



Observing the changing reality

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Abstract

This paper shares 'in time' experiences as the war started in the Ukraine and finishes with a hopeful fairytale that the author has written.

Keywords

family, war, displacement, storytelling, hope

Part 1.

Introduction. No turning back.

February 24, 2024. Five in the morning. The phone rings. My friend, who works with the military, informs me that the war has begun, and Kyiv is under fire. The first reaction is a stupid joke, and only then I went to the window and saw how people hastily throw things into cars, and already at the exit from the labyrinth of courtyards of new buildings a traffic jam has formed... somewhere far away I heard the roar of explosions.

I went to make myself coffee. To calm down and continue to act calmly. I had a plan of action in case of war. It is necessary to take the children as far away as possible and find yourself in something useful for defence. Teaching at the university is definitely not the time. That day, the 24th, I failed to take them away. During this day I visited my parents and tried to convince friends that it was necessary to send women and children away from Kyiv... But all in vain, it was on February 24, despite the air raids and hiding in metro stations and parking lots, there was a mass imagination that this would not last long. That we will defeat them, that we are not alone, that the entire civilized world is with us... now I remember these emotions with a smile. We were strong in our naive confidence.

The next day, we left for the West in two cars with three children. We reached a small town in the Cherkasy region, and then they moved to the Polish border without me, and on the way to Kyiv, I turned towards Bila Tserkva. There, on February 27, I joined the ranks of the Union of Officers of Ukraine Detachment, which was part of the Territorial Defence of the city. About the first days of the war, I wrote a fairy tale for the children so that they

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would remember it, so that when the war ended, there would be something to remember. Throughout my service in the Territorial Defence, I wrote stories, some of which were published in the journal "Krytyka" in April-May 2024. My children have been living in Poland for over two years now, they go to school, they don't have air raid alarms and blackouts. Someday they will return to Ukraine. Someday we will get rid of the enemy on our borders. But there will never be a return to pre-war life. This is a one-way road. And we all went through it...

At War as at War

At 5 a.m. I was informed by phone that the war had begun. I didn't even realize it. What was it about? Then, when I heard the sirens, it became clear - about the war. And that the world has changed forever...

The changes in the world began eight years ago. But even these few days are like a movie about changes, only you are in reality, you are in the main role... and in the episodes too...

The first day. Everything is working. In the morning, I calmly watched my neighbours get into their cars. How people wait for supermarkets to open and queue at ATMs. It became embarrassing. But it will get worse... The first day I ask my ex-wife: "Are we taking the children out?" No, she says, not today. Indeed, the city became stuck in traffic jams on the way out. Came to the parents. Everything is good. There is food. Anyway, they won't reach the basement. I talked to a colleague from Russia. "This is all politics, you just need to change your president, don't worry, there will be peace tomorrow." I thought about what to write in response. The most gentle thought: "Burn in hell, you and all your relatives, born and unborn, to the seventh generation." I realized that I was losing my mind. Stopped. Life goes on.

The next three days not to allow myself to lose my mind - my most difficult test...

The second day. The siren sounds. It's far to the shelter, I won't go. Then it turned out that there was a basement in the house. But I didn't want to join the neighbours. We agreed on the phone with the family where everyone would go. Managed to fill a full tank of gas. Finally everyone gathered and left... an empty city. This is amazing! Long road to Cherkasy region. We drove a maximum of 60 km per hour... Evening at the hotel, silence, the children immediately went to bed. We are talking. We haven't spoken to my ex-wife for several years. And here everything that did not give us the opportunity to talk became both unnecessary and secondary at the same time.

The third day of the war. Morning. Had breakfast. In the morning it became clear that Kyiv was closed and there was no point in returning to it. Saw a road sign. Bila Tserkva 75 km. Clear. I'm going there. A friend's brother is an activist of the local community of Donbas war veterans. He will help. I smiled to myself - into the forest, to Kovpak, to the partisans... My childhood and childhood games became reality. Drove through newly built obstacles and checkpoints. The country bristled... I was warmly welcomed in the village near Bila Tserkva. They fed me delicious mushroom soup with homemade noodles, and even bacon with meat veins, homemade bread, oh, this is delicious, I drank compote - I'm alive! It is during these days that food becomes especially tasty.

