



ОКСАНА  
ЛУЦИШИНА

ІВАН І РЕБА

Cover of the Ukrainian edition of Lutsyshyna's novel, with the title characters' names written in chalk.



# IVAN AND PHOEBE

*(An Excerpt)*

By Oksana Lutsyshyna

*Translated from the Ukrainian by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler*

**N**ot even the old-timers could remember an April that cold. Several deceptively warm days were just enough for the tree buds and cherry blossoms to bloom, but this renewal was promptly washed away by the rain and whisked away by the wind, and with the rain, pink torrents of rotting petals poured down the streets. At night, fog hovered over the river. They'd been cutting down the Carpathian forest. When it rained hard, the water that could no longer soak into the old, thick trunks didn't fit into the earth or clay. The rain-swollen river would threaten to overflow its banks, and then right there on its banks, soldiers would toil away, laying out sandbags. They'd close off the pedestrian bridge. The water crept all the way up to the vulnerable belly of the bridge, snaking around its legs and shaking it so hard its very frame shifted. Life in the city slowed down. The soldiers brought

in floodlights and set them up on the banks so the white rays fell on the yellow water filled with old snow and floated freely somewhere into the unknown.

People stepped onto the banks and stood there in the gray gloom of the twilight, amid the heavy scents of an imposing watery expanse, under the bleak, frozen lindens, anticipating. Well, one of the bridges is going to crash into the water, right? The bridges stayed intact, though. What was holding them together—stone? Prayers? Some mysterious marvel of engineering? The bridges stayed intact until the end—those soaked strings running between the banks, those bandages restraining the river's wound. If the gods were to walk this city in disguise and gaze at its sinners, they might very well grant the city forgiveness solely on account of the bridges.

They kept turning the power off, so yellow water filled the city with

cold and murk. Ivan was walking back through the city center; tired people holding umbrellas were rushing home. Darkness reigned everywhere except the blurry storefronts, which shone with color, silhouettes appearing behind the glass. Ivan got home (it was cold and dark there, like everywhere else in the city), picked up his little daughter—he and Phoebe had her the previous year—sat down on the couch, and shut his eyes for a second. Out of the darkness emerged Phoebe, or maybe Marhita, taut with grief, like an underground goddess, reached for the child, took her away from him, and broke into a song of lament, a song of dread, of hatred.

Ivan's father had been hitting the sauce even harder; he stayed in bed around the clock, coughing, and in each cough, you could hear just how drunk he was. Marhita would yell something or other to him; he'd reply with a hoarse, protracted



moan, roll over in bed, and lie there unmoving for some time: face up, blanket cast aside, oblivious to the cold. Ivan knew that at those moments, his father's face was flushed, addressing the heavens, not like a plea for mercy, more like a slap in the face, a silent protest—not against the regime or parliament, but against existence itself, powerless to push it along anymore.

Ivan would put his hands on his head, because there was nothing to look at but the wall formed by his own palms. Gloom came at him, crawling out of every crack and crevice. Marhita didn't like to burn more than one candle, and she and Phoebe took that sole candle to the kitchen. At night, it poured. Come morning, everything froze, encased in hoarfrost. There was a particular tranquility about those mornings, as if time had stopped—and was just about to turn back, flow in the opposite direction, somewhere into the absence of memory, the purity of that absence, into the deep suspended animation of childhood. Up in the mountains, the snow was probably as deep as prison walls are tall.

... And when the lights came back on, a short-lived euphoria would set in. Everyone suddenly awakened. Marhita worked feverishly in the kitchen. On those evenings, Ivan realized, much to his surprise, that he preferred not to see that. That he preferred the gloom. In the light, it was easier to conceal the nature of things, yet every molecule exuded

it in the darkness. He wanted to go outside and roam into the night; he wanted to gaze at the partially melted

snow, at the thin ice set in motion and rushing off somewhere like a river; he wanted to touch the winter water, commune with its secrets.

