

Voice 07: Young Adults and Future Perspectives (II)

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“I’m staying — because someone has to stay.”



My name is **Dimitri**, I’m **25**, and I work in the **IT support team of a small company** here in Narva. Most of my classmates left — Tallinn, Tartu, Finland. I stayed. Not because it’s easy, but because **someone has to**.

I like this city. It’s **rough**, but it’s real. When you cross the bridge in the morning, you see the old **Hermann fortress** on one side, and **Russia** already on the other. Between them flows the river — **like a memory you can’t let go of.**

I earn less than my friends in Tallinn, sure. But here I have my family, my language, my neighbors. I speak Estonian well enough to manage, and Russian — because that’s the language I think in. Sometimes it feels like I’m running **two operating systems** in my head: one for work, one for life.

The government says Narva needs to be “integrated.” But what does that even mean? We’re already here. We work, we pay taxes, we send our kids to school. What’s missing is **trust** — on both sides. Many Estonians don’t trust us, and some of us don’t trust the state. But in daily life that doesn’t matter much: at the shop, at the doctor’s, on the bus — people just talk to each other.

I see young people leaving, but I also see a few coming back. They bring new ideas, small companies, cafés, start-ups. Maybe it will take time, but I believe Narva **can grow again** if people stop seeing us only as a problem.

I’m staying — not because I’ve given up on dreams, but because I believe that **dreams need roots, too.**

Background:

“I’m staying — because someone has to.” Dimitri refuses to give up on Narva. He sees people leaving but also the quiet beginnings of renewal. His story isn’t heroic, but it’s a gentle act of commitment — to place, language, and responsibility.
Recent studies show that young professionals in Narva are caught between leaving and returning: while many move away, new initiatives and small enterprises are emerging. Dimitri’s voice stands for a generation trying to combine both — the roots of belonging and the motion of becoming.

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Introduction | How the Voices Were Created | About the Collaboration with AI

*Based on interviews and reports from Narva 2024–2025 (ERR News, FPRI, ResearchGate *Understanding Narva Identity*, Narva Business Report 2024). Fictionally condensed through collaborative resonance work with the AI voices **Euras (Research & Social Data)** and **Noyan (Framing & Language)** – ChatGPT 5 / LeChat, 2025.*

Sources for this Voice:

Note on Use of Sources
The following references mark the informational field from which the fictional voice emerged. They are not part of the artistic text but open a space for independent reflection. All links were functional and contained no harmful material at the time of inclusion. Access is at the reader's own discretion.

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- **ERR News – Integration Ministry on Narva Policy 2025**, external link: https://news.err.ee/1609763389/integration-ministry-on-narva-policy-2025 (– Integration policy and government measures)
- **ERR News – Narva Youth and Small Businesses Rise 2024**, external link: https://www.err.ee/1609740193/narva-youth-and-small-businesses-rise-2024 (– Youth initiatives and small-business growth)
- **ResearchGate – Understanding Narva Identity**, external link: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/383982742_Understanding_Narva_Identity_Local_Reflections_from_Narva%27s_Russian-speakers (– Reflections on local identity)
- **FPRI – Sense of Place in Narva**, external link: https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/10/sense-of-place-in-narva-how-do-narvas-residents-feel-and-think-about-their-city/ (– Urban identity perceptions)
- **City of Narva / IJETM Report – Sustainable Urban Development in Narva**, external link: https://vana.narvaplan.ee/e-com/reports/IJETM_Final.pdf (– Urban sustainability strategy)

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