We need to go to the city. There will be a village gas station on the way.

"Tell them, from me, to the territorial defence, that they will fill it up, even if there is no gas."

"And how will they fill it up if there is no gas?" - it was difficult to ask a more stupid question. The veteran, who is younger than me, smiled sincerely and funny.

"This is our village. Don't worry."

But there was no gas. At all. But still, we got to the city, my little all-terrain vehicle has to pass and arrive.

Then there were searches for gasoline, passing checkpoints, negotiations on how best to go, who to pick up, what to give to whom, and finally - the first task. Deliver a small cargo to the military unit.

Day three. Military evening. Smoking is harmful to your health.

My first task is to take the package to the N-th site, to the military unit. Next to me is my colleague (and now a fighter of our detachment) as a guide around the city. Because the streets are periodically blocked, and you need to know detours and passages. Confident that I am performing an important logistical function, I ask if I can know what we are carrying. Of course. Cigarettes. And there were too few of them, they had to be bought. The shops were closing at 4:00 p.m., so time was short. We decided that we would manage, and, of course, we succeeded... I waited near the checkpoint. I saw how the bodies of trucks were filled with our soldiers.

"Are they going to the front?" "No, they are going to training. There is little time, we need to practice working with weapons." "And further actions?" "Dinner." "Is this a task?" "The most important thing at this time" - and everyone laughs...

Okay. The dinner turned out to be delicious and hospitable in Ukrainian style. I can't eat that much! "Nothing, there's still plenty of time before breakfast." "And what's that?" "This is for appetite."

"And how about driving?" "Not today. You are not registered yet, so you can."

The first day - everything is fine. Although somehow uncomfortable. A kind of Schweik at war. In the morning, we agreed with the guys that let's sign me up for the territorial defence.

So, now you can heroically and patriotically rest, stupidly doze off... but the devil made me read the news... Oh, this dependence on the news, I immediately wanted to write to all my friends and strangers in Russia, and exclusively with swear words...

Day four. Morning.

Breakfast and morning coffee. The coffee is great. I don't know how it works out, but its potency is armour-piercing - my eyes are crawling out of my forehead... After breakfast, we watch the news and slack off. I'm calling.

"So when will I join the territorial defence?" "Well, wait, there are everyday issues here now, don't rush..." "How can I not rush, there's a war here, and I'm not involved..." "Don't rush, if you want candy, there are cakes..." "I don't eat sweets!"

Patience snapped around 11:00, and I dialled the territorial defence phone number. And half an hour later, I was already writing an application to join.

Discussion with the battalion commander. "And what can you do?" "I'm a good driver" "We have drivers - to the f...ck and more." Heavy sigh... "And what is your profession?" "Teacher, scientist, analyst..." "And what do you teach?" "Sustainable development." "What?" "Economics, ecology..." "Got it. To hell with brown eyes..." "I'm sorry." "Well, that's it, nerves. Now the chief of staff will come, let him figure it out."

In 10 minutes, a grey-haired man appeared, who could have been my father by age... for most of the volunteers, he was clearly the same age as their grandfathers.

The grey-haired man looked at me with the tired eyes of a good dog. "To the territorial defence?" "Yes." "Did you write the application?" "No." "So write." "Is there a sample?" "Yes. Look, there's a stack on the right - take any..."

I slowly filled out the form.

The grey-haired man, without looking at the application, put it on top of the pile of applications.

Secretary Nataalka, who was looking at me very cheerfully and kindly all this time and even offered me tea or coffee, nodded almost happily and issued a "Certificate".

"Congratulations. You are in the territorial defence of our city."

I left the building absolutely happy.

Day four. Daytime.

I reached the car. And I realised that I don't have any program of my own actions, and, in general, it's not clear what I will do now... yes, I'm "in business." But in which one?