Where was it flowing? Was it really just going into the nearby Tysa? ...

... That spring Styopa would come by almost every day. He wanted something from Ivan, from all of them.

"You're still asleep," Styopa said, like their family's very own Dukhnovych.\* "You're asleep! Wake up already! You aren't listening to the voice of the times!"

"If only he knew how many voices I had to listen to," Ivan thought, "he might show me some mercy and get off my back."

Once again, Styopa had some big plans, and he kept giving Ivan an earful about some restaurant he was just about to open, about the seating area, about the menu, about the tables and napkins. With the stubbornness of a man possessed, he described this not-yet-existing establishment that was meant to usher in a new era for Styopa himself, as well as the city. He spoke of Ivan's duty to his family, saying something about traditions, about *bograc*, about the *gulyas leves* he'd serve, about the *kazan* outside—the large soup pot in which it would be prepared—about the firewood that would fuel the flame, about baked potatoes, about delicious Transcarpathian pork fat: smoked, salted, sprinkled with paprika.

A truly innumerable multitude of restaurants had opened over the last three or four years—it was nothing like the old days, when all the patrons at such establishments were either police officers or

speculators. The city had changed, though. Actually, it wasn't just the city. Within less than two years, the whole country had changed, nearly beyond recognition. Politicians were giving speeches on TV. The Kuchma epoch had begun. For some reason, Ivan had gotten the notion this was going to be nothing short of an

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epoch. A new mayor was elected, some guy by the name of Semen Ulyhanets. He had been the president of some crappy trade school; however, his father was a big Party boss with access to Party money (quite possibly money stolen from the people, from Oschadbank, when the Soviet Union fell). Money disappeared from people's wretched bankbooks. For years, they'd deprived themselves of all kinds of things, even dental care, just so they could have some money tucked away in their savings accounts, just so they could have something to give their grandchildren when they came of age, even though they probably wouldn't use that money, like women in the village didn't use their dowry chests containing thin shirts lined with yellowed lace.





All of those people were forced to fend for themselves, and they panicked, like shipwreck victims panicking in the water. The ones in the boats rowed as far away as possible while all their hapless comrades drowned. All of them—terrifying, with eyes bulging and mouths wide open, like haunted caves, gaping and gaping into the void of the world's very structure. What had they seen in their lives? What did they have faith in? What would their reward be? What would it be? A car, a TV, a washer at the tail end of their lives once they'd waited their turn and the government had given them these scarce, simple comforts? Now they were left to eke out an existence, robbed of that faith, of that hope. Everything they'd done in their lives had proved to be the vainest of pursuits.

Ulyhanets, although born and raised in Transcarpathia, was a Russian-speaker, and everyone pronounced his nickname the Russian way, "Senya." He opened up a whole bunch of stores with brand-name products that nobody actually bought, yet it was clear from the start that nobody had intended to sell anything there anyway. They were merely fronts for money laundering. Senya shook his battle-ready fists in front of the regional TV stations' cameras and yelled that no decent human being could be a communist because nobody was born looking for a handout. It was hard to argue with that. Trucks crossed over into Slovakia, smuggling and smuggling—all sorts of goods—and then those very same trucks came back across the border. Business became politics and politics became business. There was no place for guys like Ivan (there

may never have been a place for him!); Zhenya, his mother's former colleague, a short, stout man, was suddenly representing some village in parliament. Just before that, he'd brought the locals some buckwheat and Chinese-made shoes.

The proponents of democracy—the former dissidents—were ousted by a different, previously unseen class of somewhat smooth, arrogant wheelers and dealers. People grew poor or rich abruptly, without any transition. They slaved away, yet yearned for a day's rest. What they really wanted was a nice place to hang out. Hawkers went back and forth across the border, moving their Chinese- or Turkish-made products. They wouldn't sleep at night, just waiting at the border; they'd doze off atop their goods in the afternoon, roasting in the sun all day. They hauled just about everything: clothes, shoes, chocolate with peanuts, kitchenware, lingerie. You could buy nearly anything at stores or bazaars now. The epoch of scarcity gave way to an epoch cursed with commodities.

