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Play

Me, war and toy granade

Original name /  
translated

Я, війна і пластикова граната

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**24 HOURS**

(tr. by, ed. by Paulien Geerlings)

*ANTON, 35y*

*LIKA, 32y*

4:40

ANTON: I was 18, I was standing in the square with the other guys.  
I studied philosophy, absorbed the texts of Homer and Ovidius.  
I wanted to learn ancient Greek and Latin.  
I didn't want to be trained for the army.  
They said: This is not an army. This is just in case.  
We were given Kalashnikovs and were taught to assemble and disassemble them.  
We bandaged our heads, pinched our arteries and made stretchers.  
We pretended to be mummies crushing a zombie rebellion.  
We were sure we would never need this for real.  
We were convinced that we were just killing time.  
We were just unlucky to be born as boys and have two extra hours on the student schedule.  
Because there was a big war that was never going to happen again.  
But the memory of this war lives in the minds of injured soldiers.  
They caught us from the library and made us crawl on our elbows.  
They taught us how to make bandages and throw plastic grenades.  
Just in case. In what fucking case?  
Soon, men who can fight will be banned from leaving Ukraine.  
In my hands I clutch a toy grenade and throw it at invisible enemies. And then I turn around and run, run, run, run.

5:00

ANTON: Wake up!  
LIKA: What?  
ANTON: Siren.  
LIKA: This is just a test.  
ANTON: It is not a test.  
LIKA: Yesterday they said...  
ANTON: It's 5 o'clock in the morning. This isn't a test.  
LIKA: Are they already here in Lviv?  
ANTON: They are in Kyiv.  
LIKA: But not here.  
ANTON: Get up, Lika! We need to do something!  
LIKA: Do what?  
ANTON: Buy food and withdraw money.  
LIKA: I need to make coffee.

8:00

LIKA: Where do all these cars go?  
ANTON: To the border.  
LIKA: A traffic jam from here to the border?  
ANTON: From here to the border.  
LIKA: But this is impossible.

ANTON: Mobilization was announced. Soon they will close the border.

LIKA: Anton...

ANTON: Soon men won't be allowed to cross the border. For me, this is the last chance.

LIKA: But it's a 60 kilometers of traffic jam!

9:00

LIKA: Listen, a traffic jam is just to the gas station.

ANTON: Men are not allowed to leave Ukraine.

LIKA: This is just a line to the gas station.

ANTON: Did you hear me? Men are not allowed to leave.

LIKA: They won't go to the border.

ANTON: You will go alone. Just with the children.

LIKA: I will not leave.

9:30

LIKA: The war started in my country today. The war is coming with wailing sirens and sprawling explosions at airfields at 5 a.m. Many kilometers of tanks, columns, crawled into my country from all sides, biting into her body like a bloodthirsty creature. But my city is on the west, on the safe side. I withdrew money at an ATM, I bought coffee, croissants, avocados, salmon. I eat breakfast. I look out the window. There is no queue of cars anymore - the gas station is out of gas. The sun has risen. Now the children will wake up and we will go to the park. So far so good. It's safe here for now. It's safe.

12:00

ANTON: Pack a backpack, quickly, they have two seats in the car. Departure is in an hour.

LIKA: No.

ANTON: They are waiting for you.

LIKA: No.

ANTON: I arranged everything.

LIKA: No.

ANTON: Lika!

LIKA: Anton.

ANTON: Please don't make this difficult.

LIKA: It's safe here.

ANTON: When there is a real danger, you won't have a chance to leave! It will be a mess. It will be too crowded. Are you going to break through the crowd with the children? Are you ready to walk over the bodies of elder people, children and pets? There will be no food soon. Are you ready to eat rats?

When they just bomb one power plant, we won't have light and heat anymore. Do you know how to make a fire? Are you ready to cook the rats on the fire?

LIKA: Pigeons.

ANTON: What?

LIKA: We have a bow. We will hunt pigeons. (*Pause.*) I'm kidding.

ANTON: You have to think about the children.

LIKA: This is a children's bow.

15:00

LIKA: We were watching the news in the bathroom.