Returned to headquarters.

Approached the grey-haired man. "What should I do now?" "Wait, we will contact you. You will be on duty, there will be an instruction, but not now, while you are free." "Thank you. I will wait."

The grey-haired man unexpectedly looked at me with interest. "And what is your military specialty?"

I was embarrassed. "I studied at the military department a long time ago, back in Soviet times." "Are you a reserve lieutenant?" "No. I am a senior sergeant of the military medical service. I have a certificate of a Civil Defence nurse." "Did you mean to say - a paramedic?" "No, it's a nurse... But it's not important, because it was a long time ago." "But you still understand pharmaceuticals?"

And here, instead of honestly saying that my knowledge of pharmaceuticals ends with the ability to read the instructions for the use of medicines, I silently nodded. "That's good. We desperately need medicine. Here is the list." "Okay. I'll bring it."

A small group of my friends immediately offered to go to pharmacies and buy...

Olena said that you can use the Internet.

After 10 minutes, it became clear that the Internet does not provide up-to-date information, and medicines disappear within hours. I decided that we need to start somewhere and stop arguing about how to do it best. On the way, the first one was the network "Social Pharmacy". Let's go. Here, half of the list is already there. Information

that we are from the territorial defence, here is the certificate... of course, there, let's help... wait a minute, now... "Masha, do you have... and who has, there are men from the territorial defence here." Olena, offended: "Everyone is equal here, all fighters, regardless of gender."

A few more calls, and we are going to the outskirts of the city, where there are a few more points. It was more difficult with dressings and tourniquets. But they also found them in an hour.

Brought to Headquarters.

At that time, my friend, Boris, was signing up for the territorial defence.

Boris stood over the grey-haired man and explained that all of us who submitted applications today, our group is from the same institute. Abbreviated - BINPO.

"The woman at the registration table for volunteers burst out laughing. Boris shrugged. 'Well, BINGO, let's call it BINGO. Will they give us weapons?' 'What weapons? We have our own weapons. You won't need them anyway. You'll just be observing, informing people about what needs to be done, that's all. The briefing will be later.' We waited for Boris in the yard. Right from the porch, he announced dramatically, 'Congratulations, we're now BINGO!' The deputy chief of staff came out. 'Hey, Bingo, we've got a task for you. We need to equip the headquarters, here's a list.' The list was entirely of office supplies and a computer. I decided to find out what exactly the headquarters meant. A laptop? A desktop? What specifications? 'Where did you find such smart guys? Forget the computer!' But we were BINGO! Within an hour, we had bought everything and brought it back. The grey-haired man looked at it and said, 'Well done, what else can you do?' We replied succinctly, 'Everything.' 'Everything? Okay, here's another list... and then this...' We found the most scarce medicines in Lviv, others in Chernivtsi. The most challenging part was finding medicine in Helsinki, then it was transferred to Krakow, then to Przemyśl, then through Lviv to Bila Tserkva – it took two days. BINGO! Evening. No alcohol allowed... of course, not allowed. But it's not alcohol, said Svetlana, our assistant, who, incidentally, is an associate professor and a candidate of sciences. It's 'aqua vita'! My husband makes it. He's a doctor of science, defended his dissertation at the department of spirits and fermentation technologies, he's one of the best specialists in... 'Scientifically supported moonshining,' Boris cut in. We laughed. There was so much food on the table, it felt like someone was having a wedding. And half an hour later, it turned out that our students were getting married, one of whom, by sheer coincidence, was Olena's son... Everything we manage to think about becomes a reality: wanted a wedding – here's a wedding, wanted dinner – here's a table, as if from a self-setting tablecloth... Lord, can we defeat this Mordor tomorrow? And in my mind, as if in response from Him: 'That's up to you. Because this task is only for the best, and from me – the conditions and inspiration...' So, thank you, God... And Boris added quietly, as if reading my thoughts: 'Thank you, God, that I'm not a Muscovite!'"