When Ivan wanted to get out of the house that spring, he didn't really have anywhere to escape to. Yura Popadynets's obsession with the Rusyns still hadn't run its course; he went on and on about some "Subcarpathian prime minister" who would head the new parliament, about ministers with briefcases ready to go, just waiting for their hour to come. Ivan had seen that "prime minister." He was a wacky college professor. Marhita knew him, too. Who knows if he actually believed in the Rusyn cause or if he had just lost his marbles and could no longer tell black from white, the real from the imagined.

"What are you gonna do when

your daughter starts growing up?" Styopa persisted. He was giving Ivan an earful, circling around him precisely like a bumblebee, though he didn't resemble a bumblebee in the slightest. "Let's go into business together. I mean, how are ya gonna make money? You know how much you gotta shell out for daycare these days? Aren't ya gonna finish your parents' place? You're not gonna just leave it like that, are you? Wanna hear a joke?" Without waiting for Ivan to reply, he promptly told a joke typical of that epoch—not good, not funny.

"Where do you keep your money? Which bank?" One Georgian, Gogi or something like that, asks another.

"The left bank." Then Styopa continued, still not letting Ivan reply.

"Those banks of yours are gonna go belly up. You know where things are going? Downhill, that's where!"

"The house, yeah, we'll finish the house in the summer, once it gets warm," Ivan thought defensively. "What about the bank?" "What about the bank?" he said aloud to Styopa. "Sure, Lisbank went belly up, but that was different." He didn't really believe what he was saying, though. After all, things were cut and dried with the bank—it wasn't going to be around forever. It was temporary, like everything else in those days.

It wasn't like he was going to talk to Styopa about being a father, though. After all, he didn't know what he could tell him. That he loved his little girl so much it hurt? He hadn't even hoped to love her that deeply. It was as if he had been

preparing for some event, but it still blindsided him. He really just couldn't put that kind of stuff into words. How could he say it, and who could he say it to? Say that Emilia had wound up being just as he'd imagined her the minute he got the call from the maternity hospital telling him she'd been born. Delicate. Tender. Even as an infant, she hardly ever cried, always woke up in a good mood, and quickly learned to smile. And now she'd become the center of Ivan's being, the core of his essence, for even when he wasn't thinking about her, all of his actions, all of his thoughts were still directed toward her.

There was something else that would've been much tougher to talk about, though—the fact that he shared parenthood with Phoebe. How should he talk about Phoebe, and more importantly, who should he talk to?

... Once they'd picked Phoebe up from the maternity hospital, the whole family came together. To celebrate. Khrystyna and Styopa came. Marhita made a nice meal.

"A new person has been born!" Myron Vasylovych said, proposing a toast, and everyone drank. Everyone except for him, because he had to drive, and Phoebe, because she had to breastfeed. Phoebe sat there somberly.

"What are we going to call her?" Marhita asked.

"Emilia," Phoebe replied. Everyone started talking at once. Is that name on the liturgical calendar? Has anyone else in the family had that name? They began making suggestions. Phoebe listened in

silence and then said, "I'm calling her Emilia."

"But what does that name even mean?" Marhita asked.

Phoebe lifted her head (slowly, so slowly that it scared Ivan for a second—it was like she had snakes for eyes), looked at Marhita, then at everyone sitting at the table, and spoke.

"I'll tell you what it means. It means that I've chosen her name."

The scary truth was that ever since Phoebe had come back from the hospital, it'd seemed like she had a few screws loose. She sat in her chair all day long, with the child in her arms when it came time to feed her. She only went downstairs when the lights were off. Other than that, she sat there and

cried—sometimes to herself, sometimes out loud—driving Marhita mad. Marhita yelled at her daughter-in-law (it's a good thing the neighbors' houses were a ways off).