My son asked: Why are you crying? Why are you crying? Who has hurt you? Did someone hurt you?

And my daughter said: He hurt her. The stupidest. The stupidest one. One, who send these stupid rockets. He hurt me too. I'm so mad at him. I'm so hurt. Because of him I did not go to kindergarten. Because of him we must sit in the bathroom. Because of him, mom is watching the stupid news all the time. Because of him and because of his rockets. Because of his tanks and his soldiers. I saw, I saw, I saw these tanks. I saw, I saw, I saw these rockets. In this stupid news. I hate the stupidest. I hate him.

My son asked: What rockets? He loves rockets. My son loves rockets that fly in space, fly to the moon. Good rockets. Everything else he does not seem to understand, only rockets. He understood that the rockets offended his mother. And my daughter said: Stupid rockets. Stupid, stupidest. Bad rockets. I'll shoot these rockets down, yes, I'll catch them, yes. I will catch the stupidest. I'll bite his hand. I want to bite him. I want to bite off his hand. Oh yeah. That's what my daughter said. And she bit me.

Yes, yes, said my son. He was catching imaginary rockets and was biting my hand. He liked this game.

16:00

ANTON: I want you to leave. You should be in a safe place. To keep my children safe. It will be easier for me. I can handle it by myself. It will be easier to survive alone. We can't feed four mouths. You can't stand without water and electricity. There will be nothing to wash asses, there will be nothing to drink. There will be no croissants, Lika.

LIKA: I will survive without croissants.

ANTON: I say it will be easier for me without you. I will enlist in the army, take up arms, live at checkpoints, if we lose this war, we will retreat to the mountains, we will become partisans.

LIKA: I thought you didn't want to fight. I thought you wanted to leave Ukraine.

ANTON: I don't want to fight. I have no choice. But you have.

LIKA: Ok, then let's divorce.

ANTON: What?

LIKA: Let's get divorced. You will take the children and go abroad. And I will enlist into the army, take up arms, if we lose this war, we will retreat to the mountains, we will become partisans. Let's divorce.

ANTON: So, do you want to divorce, right now?

LIKA: Then we will get married again. If we want.

ANTON: Or won't want.

LIKA: Or won't.

19:00

LIKA: Fondue!

ANTON: What?

LIKA: Fondue! One hundred years have not cooked fondue!

ANTON: And you decided to cook a fondue today?

LIKA: I love fondue!

ANTON: Oh, now I get it.

LIKA: Finally!

ANTON: You're crazy.

LIKA: Thank you for your support! Anton, it was you, who brought home six loaves of bread? Tell me why? Bread will be moldy after 2 days. What am I supposed to do? I dried them. We still have some cheeses, wine, and Provence herbs. In a French restaurant, such a dinner would cost 100 euros.

ANTON: Lika... My incredible Lika! Do you know what I think? I think that's great. I think you are a cooking genius. Here's what we'll do. Now, we are eating this fantastic fondue, drinking a glass of wine, dancing and playing board games. And tomorrow morning you will pack your ass, take the children and get on the bus. Beautiful, comfortable double decker bus. If you want to go to France, go to France. Fondue, Provence herbs, croissants, you have always liked that. You will be sheltered, find a job, the children will go to kindergarten for free. You will have your hands free. You will get to realize all of your talents.

LIKA: I don't want to "realize my talents."

ANTON: So what the hell do you want?

LIKA: I want to stay in this dump. Without light, water and food. Without money and future. In fear and danger. I want you to stop putting me on the bus and eat this fantastic fondue before it's frozen!

22:00

ANTON: It was curfew and we turned off the light.

LIKA: Are we playing hide and seek, my daughter asked?

ANTON: I don't see anything, my son said.

LIKA: Let's turn on the flashlight, I said.

ANTON: And I will be a crocodile. (*Makes a shadow with his hands*) Click click click.

LIKA: And I will be a bird and fly (*make a shadow of a bird*), my daughter said.

ANTON: And I will be a deer and hit you with my horns (*same*), my son said.

LIKA: And I will build a hut, I said.