Part 2: Currency exchange and navigating the wartime city

Nina, with her two daughters, was driving from Kyiv to Poland. Surprisingly, her Lexus broke down right at our checkpoint. "Her husband is waiting in Amsterdam, but he can't come back for us because they won't let him back across the border. Guys, you

understand..." "Of course." Quietly: "If it weren't for the kids, I'd probably send you off..." My friend and commander bluntly asked, "So, guys, who's going to put them up for the night?" Everyone smiled. I was the first to respond, because I was the oldest. "I've stayed here in Bila Tserkva before, I know the owners of an apartment personally, they offered to rent out their place for a day or two..." The commander nodded. "Go find it." Five minutes later, I reported back. "Found it. (Before that, the dialogue ended with the phrase: "Yevhen, just for you... and of course, it's your responsibility.") We settled her in. For Nina, it was all too modest, without any particular luxury. She noted that the renovation was so-so... but what could you expect from such a... "Such what?" "Excuse me, such a backwater, no offense." "Of course, no offense, they haven't had time to build a Hilton, it got hit by a Kalibr yesterday." "A Kalibr?" "A missile." "I'm not in the mood for jokes." She looked around the apartment carefully and silently agreed to everything. But then there was the problem of not having any cash. So, we needed to find somewhere to exchange it. Today is a weekend, the banks are closed. I asked, "So, you don't have any cash at all?" "Because I didn't think I would be stopping... I have cards, but here, everyone needs cash." "No problem." I turned to my comrade. My friend called an informal currency exchange "entrepreneur." On the other end: "Yes, I'm waiting... but at such-and-such a checkpoint, that's where I'm serving..."

We are going to the second outskirts of the city.

On the way I hear:

- And where is the war? Is it dangerous here? Can something happen between us while I'm with you? And why don't you have some kind of red cross or the inscription "PRESS"?
- Why? I am neither a doctor nor a journalist.
- So that they don't shoot at you?
- And what, did it ever stop the [Russians]?
- Evgeny, I'm afraid, but can we go sooner?
- No, you can't. And why are you afraid?
- Because it's war.
- Where?
- Everywhere.
- There is silence everywhere. The war is in your imagination. Because everything is calm around.
- Is it true that Putin has missiles that can hit a thousand kilometres away?
- True.
- What if we have it?
- Putin does not know that you are with me.
- Your jokes are inappropriate!
- I'm sorry, I always felt a lack of education.

- And for that you need to read books.
 - Thank you. Reading right now?
 - Now you have to drive the car.
 - Maybe read the book anyway? What book did you read before the war?
 - I don't read, I listen.
 - Which one did you listen to?
 - I listened... but you probably don't know.
 - Maybe I know. Drivers sometimes hear something, and in particular, from literature. Well, which one?
 - This is an outstanding modern writer - Daria Dontsova. Do you know?
 - I never read it.
 - Of course... So, it is better to look behind the road.
 - Thank you... I will watch.
 - Why are there so many soldiers here, is it dangerous?
 - It is safe.
 - Why?
 - Because there are so many soldiers here...
 - I don't understand, don't you think so? It's like two plus two! If there is a lot of military, then missiles can come here, which is not clear!
 - For my part, I kind of reason that if there are many soldiers, then "liberators" will not get here, and I like this idea...
 - But what are you saying, this is the 21st century, all civilized people!
 - So, can you be sent to Russia? Through Donetsk?
- One minute of silence.
- Per minute.
- Oh, it would all be over sooner. I am for peace.
 - And I'm for OUR victory...
 - Is it because you are a man and I am a woman, do you feel the difference?
 - There are people. Different sexes, different genders, different personal preferences, different nations and races - and they are all human, but that does not mean that they are all intelligent.
 - So, in your opinion, a woman is not intelligent?
 - These are your words.

- Look better at the road...

Finally, we arrived. There are a lot of cars near the checkpoint. We find a Porsche Cayenne, a white hybrid. This is his. Above the roof is a small yellow-blue flag. In a minute, there is a bearded man with a machine gun near the car.