"Have your mom come and help out! Just loafing around all day ... aren't ya gonna do anything?! What'd ya think havin' a kid would be like? No gallivanting 'round town anymore!" As if Phoebe had been one to gallivant around town. "You have a kid now. If you wanna go somewhere, just slide 'er into your pocket, right?"

Kateryna Ivanivna was in no rush to help out. She'd come over, of course, and always bring something for the little one or her daughter. She gave them money, took care of them. Yet she wouldn't sit by Phoebe or stick around to play with the child. Marhita, who wouldn't leave her for even a second, unnerved her. Marhita eagerly took on

all sorts of tasks, just picked up her grandchild whenever, seemingly showing everyone that she was the one in charge, the lady of the house. Kateryna Ivanivna furrowed her brow and left, repeatedly reassuring herself that everything was fine. She, like everyone else, decided to simply ignore the state Phoebe was in.

And Phoebe kept sitting in her chair. Planets revolved around her, as if around the black sun of despair: the child, Marhita, him—Ivan, sometimes—Kateryna Ivanivna, the local hospital's pediatricians—a truly rare combination of bitchiness and self-sacrifice, guests who came for all the major holidays and the occasional Sunday lunch—Khrystyna, Styopa, and their twin sons, nicknamed the "Falcons."

And she kept sitting there, only getting up when she absolutely had to. She'd walk around the house, her eyes seemingly unseeing, feed the child, change her cloth diapers (Marhita maliciously threw out the disposable ones Ivan had bought—wouldn't want to expose the child to all those chemicals!), and iron what Marhita washed. Phoebe had to force herself to breastfeed. She instantly developed an aversion for the whole procedure, couldn't take the greedy smacking of lips.

Ivan grew angry with Phoebe. For some reason, he was convinced that once a child came into the picture, Phoebe, like all of his friends' wives, would become a happy homemaker who wouldn't have time for him (or poems for that matter!) and would only concern herself with vegetable puree, the color of her child's excrement, bifidumbacterin probiotics, measles vaccinations, and lullabies. He bragged to the guys at work





when they asked him why he hadn't brought Phoebe to the office party.

"She's sitting at home," he said, "she won't be coming." Well, there she sat. The space on the second floor allocated to him and Phoebe was in utter disarray: scattered stuff, toys, sheets the sleep-deprived Marhita hadn't gotten around to washing, and in the midst of all this was Phoebe, looking like a broken mast. In the nascent twilight, at the same time every evening, she began to cry,

**He didn't dare touch her now. She tensed up, turned as hard as a rock, and broke into tears or started talking.**

as if someone had wound a bizarre clock inside her body.

He didn't dare touch her now. She tensed up, turned as hard as a rock, and broke into tears or started talking. He couldn't figure out for the life of him what she was saying, but it seemed to be something about poems: that she wanted to write, that all of her words had transformed into a wrenched wound, that she was a poet, that life shouldn't treat poets like this, and that she didn't know how to convey her anguish. Ivan listened, but didn't hear her. What did she want from him? Why had she sicced her words on him like ferocious dogs? ...

Ivan could only play with Emilia in the evenings, after work, but the little time he did have was constantly getting compressed, since a surprise lay in wait for him. He'd thought that at least Marhita was on his side, that at least he could count on her. After all, what could be more natural than a grandmother who played with her granddaughter and wanted her dad to play with her, too? ... He wasn't allowed to give her baths, change her diapers, or even wash any of her things, and eventually he was rarely given the chance to hold her. Who knows, maybe Ivan had a knack for parenting. There was no way of finding that out, though. He realized, to his astonishment, that Marhita sought out her granddaughter's company, even though she griped about being exhausted. Maybe she sought out her company just so that she could gripe about being exhausted. These were some really tough equations—tangents and cotangents of flesh and blood. Phoebe, Marhita—now Emilia was growing up—and who knows, maybe the two of them, along with Kateryna Ivanivna, with her horses and goats, could teach his good little girl that language of theirs, the language of women, in which everything is said with a twitch of the shoulder, a quiet laugh, silence, or worst of all—tears, constant, unrelenting tears.