ANTON: Right in the hallway, I said.

LIKA: And we will live in it, they shouted.

23:00

LIKA: What the hell do I really want? I want you to hug me. To huddle together on the floor of our tiny hallway of our tiny apartment in our tiny town like two tiny dots on the body of a huge country of a huge planet of a huge universe. In which bombs explode, volcanoes turn, stars collide. Burning everything around, turning to ashes, destroying cities, destroying destinies. But now we are together, we are home, and there is love between us and our world still holds. Tomorrow I will get on a bus full of crying children and women to stand in line for 24 hours to cross the border. But today I am here. We are here. Today.

4:40

ANTON: Darkness is coming from the East. Death, destruction, poverty, hunger and despair. The hours crawl by, and mile by mile, darkness creeps into my home. Bombs. Screams. And then those pauses of quiet in between, the uneasy smog resting over my home. "Is it over?" And then, there's the cruise missiles. Missiles that fly hundreds of kilometers in a few minutes and hit any house anywhere in the world. But in my imagination, they hit my house, a ten floor panel building, where my wife and children are sleeping in a corridor that ghostly protects with two blank walls. And in these dreams, they are protected from the ashes and the dust and the smog and the bombs and the screams and the darkness and... I have learned, like a child, to be afraid of the dark.

I have to confess: I'm a bad warrior. I was not created for that. I only fight well in total war. I'm a good strategist, but I don't shoot well. I'm afraid that if I try to shoot someone, they'll shoot me first. That's what our soldier said, that there is a shock wave that hits the shooter. A person who has never shot in his life cannot shoot. Not everything happens for the first time. There are things that should never happen at all. I don't even eat meat. I was not created for that. It will be easier for the army without me than with me.

And one more thing... I don't want to die. Neither as a hero, nor just like that. I don't want that at all. I want to live. Buy a house, get a mortgage. Hang up a hammock in the garden, make an open-air cinema. I want to travel. I've been almost nowhere, although I still could, I could go to a club in Berlin and dance the night away, learn to dive deep before the coral reefs are extinct from global warming, I could go the way of St. James in Spain...

And yet - I cannot sleep. I'm protecting my family from the darkness I can't hold. I'm reading the news. I'm listening to sirens. I'm thinking about calls, buses, trains, humanitarian aid, about cats left in locked apartments, about buying medicine, about the bombing of Kharkiv, about parents with whom I lost contact, about medical care, about barricades. On the right to bear arms. About shooting training. That I can pull the trigger at least once, even if I lose touch, once I can. I can.

(transl. by Iana Gudzenko, ed. by Paulien Geerlings)

LISA, MIKE, SASHA, I, 17y

Mike wrote: Whoever runs away is a traitor.

I wrote: What's happening?

Sasha wrote: My windows are shaking.

Lisa wrote: Fuck... My parents are packing our things. We are leaving in 10 minutes. I don't know where.

Mike wrote: You have to stop them.

Lisa wrote: I can't.

Sasha wrote: That was a bomb!

Mike wrote: We had an agreement.

Lisa wrote: Don't be a moron. They decided without me. They didn't tell me anything.

Sasha wrote: Lie on the floor.

Lisa wrote: I'm leaving.

Mike wrote: I can't believe it.

Sasha wrote: If a fucking bomb hits your house right now, you'll be dead.

I wrote: Do you hear that?

Sasha wrote: What the fuck?

Mike wrote: Lisa you're a rat. Don't come back to Ukraine, ever.

Sasha wrote: Shut up. Her parents decided for her.

*Mike deletes the last message.*

*Sasha deletes the last message.*

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The teacher wrote:

There will be no classes today. Stay safe. Watch the sirens. Go down to the shelter. Pack your backpack. Bandages and iodine. The medicines you need. A bottle of water. Biscuits. Flashlight. Needle with thread. Money. Documents. Powerbank. Phone.

Write your name on your hand. Blood type. Phone of relatives.

If the explosion is near — run to the bathroom.

Keep in touch. Breathe deeply.

It will all end up in history textbooks.