- Glory to Ukraine!

- Glory to the heroes!

- Are you from Valerik?

- Yes. Are you Volodya?

- Exactly.

- Hello. Eugene

- How much to exchange?

Nina says: "I would like 1,000 euros...".

- No problem, but what is so little?

- I want to cross the border as soon as possible...

- I understand.

Pulls out a piece of money from his pocket. With the speed of a card cheater, he draws something and gives the rest.

- There are 36 thousand here. Recount.

- No, first, are you my euro?

- Why? I trust you. But you are not me? It's okay, I'll wait.

Nina blushes, turns to me and says: "Let's go soon." On the way home, she is silent and carefully counts the money... I enjoy the silence in the cabin.

When she got out of the car and discreetly thanked me, I felt such mental satisfaction, well, almost physiological relief... Is it possible for her to stay somewhere in the Netherlands? Forever. In comfort and well-being. Then he looked at the domes of the small church: "I didn't wish anything bad, did I?"

Part 3.

The most interesting is ahead!

From Kyiv to Bila Tserkva is 70 km, if you believe the sign at the beginning of the Odesa highway in Teremky. And from Bila Tserkva to Kyiv - the same amount... But the road takes more time. A lot more. After all, on the way back, I get into a huge traffic jam, because the documents are checked, the interior, the trunk is inspected. But this is a time for reflection. As a rule, I put on wired headphones and talk to my son on the phone. He always has a lot of questions...

My father is in Kyiv. He lives in his own fairy tale world. In the world there are cakes, cats, "always-not-good" mornings and "unlucky weather" outside the window. And memories live in his world. They change over time. And all stories are told differently, even the characters behave differently.

I have to spend the day with my parents. Most of my peers no longer have parents. And what everyone has is war.

War has become commonplace. A territorial defence patrol walks under the windows at 4 in the morning. I didn't wait for good dreams and got to work. Today will be a long day, with a feeling of loneliness and ghostly unity for important matters. When I drove a car and carried various small things for the army, I felt that life had a meaning. He returned to work as a scientist and teacher. It became sad. Not because there is war around - war is a reality that I have no influence on. War is a challenge to change.

Changes happened in my life - I became deathly bored with what I was doing. Life will require simple professions, skills, perhaps in a few months the professor will not be needed by anyone, and housing will become so expensive that it will not be advisable to stay in it. You can move to the barracks. But while I'm here, I have to answer strange or naive questions from my colleagues. And support students with a kind word. Maybe that's why it's good, it helps to get out of fear and pain. The word should sound sincere. I don't ask for homework because I know it wasn't prepared. Students join online communication so as not to feel alone. And through the roar of explosions, to have hope that life has other colours.

Maybe these are the colours of the primroses blooming in the parks? You can finally go to parks and squares if it is in the city centre. The neighbourhood is still being cleared of mines, and the remnants of the war are being cleaned there... We have to live in a new reality. The colours of life are questions and answers. Why are we here? Why did this happen in our life? Why did some suffer and even die, while others did not?

Why am I in occupation - asks a relative? Why me? Why here? I could have told her that it was because almost everyone took the side of either resistance or security. Surprisingly, among those who believed more in our army than in the search for safe places on the map of Ukraine, wherever they are now, shock and despair are much less. But he didn't say. Everyone was embarrassed. People are naturally afraid of war. But the fact that one of us ends up where we are is our own choice and often not dependent on the will of an individual person - a coincidence of circumstances.

I calmly said that I hope nothing threatening to her life will happen. I have no rational reason to think so. It's like hoping that the clouds in the sky don't always mean rain, and rain doesn't always mean disaster...

Today, I consciously do not want to live with the thought that all our enemies are inhuman creatures. This is a simplified picture of the world. And we cannot survive in a world where we simplify reality. This thought, just in case, is close to me. I want to remember her when I will be filled with a subconscious and, worse than that, a conscious desire, even a demand to the universe - that they all not be among the living... Because then we have to become like them. And we will also become inhumans.