... Styopa didn't know anything about all of that, and even if he did,

**The Neptune Fountain, Market Square, Lviv.**









Left: Market Square, Lviv, with Uspensky Sobor in the background.

he wouldn't have taken the slightest interest in the details, not in a hundred years. He was knowledgeable about rebar, understood the ins and outs of plumbing, had a good handle on things like hardwood floors and two-by-fours—that was the kind of man he was. He could draw up a budget, he could work hard enough to make his veins pop, and he'd strain the veins in his neck like ropes. What did the language of women have to do with him?

That was their domain. Yet if he was doing some home improvement work and Marhita started butting in, as she was known to do, he'd just glare at her and mutter something under his breath. After all, he couldn't just brush Marhita off. They had to wait until summer before they could do any more work on the house, though. He was urging Ivan to go into business with him, open a restaurant, or buy an old house. It didn't have to be downtown or anything. All the bigwigs already had their own cars. Soon enough, the simple folk would too. They'd serve gangsters, police officers, and ...

"And who else, huh?" Ivan asked, which threw Styopa for a loop.

"How should I know? We'll find out once we start feedin' people!"

And Styopa kept talking and talking, saying that you couldn't give up everything in the city in exchange for some metal-filled construction plastic, that they had to preserve their traditions. Meanwhile, the new restaurants served all kinds of

food, of the non-local variety: pizza, hot dogs, Italian-style meat, wilted salads. The waiters were young, inexperienced, not of the caliber they used to be. Ivan knew what Styopa was getting at; he knew that even in the Soviet days, waiters were middle-aged men, the knights of napkins and silver, with impeccable manners, obliging, yet proud. Scurrying serenely around restaurants steeped in the cigarette smoke forever trapped in the curtains suited these men with heavy eyelids.

These were the final outposts of the already-deceased Austro-Hungarian Empire. These restaurants with Romani music. These waiters of the highest caliber.



[...]

Then he got a call from Lviv. It was Andriy Hroma asking him if he wanted to visit. Ivan loaded up his backpack that very evening, told his family he was going, and then walked to the train station. He bought a ticket for the night train, arrived in Lviv the next morning—too early, come to think of it, and traveling during the day would've been cheaper. But it was dark at night, so at least he wouldn't have to worry about his head—it didn't ache in the gloom.

The Lviv train station was bubbling with activity that morning. A mechanical voice announced the schedule. Ivan left the building and ventured over to the tram tracks.