Mom said:

What we all feared did happen. Dad went out to take some cash from the ATM and to buy some food. At grandmother's, it is quiet. At aunt Valya's, explosions are heard. The president ordered everybody to stay home. The worst thing is panic.

The worst thing is the journey. Those who are about to give birth are in the worst position. It's not the worst for us. Have breakfast and we'll check where the basement is.

Dad said:

Lines are everywhere. At the ATM - an hour. At the store - an hour. At the gas station, there is a fight. The worst thing is panic. The main thing is not to panic. How are you?

I said: I'm OK.

---

*Siren.*

Mike wrote: Hey guys, how are you?

Sasha wrote: It's a fucking nightmare.

I wrote: I am ok. I am in the basement.

Mike wrote: My Dad joined the territory defense.

Sasha wrote: And what does he say?

Mike wrote: He says it's hell. Landing in Gostomel.

I wrote: It's scary here. Dusty. Hard to breathe. There is nothing to sit on.

Sasha wrote: We are in the parking lot.

Mike wrote: Well, don't stay there.

Sasha wrote: Can you go to another place?

I wrote: I do not want to stay here. Here are too many panicking grandmothers.

Mike wrote: If a missile hits, the basement will be destroyed anyway. There are more important things to do.

Sasha wrote: What things?

Mike wrote: I'm going to help daddy to build a checkpoint.

Sasha wrote: Your dad is an idiot, if he let you do that.

Mike wrote: Say this again about my dad and I'll kick your ass.

*Sasha deletes the last message.*

*Mike deletes the last message.*

*Siren stops.*

I wrote: Alarm is off.

---

Lisa wrote: I'm in real hell. We are two days on our way, and we still haven't crossed the border. Fuck. Traffic jams everywhere. I've gotten acne because of stress. I can't take it anymore. My parents do not allow me to use my phone. They are worried Russians can transmit a signal. What? They have paranoia, they think a fucking cyber-drone is hunting for a mobile signal to bomb us. It is so surreal. To

bomb mobile phones? I asked to go to the toilet to write a couple of words to you.

How are you?

I wrote: I am ok.

---

Sasha wrote: Don't listen to Mike. This is not an adventure. Sit in the basement. 8 year ago it was the same in Donetsk. A lot of people died. I know this well. Soon it will be the same here.

I wrote: Everyone who's fleeing is a traitor.

Sasha wrote: It's so stupid, to stay here and just die.

I wrote: My parents are doctors. They will not go anywhere, they have to be here. They believe there is no reason to panic.

Sasha wrote: We'll probably leave in a few days, when the roads are unloaded. If you want, there is one more place in the car.

I wrote: Are you kidding me?

Sasha wrote: When the Russian soldiers come here, it will be too late.

---

Mike wrote: Hey guys, there is work to be done for you.

I wrote: What kind of work?

Mike wrote: Make molotov cocktails.

Sasha: My parents won't let me do that.

Mike wrote: You're not going to stay the whole war in the basement, are you?

I wrote: See you in 15 minutes.

---

### *At Mike's place*

MIKE: 1/3 motor oil,

2/3 gas,

Rag,

Cork,

Scotch,

Thirty bottles.

I: The best fucking thing that happened to me in this war.

I: Where did you get so many bottles?

MIKE: My dad and I were collecting.

I: I see you are prepared.

MIKE: Do you want a cigarette?

I: Maybe.

MIKE: It's best to aim at the barrel of the tank. This is the most vulnerable place. If you hit it - Splash!! and they will lose their shit.

I: Do you think we will win?

MIKE: I'm sure. Our gays won't give up. Never. We will fight.

*Siren.*

I: Damn, this siren again.

MIKE: I dont give a fuck.

I: Should we go to the bathroom?

MIKE: It makes me mad that they try to put us in fear. I hate this shit. If a rocket really flies here I'll show my cock to this rocket. Go fuck yourself, Russian rocket. Fuck off russian rocket ! Fuck off, fuck off!

I: Everyone can hear you, Mike (*laugh*).

MIKE: I don't give a damn, I'm not embarrassed. I don't want to hide. Do you want to hide?