We are different.

Many of our people are now in Europe - from Poland to Iceland... But it's more interesting for me to be here. In difficult times, it makes sense to stay in the front row of the "Life" cinema. We will all win. We have no options. I used to think like this about myself - I have to change my life - I have no choice. It turned out that there was always a choice, and with any decisions, life changes. And now it has changed fundamentally. And it changes further.

There is silence outside the window. I don't hear any shots or explosions...

The most interesting is ahead!

Epilogue. Everything will be fine!

The wolf and the war (fairy tale)

The war came as a surprise to everyone - neither Masha, nor mother or father expected the war. It was an ordinary winter's day, when explosions rang out in the morning, somewhere far away, but everyone quickly got up and a commotion began... Coffee spilled from the kettle onto the stove, dad lost his right boot, and Masha sat sulking and flipping through Vovchik all the time. The wolf was glad to be hugged and hugged, but somehow it was scary and awkward. Something was happening, and what it was - it was unknown... Dad looked at the yard - neighbours' cars were leaving the yard one by one, people were dragging suitcases and large bags...

Dad said alarmedly:

- We have to leave Kyiv.
- Where? - mother answered quietly.
- To the west. Lviv is full of friends and relatives, to uncle Andrii and aunt Oksana, for example...
- Let's go right now, we need to get together

And then something strange sounded.

Masha let go of Vovchyk and said:

- Wolf, it's an air alarm, we should go to the shelter.

Maybe it wasn't Masha who said it, but dad or mom, but Vovchyk knew that he would be with Masha, and together it wouldn't be scary, and if someone attacked Masha, he, Vovchyk, would protect her. Rrrrrrr... that's right!

Everyone left the apartment, the parents had small shoulder bags in their hands, and Masha held on to Vovchyk.

- Wolf, be smart, we are going to the shelter, it will be safe there.

The wolf was silent and watched. They walked up the stairs for a long time and came out into the yard. There were a lot of people there, and everyone was going to the underground parking lot - the place where dad kept the car. Apparently, Vovchyk has never seen so many people in the parking lot...

Everyone was talking in whispers in the parking lot. And listened. There were many people, and people kept coming. Masha held Vovchyk tightly and asked her parents from time to time: "Will it be possible to go out soon?".

Parents did not answer anything. Mom was holding Masha's hand, and dad was talking quietly with the neighbours.

Finally, everyone got up and went to the exit. Masha and Vovchyk were cold because a breeze was blowing from the street in the parking lot, they entered the house in silence and only in the elevator did Masha ask:

- Will it end soon?

"Unfortunately, Donya, it's just beginning," Dad answered sadly.

Masha did not have time to go into her room, when the air alarm sounded again, and they all left the apartment again. On the street, Vovchyk decided that he should use the opportunity to joke, because how long they will be in the parking lot is unknown.

"Well done, Wolf," said dad. I didn't go to the toilet...

The next seat in the parking lot turned out to be long. At first, Masha was watching something on her smartphone, quietly talking to a girl sitting next to her, while Vovchyk huddled close to Masha and carefully watched everyone, carefully, until Vovchyk's eyes began to stick together and it occurred to him to close them and not open them for a moment...

- Wolf, wake up, we are going home!

The wolf ran forward, he really wanted to go home. Dad and mom were silent and upset. The day didn't start at all... And in an hour everyone arranged a big family gathering in the kitchen. Of course, Vovchyk also settled near Masha. Dad said that no one is going to work today. It is not entirely clear what will happen there tomorrow, but a decision must be made - to go or to stay. And he is categorically in favour of "going". Mom said that maybe not today, because roads are in traffic jams, it is almost impossible to move anywhere from Kyiv, and we have a good army and "they" will not take Kyiv...

Vovchyk thought, who are "they" and why would "they" take the city? The city cannot be taken. You can take a sausage, candy, stick on the street... you can't take the whole city. These must be some kind of giants taller than the clouds. And they attacked us? Horror!

