

The Song of the Siren

The girl hated walking with her family. Every Sunday morning, she was frogmarched round the pond in Mariinskyi Park where other children sailed little wooden boats with cheerful flags. She hung back from her mother and father, who never spoke, who were together but not together, who were nautical miles away from one another. The only sound the girl humming a bewitching song, screaming like a foghorn on the rocks.

That was before The Incident, as her father calls it. When walking together as a family round the park is no longer safe. When it is safer to stay inside the apartment on Lavrska Street. *But away from the windows, mind*, her mother calls out to her. When it is safer to be in the cellar when the air raid sirens call out in the dark, like the sirens in her Greek mythology book with wooden boats on the cover. Luring sailors towards the dangerous rocks.

The girl wishes she could walk with her family in Mariinskyi Park, Kyiv's Park of Eternal Glory, with its monument to the dead. She asks her mother if her uniformed father's safe on the boat, bound to the mast like Odysseus so he can resist the Russo siren song, resist bombs resounding in the sea. Will he hear the quiet flick of a mermaid's tail; the soft, sweet scales of the siren song the girl calls out to him. Luring him away from the rocks, luring him to safer shores. Luring him home.