I: I don't want to either.

MIKE: Then do not hide.

I: I'm not hiding.

MIKE: So don't hide.

I: I'm not hiding.

*Siren stops. The kiss.*

MIKE: How are you?

I: I am OK.

---

Sasha wrote: What are you doing?

I wrote: I can't sleep. And you?

Sasha wrote: I just had a nightmare

I'm so fucked up

I'm scared

In my dream

I'm in our old apartment in Donetsk

The Russian soldiers are coming

I want to run away

They grabbed me

They tied me up and they shot me

I have a hole in my stomach

A real hole

And then in my dream

I wake up in my bed in Irpin

I'm cold

Someone is knocking on the door

I go to see who it is

And I open the door

Instead of a house there is a huge hole  
The hole from an explosion  
I'm standing on the ninth floor  
Looking down  
And my house is destroyed  
My apartment is destroyed  
I'm dizzy  
And I fall down  
And I wake up  
I crawl across the field  
Quietly, on my elbows  
I know that the soldiers are nearby  
I need to move a little forward  
And I will be safe  
But out of the corner of my eye I notice a tripwire  
And I do not have time to remove my hand  
And I touch it  
And I collapse  
And then I exploded into 1000 pieces.  
I wrote: Did you write your name on your hand?  
Sasha wrote: On my hand. On my shoulder. On my leg. On my abdomen. On my neck.  
I wrote: Well, then you will be put together.  
Sasha wrote: Now I feel better. ( *Smiley* ).  
I wrote: Sorry, I am not a psychologist.  
Sasha wrote: Don't tell Mike about this.  
I wrote: Why would I?  
Sasha wrote: Just don't tell.  
I wrote: I won't tell.  
Sasha: We are leaving tomorrow morning. You can come with us.  
I wrote: I'm staying here.

---

Lisa wrote:  
Here is no signal. We are in Germany, in the middle of nowhere. Farm. Fields. Chickens. Pigs. And me. The city is 15 kilometers away. But they give us bicycles. Fucking bicycles... We have so much food here. Bread is so tasty, but my ass is so big now. They brought for us some humanitarian aid. They told we will be here for a long time, that's why we need a lot of clothes. They told me to learn German. I don't want to. I wanna go home.  
How long do you think this war will last? Maybe you could come here, in Germany? It would be more fun.  
I wrote: Go fuck yourself.

---

Sasha wrote: Fuck... They are here.  
Mike wrote: This can't be.  
Sasha wrote: Russian tanks are in our street.  
Mike wrote: Dad doesn't answer.  
Sasha wrote: This is an occupation.  
Mike wrote: We will fight.  
Sasha wrote: This is a very, very bad idea.  
Mike wrote: Let them come closer.  
Sasha wrote: It's stupid to resist.  
Mike wrote: I'll treat our guests to a cocktail.  
Sasha wrote: How?  
Mike wrote: From the balcony.  
Sasha wrote: Don't do this, Mike, you will be shot.  
Mike wrote: Wow, this cocktail shit is so cool.  
Sasha wrote: It's dangerous.  
Mike wrote: I want to treat them to dangerous shit.  
Sasha wrote: Don't do it Mike.  
Mike wrote: Go fuck yourself, russian idiots! Try that!

*Mike sends a burning fire smiley*

---

I: I slept in the basement. It banged all night, but I didn't wake up. And when I woke up, it was as dark as night, and I didn't know what time of day it was, and I couldn't remember where I was, and I even forgot that there was a war.

Mom said: They are already in town. We need to sit quietly. They walk around the apartments.

And then I wrote:  
How are you, Mike?  
How are you, Mike?  
Mike, are you here?  
Don't do that, Mike.  
Don't throw a cocktail.  
Wait for your dad.  
Don't throw, please.  
Hide it in the pantry.  
Hide it as far as possible.  
They walk around the apartments.  
If they find it, you're dead.  
I'll get out of here soon and come to you.  
I'll ask my mom to let me go.

Wait for me, please.  
It was cool to be with you, Mike.  
I dreamed of you all night, Mike.  
Write to me, Mike.

