



Kids Care

Supporting foster care in Bulgaria to provide a safe home environment for children at risk.

The true story of Robbie From The Cardboard Box

Retold by Nadia Yoncheva

I must tell you the story of little Robbie before the gullible spring takes you away in its sweetness... While reading ahead, please, make sure no chewing gum or TV show distorts your ability to extract pictures from words...

The first picture is dark grey, like a narrow rubble road at sunset. There are vague voices at the end of a hospital corridor, gossiping: "She flew away just an hour after giving birth. What else would you expect? She's got ten more on her own. They're feeding on people's waste."

This is a story of a stray dog, I hear you say? But Robbie's had even worse than dogs' luck. He is one of Bulgaria's abandoned children.

"...and darkness was upon the face of the deep." *

Having spent his first year in institutional care, Robbie is brought back to his family "for reintegration". And here the darkness deepens...

A few months later, the police is notified that a child on a visible age of 1,5-2 years is living in a... cardboard box, by the road. It seems that "the reintegration" was received by Robbie's alcoholic grandfather. His father slacks away in the jail and the womb that sprung Robbie up wanders around the town's dump. His mother has left alone a dozen Miserables in a den, which we shall use all our imagination to call "home". In a matter of days that wretched hut made from vinyl and cardboard is demolished by the city authorities. It's not very clear what happens with Robbie's brothers and sisters afterwards...

"...and there was light." **

Against all logic, Robbie from the cardboard box survives. Like the other inhabitants on the sidewalk, the stray dogs, he doesn't speak human language and feeds on thrown away leftovers. Just like the ancient Greek philosophers, he doesn't know who he is, where he comes from and where he is going. He doesn't even ask himself. For Robbie is hardly aware of anything other than his hunger and fear. He isn't hopeless - Robbie doesn't know what hope is.

...Until there comes the brightest light.

Her name is Tonka. Robbie's heart leaps, when he first finds himself in a loving embrace. He doesn't leave his foster mother from his sight. Robbie is terrified to lose his new mother, who miraculously appeared like lightning, tearing out his cardboard world. He whimpers, shakes fanatically, sucks fingers, his heavy sad tears pouring down, threatening to drown in anxiety even his savior – Mummy Tony.

“And there was evening, and there was morning, the third day” ***

Robbie grows up in love, abundance of care and safety. Only half a year after his escape from his dark reality, he is immersed in a completely different life – the world of maternal affection, joy and laughter. In a few months, the child runs the millennial history of the human race: from inarticulate form of communication to human speech. From inability to dexterity. From the dark inevitability to the brightest hope.

No, this is not another story “It could have been *my child*”. Because it just couldn't!

Robbie's story is even more special. To us it sounds like this:

“We care, because Robbie could have been one of those children. The abandoned children of Mogilino.”****

***Genesis 1:2**

****Genesis 1:3**

*****Genesis 1:13**

****** In 2007, the BBC showed the film "Bulgaria's Abandoned Children"**

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQZ-ERQczj8>). The British public were deeply disturbed and started a petition to the Prime Minister to intervene and put pressure on EU institutions and the Bulgarian government to solve the problem in Mogilino institution for children. Many British, Bulgarian and international charities intensified their effort to solve the problem with abandoned children in the country.

***Robbie From The Cardboard Box* is one of the many stories inspired by the Kids Care Charity. Straight after watching the BBC film, the UK professional with Bulgarian origin Dessi Lambina founded the charity in 2013. Since then Lambina's organisation has taken out 34 abandoned children from the institutions in Bulgaria. Learn more, visit www.kidscarecharity.co.uk**