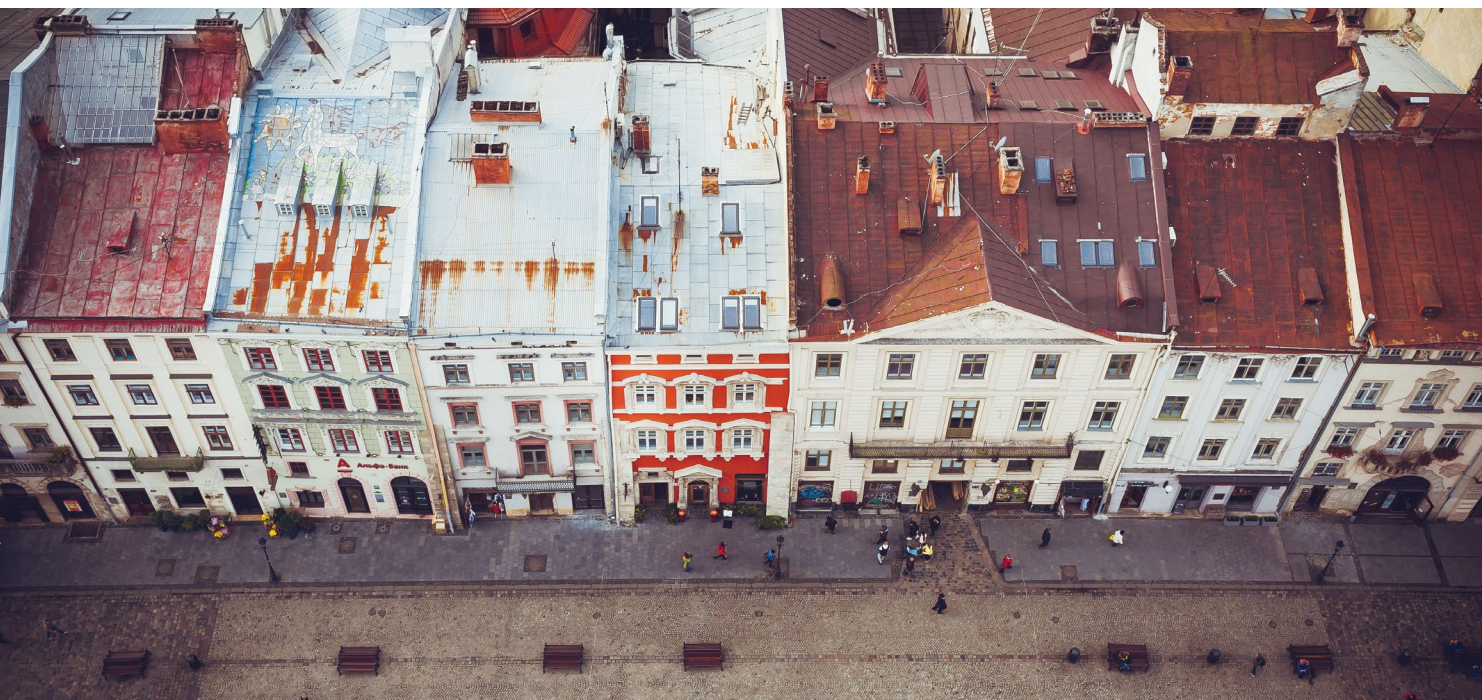
**Here, in this city,  
he loved every  
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his feet, the callous  
cobblestones, the  
stone slums.**

The trams weren't running yet. Ivan sat on the bench at a stop, eventually grew weary of waiting, and started walking, even though he had no clue where he was going. After all, he hadn't talked to anyone about crashing at their place. He wandered down the streets he'd escaped in disgrace several years before that. Here, in this city, he loved every single stone under his feet, the callous cobblestones, the stone slums. He knew the route here by heart, he could do it with his eyes closed.

Once he got downtown, he called Andriy. He said he'd be by Neptune. People traditionally met their dates or just their friends by that fountain outside of City Hall. Tons of people always sat there, on the ledge. Oh Lord, he hadn't seen Lviv in ages, how had he lived without this city for so long?! The sun was shining, but it was still cool. That morning briskness still lingered. The trams were already running, their clattering carrying across Rynok Square, and the square trembled. Ivan knew that tremble could be felt in the nearby apartments, but he also knew that you got used to it.

Andriy ran over about twenty minutes later. Yes, really, ran over.





Crashed into Ivan, embraced him. First they went over to Andriy's, then later on they headed to a café everyone called the Mausoleum because the large countertops made of dark wood really did resemble coffins that had been covered with glass. Plants and piles of pebbles, and who knows what else, lay in the coffins. Thank God Lenin's relics weren't in there. Tymish Hamkalo joined Andriy and Ivan at the Mausoleum. Then they all went to Yarema's. They hung out at Virmenka, one of Lviv's most famous establishments, and drank coffee brewed in a pan filled with sand.

*Top: Aerial photo of downtown Lviv by Alexander Lipko.*

Yarema had opened an arts center in an old stone building, the ones with extremely thick walls.

