



Illustration by Eleeza Palmer

Dear Sasha

Where the sun sets in floral hues,
A man named Sasha, a soul so true.
With wiry locks and glasses convex,
Only a thumb could his right-hand flex.

At his dacha, of a village small,
Ukrainian tales in the air would fall.
We sat and sipped on chai so sweet,
And kvass that warmed with every beat.

His laughter repeated, his spirit soared,
Despite the pain his body stored.
Health woes his frame did claim,
Yet, his heart, untamed, aflame.

He joked of the word for ambulance,
Translated is “fast help,” but without
chance.
Calling it “slow help,” with some belief.
In a system so dysfunctional, no relief.

I left his land with a heart so stirred,
A call to heal in my soul occurred.
To the land of the free, I returned anew,
To seek the path where knowledge grew.

In fields of healing, I found my place,
Met souls with pain, yet, full of grace.
The disparities in health did not recede,
In the home of the brave, the same need.

In America’s remote, where farmers reside,
Hesitancies in seeking cure do hide.
A man with a wound, an infection so stout,
Explained to me, “I’ll wait it out.”

Barriers to health are not just miles,
Cultures and disparities are unseen trials.
The social fabric, the context of life,
Play silent roles in health and strife.

I tread the path of medical care,
A niche where hope combats despair.
Inspired by one, the man so grand,
I seek to heal with a gentle hand.

So dear Sasha, I’ll return,
A leader, ready to discern.
In global realms where silence speaks,
I’ll bring the healing that you seek.

And if not to you, then to another,
Grateful that we found each other.
Perspective I grew, on your dacha.
All thanks to you dear Sasha.

—*Martin Bunker*