns, Shakespeare and Moore. I did all that I had to do. But I definitely knew it was not mine way, and no matter how, I will become an artist.



Picture Seven

Sasha

June 2009, Kiev



I call him a Man-sunlight or a medicine from depression. This guy is a real sunshine, and his name is Sasha Kvarta, short for Alexander Kvarta. He is a singer from Ukrainian city of Kharkov and a semi-finalist of «Ukraine’s Got Talent». Every morning he jogged from our sanatorium to some distant ponds.

— I miss my wife and son, — says Alexander, — I’m stuck here for three weeks already... But I could be with them...

— But you need to rehearse like all of us, don’t you? — I say. I understand Sasha: I had to leave my son far away to come here...

— I asked the producers of the show: «What do we have to do these three weeks that we are here, in Kiev?» They replied, «Prepare, rehearse your performance...» What to rehearse? I’ve been singing

my «Senorita» for ten years already!

Remembering the way he said it, we still laugh with my husband Igor...

Sasha was a very special singer who could make thousand of the audience in the hall clap and step because of his personal inner joy he spread around during his performance. He sand an old Italian song «Senorita» in Russian and danced. It's so difficult to explain how he did it to people who never saw that... Ok, just believe me – it was something extremely great and funny.

At first we could not believe that there are people like Sasha – that they live nearby, prepare for the show, watch TV... He was totally different. As if he came from another planet, from a world where everyone is infinitely happy. Attracted to him, we felt joy and calmness, it was so great...

...The last days of the show, after the final – when we expected the voting results – my longing to see my son has increased to such an extent that I wanted to hug and kiss all the kids who lived in the neighborhood. Here Sasha appeared with his kind help.

One evening in someone knocked the door of our room. It was Sasha, his wife Olga and... small, very tiny baby.

– Meet my little son Vanya. – Sasha smiled.

They left us very late, but if Igor didn't take little Vanya away from me and gave him back to his parents, they would have to stay with us till the morning...



My work on the beach

1997-2002, Evpatoriya



When I was twelve, my father bought his first motorboat. That time after he fired from the Army, he had no job, and decided to earn some money by entertaining people on the beaches of our resort city. Every summer he took a boy-assistant and traveled by boat from the beach to the beach, with his small motorboat, with an inflatable rubber «banana» and other attractions such as «flying saucer», waterskiing and other amusements. In a few years he received permission from the beach «Solaris» to work there all day long... Now we would call it «the exclusive right to entertain the guests of the beach.» It became easier to work with this permission — there was a beach, people who rested there from season to season... But to make people come and pay, he needed an advertisement and advertiser. So he brought me to the beach, gave me a megaphone, pulled me into the middle of the crowded beach and said, «Go on! Speak.» I began. My text had to be the following: «Dear ladies and

gentlemen! We invite you to join our amazing attractions — riding on the waves of the Black Sea. We will leave the seashore on our comfortable and stable yellow „banana“ behind a fast motorboat with a engine „Yamaha“. We'll take a ride around the bay, get to the open sea and you will be able to swim in the crystal-clear water and take a picture during a stop. Each of you will be provided with a very convenient and reliable lifejacket, which will allow you to swim even if you never could do it. Come to us and you will get a lot of pleasure...» So, that had to be my text of an advertiser, and I had to make all people on a big beach hear me with the help of a megaphone. I opened my mouth, and a strange sound came out of it. This sound was my voice. I took a step back with a plan to escape as far as possible from the lying people who raised their heads and stared at me with an expression of great surprise. I wanted to escape but it was nowhere to run — there was a wall behind my back, and that wall was my Dad. I sighed and bleated: «Dear...». People listened with kind sympathy. The only thing I was longing for that moment was to vanish into the thin air...

...By the end of the summer I knew what happiness is. Happiness is walking along the beach and yelling into a megaphone. In September I went to the eleventh grade, the last grade of the school, and my longing for the beach was very strong...

I sat in the classroom and on the last page of each notebook drew my boat cleaving the sea surface, remembering the evenings on the quay when we counted the cash. And our daily tradition — running dozens of inflated condoms into the evening summer sky. The schoolmates and teachers did not recognize me — my pale skin became sun burnt and this sunburn didn't disappear within all winter. I became skinny and muscled and have learned not to worry about what someone will think of me. It was a new, unusual

experience and — rather nice one...

Everyone was thinking about graduation and entrance exams, and I was waiting that — hurray! — summer is coming soon! I was getting ready for the university exams right on the beach, during the breaks in my «advertising job» and counting the cash. In my heart I was hoping to fail the exams and spend all my life on the docks...