They could finally all hang out and catch up. Tymish was a programmer. He'd write in the evenings (essays, he said). He was looking to get them published. Andriy had gone into tourism. He showed tourist groups around, did some archival work. He was no longer interested in national politics. His politics were Lviv now. He put up resistance when the city government tried to tear down an important building or sanctioned façade repairs. When they wouldn't listen to people like him, Andriy would draft petitions, hold talks, make his case, present arguments. There hadn't been a gram of anger in him back then, during the Maidan protests, and there still wasn't.

As always, Yarema didn't talk much. He smoked a lot, though. He

spoke about the crushing defeats suffered by the national democratic parties, about the People's Movement that was, according to Yarema, already moving toward a split ("then what? who's going to follow them?"), about the fabricated scandals, about the contract killings, about the collapse of the student movement from within.

"You know," he told Ivan, "we all used to get along just fine. Some of us were nationalists or other kinds of 'ists'; some of us even read Castaneda, but we stuck together. Those things didn't get in the way. Now we got people snapping at each other, sinking their teeth in until they draw blood. Soon they'll rip each other to shreds." Ivan had heard a little about that, but it was particularly painful to hear it from Yarema himself. The nationalists were at odds with the liberals, the liberals

were at odds with the democrats, and the democrats were at odds with the feminists.

Yarema spoke about the rise of the oligarch class. The oligarchs had lots of dirty money behind them, money made on the manufacture of arms, on death, money stolen from the people. What did the national democratic forces have? What did they have besides an idea, stubbornness, less-than-perfect health, and a couple clean shirts? ...

The oligarchs dined with crime lords, went clothes shopping in Paris. They could buy an apartment in Kyiv or several in any other city in the country with their pocket change, while the dissidents oftentimes didn't even have a little nook for themselves.

"So should I be afraid of those oligarch types?" Hamkalo asked, laughing, and they all enjoyed a laugh, except Yarema, who only smiled with the corners of his mouth.

"Do your thing," he said. "Hold the perimeter ..." That's just what Yarema did. He'd been holding the perimeter, and many people had finally felt a sense of security. He supported rock bands. Poets. Artists. In the early evening, they went to a cult establishment—Lyalka.

At Lyalka, people lined the walls because they couldn't find anywhere to sit. Ivan marveled at the masses, which didn't resemble "the masses" in the typical sense. Each person was distinct, not like anyone else. This was a completely different bunch of youngsters, a completely different life, even though not much time had passed since they—Yarema, Tymish, and Ivan himself—had considered themselves young. The girls were

clad in black and wore sophisticated jewelry, the kind nobody in the Soviet Union had. They listened to music you couldn't hear back then. Mertvy Piven was set to perform. It was as though these years had stripped Ivan's nerves absolutely bare; every sound, every movement, every pinch of the guitar echoed long inside him. Misko Barbara said something or other on stage between songs, but Ivan couldn't make anything out. It was all one constant stream: music, words, poetry, faces, the joy of renewed mutual understanding.

They announced the intermission. Ivan and Yarema went outside, lit up.

"It's just time," Ivan thought with sudden realization. "It's just that time has passed." It was because the steel hand that had Ivan by the throat all these years had loosened up. Time had done more to free him of the hobble than any drama could. He'd waited out the scariest part on the banks of his river, in the Malyi Halahov district, like a kid under the covers. He mustered up the courage to ask Yarema about Roza. Yarema glanced at Ivan, didn't say anything for a bit, and then spoke.

"She married Bodya. She's expecting. They live together in his

hometown." Ivan didn't pry anymore.

"Bodya! There you have it," he thought.

He hadn't known who she married. Now he did. Well, what was Roza supposed to do? He just up and left. They didn't even get to talk things through. She had no clue what was going on ... And now it was too late. "It's a good thing she's with Bodya. Bodya loves her." Bodya would never dump her, unlike him, Ivan. "Hope they're happy."

He closed his eyes, and his head started spinning. Roza. The red rose on the black earth. Pregnant Mother Earth who bears life, yet hides the dead inside her. He shuddered. Why was he thinking about the dead now?

