

# ZIVA

## 12 years old

*You are the centre of the scene. Talk to everyone at first, then listen only to Jarilo.*

*White band around your leg, like a chain.*

Dear diary,

you're the only one that can understand me, with all the time you spend locked up in a drawer. But sometimes I let you out and my friends do the same for me.

Right under my mother's nose, and her guardians' as well. They think I'm as fragile as crystal, just because a stupid doctor said I'm allergic to... Well, to everything! But it's a lie. It's some kind of silly joke. Do you want to know how I know?

Because today I put a star back in the sky. Do you think a sickly girl could do that? You don't believe me? Then listen well.

When I was finished with my morning lessons, Svetovit managed to sneak me out.

Not just out of the house, but the garden as well!

He's older and he knows the place well, because his father tends to the plants.

It was the first time in a while that I got so far out, and everyone was there with me.

Borevit (with no violin, though... He's really good at it, while the more I struggle, the worse the music sounds. I would've liked to hear him play again), Kresnik (always so serious, at Svetovit's beck and call) and Tawals (he always cracks me up with laughter).

But then, another boy came. Handsome. Odd. Sweet.

His name is Jarilo and he's travelled as far as the Fingers of Dawn. Can you imagine that?

At the other end of the country. That was where he found the fallen star.

He showed it to me, shiny, beautiful. A true token of love between Polabo and Vendevo, like the stories say.

Then Tawals had an idea: Why not throw it in the bottomless well, the one that sends things into the sky at the other end of the world? A GREAT idea!

We all went to the well, all together, and Jarilo offered me the star.

I took his hand... I don't know why... And we freed it. Together. He was smiling. I was too.

Unfortunately, another boy arrived right then. He yelled that one of my mother's guardians was coming, and he told us to run. I looked at Jarilo, I wanted us to flee together...

But nothing happened. And the guardian got us. I think Svetovit was punished. Again.

I wonder when I will see Jarilo again.

# ZIVA

## 19 years old

*Bring feeling to the scene.  
This is an important moment.*

*White band over the shoulders, like a shawl.*

Dear diary,

the moment we've long awaited has come. We are going to take flight.

Nobody will be able to stop us. Away from our prison, away from my mother's anguish, away from the doctors and from the resentment I feel towards them all.

I haven't been any more sick, nor any less, than anyone else, but for years I was forced to live like a leper, ever since my father's death. He would have allowed none of this, I am certain of it. As far as I know, I am allergic to nothing.

My throat has never swelled up during a meal, nor have my eyes when I opened a window.

I wouldn't be surprised to discover that, in the end, my only allergy is to the needles they use for their stupid tests. But now they're done poking me with them.

I no longer wish to talk about it. Next week we fly away.

Even if I've sworn the opposite to mother, I still haven't decided which courses I shall follow abroad. The truth is that I want to learn everything, because every time I see someone mastering something my instinct is to emulate them.

Why should I ever choose to specialise in one thing?

It's decided, I will be the greatest surgeon-acrobat-violinist in the world!

No, maybe not violinist: The Maw of Dust shall be content with only giving birth to Borevit.

I've tried to give him the third degree, to learn more about other countries, but it's a lost cause trying to get answers out of him. Wherever he goes, he simply lives in his own head.

But guess who I met by chance? Jarilo.

Do you remember him? It must have been seven years, but for me it's like it was yesterday. We crossed each other on the street (I wonder how many occasions I lost, locked up in my own home...) and we started talking and talking.

He has just returned after travelling half the world, yet he looked melancholy.

So I invited him and his brother Viles to the party Svetovit is throwing to send me off.

Dear Svetovit... I shall miss him.

I shall miss Tawals and Kresnik too, of course, but the time has come to spread my wings and take a leap of faith. I wonder where the wind will carry me.

## ZIVA

26 years old

*The scene is bitter, not sad. You want to involve everyone and make them all a part of it.*

*White band over your head, like a veil.*

Dear diary,

today we bury my mother. I feel terribly relieved.

I know it's a shameful thing, but a part of me cannot help but think that I could set off tomorrow, to take my life back seven years late.

I believe it is the same part of me that wants to go back to sleep when I hear the airstrike alarms blaring late at night. Are two years of war enough to get used to it?

I repeat to myself that mother certainly didn't fall ill on purpose, just to spite me.

She would have done anything to make me stay, of course, but not this.

I have witnessed every single moment of her suffering, and pain seems to leak from the very walls of the mansion now. I'd really want this to be over. Yet it is not.

I will be alone, I won't have to look after my mother anymore, but I am still a prisoner in my own home. Nothing ever really changes.

The last, surprising heirloom I got from mother was her Polabian heritage.

She had never spoken of it, but after all it once meant very little to call oneself Polabian or Vendenian. Not like today. It was Kresnik that told me.

They have put him in charge of snooping around all the archives the Dusk Dragon has put its claws on. He wanted to warn me, of course, but he looked more worried than I was.

He is not made for war, he is not made for hunting dissident Polabians.

He fears they may take my mansion, leaving me on the side of the road. I almost hope they do.

As for Svetovid, he is the portrait of the Vendenian hero they put on every poster.

He's on the frontlines now, he has sent many letters to me. He says he'll come home for the funeral, he says that the foreign invaders have almost been pushed back.

I am anything but sure that his victory is mine. Still, it's strange not having him around.

I see Tarvald the most often. He seems to have taken responsibility for all the Polabians in the Maw and my quart of Polabian blood is apparently enough to qualify.

I once received a letter from Jarilo.

He seemed to be a prisoner of his brother Veles as much as I was my mother's.

A prisoner travelling the world.

I'd like to help him, but I'm not even sure I will ever see him again.

# ZIVA

## 33 years old

*Let them think you fragile.  
Then use your strength to solve the conflict.*

*White band around the waist, like a belt.*

Dear diary,

I've made a choice.

Mine is not the story of a miserable girl, trapped in a house that smells like medical equipment, that lost much of her time tending to a person she sometimes hated and will lose the rest in a country too foolish to live in peace. No.

Mine is the story of a girl that can find infinite beauty in every little thing. Even in times of war, even locked up in a house or a deportation camp if need be.

This is the decision I've made.

I will leave the mansion, so that when an official of the Dragon in his dress uniform comes to deliver yet another eviction threat, he will find nobody to read it to.

I will finally leave the Maw of Dusk.

Borevit asked me to go with him, he got a permit from the philharmonic society.

The director must have some weighty connections: I remember him coming to mother's house for dinner from time to time. How quaint, the dear old influence of high society salons put to use to save the mad cellist that plays under the airstrikes.

Could there still be nobility in this world? But how could there not be?

There are things that cannot be buried by bombs.

Jarilo and his brother have been in town often, recently. I've even crossed paths with them.

If only Svetovit knew that I cannot wait to meet them again...

He worries because they are wanted criminals, said to be con men.

They must have taken money from the army. Thinking about it, I cannot help but envy them.

Yes, I envy them, for the only way to avoid being swindled is to become swindlers.

To swindle yourself, to convince yourself that life shouldn't be wasted.

I imagine Kresnik would answer something witty, like that this is the deception that tricks us into really wasting our years. But rather than employing them like he did, meticulously imitating his brother, I would throw them away without a second thought.

I haven't seen Tawals in years. I fear he is... Lost. He was a dear friend.

There are many things I cannot set right, but at least one I can do something about:

I will find Jarilo and we will be together. As for the rest, we shall see.