Dad said:

- These non-humans [Russians] will stop at nothing. We need to take you to a safe place as soon as possible.

- And you? - asked his mother.

- I have to be here and defend our city.

- You are not a soldier.

- Now all men are military. There is always something and how to help those with weapons...

For some reason, my mother began to cry quietly. Masha too...

The wolf licked the hand of Masha, mother... he was completely lost and did not know how to help them and why they were crying. Are they afraid of giants? But dad will come up with some kind of rocket, huge, awesome, and with that rocket he will fry the giants - he will not have anything left of them! They are stupid if they attacked us!

Masha went with Vovchik to her room. Parents began to gather....

In the afternoon, there were suitcases in the corridor. Masha collected her school supplies and put the Pink Bear on her shoulder bag. The wolf looked at the Bear with surprise. The bear is silent. Never says anything. Why take a silent one with you? It is unknown.

It was early evening. The sun, an almost cloudless sky, a frosty breeze, the end of February and everyone is waiting for spring. And now, as my mother says, everyone is waiting for us to be safe as soon as possible. And we believe in our army...

Vovchyk also believed in our army.

It was warm in dad's car. He and Masha sat in the back seat, and the journey began. It started with a huge queue at the gas station. Mom said she had never seen such queues for gas. Masha and Vovchik got out of the car and walked along the footpath. There they met Tim. Tim is a small English bulldog. He was also driving somewhere in a huge black bus. There will be a big family. Tim told Vovchyk that he was also sitting in the storage room in the morning, and now they are travelling...

- Where are you being taken? - asked Vovchyk
- They say, to Uzhhorod. Our grandmother and grandfather live there.
- And we... dad says to the West, and mom - that we are going to Lviv. There are friends.
- That's good. Everyone needs friends now. We can't do it without friends.
- Tim, mother said that we were attacked by giants and we are running away from them?
- No. Inhumans [Russians] attacked us. That's what my mother says. And our army will fight them and attack them to the fullest.
- How is it?
- I don't know. My dad says that they will not have transfusions. But children and women must evacuate. That is, to go from Kyiv.
- Are you sure that our enemies are not giants?
- I'm telling you exactly. This is some abomination. But all the same, the army and our daddies will fight with them.

Tom was called to the bus. He waved his paw in farewell and ran forward...

Mom got out of the car and approached Vovchyk and Masha.

- Are you not cold?
- No - answered Masha

- Are you scared?

- No. Maybe a little.

- Everything will be fine. I hope we will refuel in half an hour. Dad took a canister so he wouldn't have to look for gas on the road. We will be in the evening, and maybe a little at night. So, make yourself comfortable so that you can sleep together in the back.

- Yes, mother. We will now prepare a bed for Wolf and Pink Bear.

Masha approached the car. And while Vovchyk and his mother were waiting for her, she arranged a bucket of shoulder bags and things there.

Finally, they left. The road was long. The sun disappeared behind the trees, which were extremely dense, it got darker, under the light of headlights Masha saw many cars. They were all going west. Where shelter was waiting for everyone.

Mom, won't there be air alarms in Lviv? - asked Masha, when the surrounding darkness became solid.

- I called Oksana. She said that there are worries there too. These inhumans [Russians] shoot rockets all over Ukraine. But it is safer in Lviv.

- Will dad stay with us?

- Yes. But only for the night. Because he has to come back.

And Masha repeated it for Vovchyk, as if he did not immediately understand.

- Yes, Wolf, dad needs to go back...

Vovchyk agreed and leaned closer to Masha. It was so warm and everything was fine...

At night they reached Lviv. There was an air alarm. But there were many different cars on the streets - both large and small. Vovchyk saw how a huge green car drove past them, on top of which sat men in helmets with weapons.

- Look, Vovchika, these are our soldiers. They will not let the enemies come here...

- Will they destroy our enemies?

- Yes, Wolf, because this is our land and...-

- And the truth is behind us, and that's why we are invincible! - said mother unexpectedly.