"Have you thought about moving here?" Yarema asked. "I know someone who's hiring." He mentioned some mutual friends who had their own business. They always needed well-educated people, especially Polytech grads. Ivan inhaled—not too deeply, because he had a sudden chest pain.

He didn't know what to tell Yarema. Actually, he did. He could tell him that he wouldn't come here without Emilia, that Phoebe wouldn't come with him, and even if



His head didn't hurt from the trip, from the alcohol, from the noise, from his backpack pressing down on the muscles in his shoulders, but now, at home, in this city, he felt the pain.



she did, they'd have to bring Marhita along or start looking for a nanny, because a person who barely ever gets out of their chair can't be a mother, be a friend, and be supportive to a man who's seeking something he can put his efforts into—a major, robust endeavor. But actually, the truth was much more bitter. Phoebe would nag him, Ivan, to death. Or run out on him—no doubt about it she'd gain access to another social circle here! She'd start sporting black again, puckering those lips of hers, wearing coral necklaces ... She would frequent Lyalka, attend galas, start listening to poems and driving herself mad, because what can Phoebe do at home? There was Emilia—there were probably times when she went a while without seeing her—and him, Ivan, whom she hated (he didn't have the slightest doubt about that, for some reason). How could the three of them keep on living? How could they live together? What would happen to their little girl?

He sighed. "I'll think about it" was all he could say in reply. Stars had probably already spilled across the sky, but the streetlights were still on. Ivan couldn't see anything besides the illuminated square, just yellow flashes and the black cobblestones under his feet.

He returned home two days later, took the night train, and walked from the station. His head didn't hurt from the trip, from the alcohol, from the noise, from his backpack pressing down on the muscles in his shoulders, but now, at home, in this city, he felt the pain that had lain dormant for several days suddenly twitch in his head, awakened. Ivan

quietly entered the house—he had his own set of keys—went up to the second floor, their floor, peeked into the bedroom, looked at little Emilia, went out to the balcony, and lit up. A wave of gratitude crashed over Ivan, gratitude for his house, for Lviv, for the trip, for the fact that the pain had so graciously gifted him those days of freedom. Lviv had poured energy into him. All he had to do was find where to put it. All he had to do was craft his life's script. He had to do something, just didn't know what yet. ■

*Excerpted from chapter 3 of Ivan and Phoebe by Oksana Lutsyshyna. Translation © 2020 by Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler. Printed by permission of the author.*

*Oksana Lutsyshyna is a Ukrainian writer and poet—author of three novels, a collection of short stories, and five books of poetry, the most recent published in English translation in 2019 (Persephone Blues, Arrowsmith). Her fiction and poetry have won a number of awards in Ukraine. She holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature from the University of Georgia and is currently a lecturer in Ukrainian studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where she teaches the Ukrainian language and various Eastern European literatures in translation. Her dissertation focused on the Polish writer Bruno Schulz; Oksana spent a year in Poland as a Fulbright scholar. She translates Ukrainian poetry into English in collaboration with the New York-based poet and writer Olena Jennings. The events described in the novel Ivan and Phoebe unfold between 1989 and 1997. The novel focuses on the life of Ivan Chepil, a student at Lviv Polytechnic University, who takes part*



*in the student protests of 1990. Known as the Revolution on Granite or the "first Maidan," these peaceful protests would set the paradigm for Ukraine's subsequent two Maidans.*

*Reilly Costigan-Humes and Isaac Stackhouse Wheeler are a team of literary translators who work with Russian and Ukrainian. They are best known for their English renderings of prose by the great contemporary Ukrainian author Serhiy Zhadan, including Voroshilovgrad, published by Deep Vellum, and Mesopotamia, published by Yale University Press.*

\*Oleksandr Dukhnovych (1803-1865)—writer, Transcarpathian cultural figure, priest, and teacher. He penned the "Hymn of the Subcarpathian Rusyns," calling upon Subcarpathian Rusyns to "leave their deep sleep."



*Above: Oksana Lutsyshyna (Photo by Valentyna Schneider)*