Despite the night, aunt Oksana and uncle Andriy were waiting for them at the entrance, they quickly walked to a large but cozy apartment. Vovchyk immediately went to study all the rooms, but mom said that his and Masha's room was on the left down the corridor, and it was indecent to be too inquisitive and curious. While the adults talked for a long time about something in the kitchen, Vovchik ate delicious dry food and fell fast asleep...

In the morning, before breakfast, dad approached Vovchyk, stroked him and said:

- Listen, Vovchyka, I will soon go back to Kyiv, but I will leave you a magical micro-transmitter, it will be inconspicuously attached to your collar. That's it. - And still something clicked. - This is our connection with you. Only you can see me in your mind

and only you will tell Masha how I am doing. And I will know from you, like Masha and mother. This is a new development of our scientists, it works only with dogs, and if you can handle it, we will always be in touch.

"Okay," Vovchyk nodded. - I will try very, very hard to cope!

- You are well done! I believe in you, - and dad hugged Vovchik, and then punched him right in the wet nose.

The wolf sneezed and smiled up to his ears...

- Wow, you're our smiley dog!

The wolf now shared a secret with his father. He is already an adult and has his military task.

Soon, dad packed up and left for Kyiv. But before that, the adults, all together, talked for a long time in the kitchen, and later Masha and Vovchyk learned that their journey continued. Today they will still be in Lviv, and tomorrow morning Uncle Andriy will drive them to the Polish border, and then they will go on foot. But not for very long. Because their friends - Uncle Jacek and Aunt Jadwiga - will be waiting for them on the other side. They have two children - a boy Andrzej and a daughter Helena. And they will live in a private house in a Polish town with a strange name - Bielsko-Biała.

But Vovchyk was thinking about his military task. He himself called this task a military task, because if someone in war has a task, it is a military task. In order to know how dad was, you had to think about dad very, very hard, and he would see him. Therefore, to practice how this happens, Vovchyk hid in the corner of the room, near the sofa, and began to think about dad.

And that's what he soon saw!

Dad was driving a long road, and he was thinking dreamily about something... He was thinking about how to win Victory and preserve our country, how to get rid of such an insidious and evil neighbour, which is Russia, and how we should live next to such an abyss of evil. Vovchik wanted to give Dad something to advise, but no good idea came to his mind. And then he mentally invited Masha to come up with something so magical that where they are thinking about the destruction of Ukraine and Ukrainians, that there they ... they ... Masha, well, help me!

And then, like a dream, the following appeared before Vovchyk.

Area. On one side - a church with several domes, and next to it - a dark red brick wall, behind the wall - a huge palace, and in front of the wall - an inconspicuous house on which you can see the letters - l,e,n,y,n. Nearby is a tall tower with a clock... And then Vovchik sees an explosion. The big tower with the clock is completely crushed, then everything behind the wall is torn apart, and the last to be destroyed is this inconspicuous house... and above the ruins of these buildings, high above the cloud of ash, huge yellow letters that shine brightly in the blue sky: Glory to Ukraine! Which are replaced by other letters in a minute: Glory to the Heroes! And on all televisions, computers, gadgets, in this entire state - the same picture. Ruined buildings made of dark red bricks and letters in the sky: Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!

For some reason, Vovchuk knew that this was the capital of this hostile state, and that the people living there, instead of their hatred for Ukraine, felt fear and despair, because huge letters were staring at them from all sides, and the sky itself became a huge flag of Ukraine.

And dad stopped the car. And also, like Vovchuk, looked at it. And then quietly said:

- Wolf, thank you! But we all still have a lot of work to do to make your imagination a reality. But we, all together, all Ukrainians and our friends around the world, will do it. Feel the millions of hands that help us, give shelter to our women and children, put weapons in the hands of our men and inspire us with faith in our common Victory over the enemy.

And there will definitely be a clear blue sky over our Ukraine. And our fields will be golden from good cereals. For good people.

In the meantime, Vovchuk, be with your mother and Masha.

Everything will be fine!

Bila Tserkva - Kyiv, 2022-2023.