I was sitting and waiting for him to read it. We never call each other, we just write.

I was thinking: perhaps the phone was discharged. Perhaps, the network was dead. Maybe dad took him to the territory defense and they retreated to Kyiv. Maybe he threw the cocktail and hit the place where the tank's head is attached to the body. Maybe he will be given a medal and a pension for it. As a veteran of hostilities. I imagine how he will flaunt it. His photo will be on the board of honor: Mike Putylo — the pride of the school — destroyed the troops of enemy occupiers.

Then, the network was gone. Then the phone discharged. And I did not write anymore.

For a week we lived in the basement, ate crackers and drank water. Then my mother and I walked to Kyiv. Through the ruined city, the ruined bridge, the bombed road. Then we were picked up and put on a train to Poland.

Dad stayed in the hospital.

We were housed in former barracks on the outskirts of Przemyśl. In small rooms with a toilet in the hallway. In the room there was a socket and I switched on the phone.

Nothing from Lisa.  
Nothing from Mike.

Sasha wrote: On the twelfth day we left through the green corridor. I wanted to pick you up, but I didn't know where to look for you. I'm very worried. Write how you are.

I wrote: I am OK.

### 3

## **DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL**

(tr. by Olha Drobotai)

*sleeping district in Kyiv, post*  
*Roma 30*  
*Slava 33*

ROMA (*carries a little cake with a candle*): Happy Birthday to you...  
SLAVA: Roma?...  
ROMA: Happy Birthday to you...  
SLAVA: Cut it out.  
ROMA: Happy Birthday, dear Slava. Happy Birthday to you...  
SLAVA: Come on, why?  
ROMA: Bless you!  
SLAVA: I asked you not to...  
ROMA: Come on, make a wish!  
SLAVA: Have you shaved your hair off?  
ROMA: Well, I'm a warrir, kinda.  
SLAVA: Your ears are sticking out.  
ROMA: Blow the candle.  
SLAVA (*blows the candle*): That's it. Basta. I'm on duty.  
ROMA: I baked it myself by the way.  
SLAVA: We are not supposed to be seen together.  
ROMA: Are we doing anything wrong?  
SLAVA: We are distracting.  
ROMA: Are you gonna try?  
SLAVA: I don't eat on duty.  
ROMA: Ok, let's throw away.  
SLAVA: Oh, just give me. Don't be mad.  
ROMA: It's just not what I expected.  
SLAVA: I'm on duty.  
ROMA: So I'm needless.  
SLAVA: I'm sorry (*tries the cake*). It's delicious, what's that?  
ROMA: Fig.  
SLAVA: I love it.

ROMA: It wasn't easy. Supermarkets are empty.

SLAVA: Do you wanna hear what I wished for?

ROMA: It won't come true then.

SLAVA: Yeah. It won't.

ROMA: I though you wanted this war to end.

SLAVA: Crimea to be free.

ROMA: We'll see.

SLAVA: I wanna swim in the sea, eat peaches and listen to jazz in Koktebel. And I never wanna see a fucking greenman and a red passport. Ever again

ROMA: We just have to wait.

SLAVA: That is the only place where I'd like to get married.

ROMA: Me I hope.

SLAVA: You. Officially. Invite friends, relatives, have a huge party, say those vows, take cool photos for Insta.

ROMA: Throw the bouquet.

SLAVA: We don't have to throw the bouquet.

ROMA: We can throw the bouquet.

SLAVA: Do we have to throw the bouquet?

ROMA: Can we throw the bouquet?

SLAVA: And a wedding cake.

ROMA: With two black swans.

SLAVA: Why not unicorns?

ROMA: And the first dance to «Океан Ельзи»... Обійми мене, обійми мене, обійми... так лагідно, і не пускай... (they start dancing)

SLAVA: I'd also like to tell the officer...

ROMA: Обійми мене, обійми мене, обійми...

SLAVA: Tell the officer that I'm gay.

ROMA: Are you fucking mad?

SLAVA: Did you hear what he said yesterday?

ROMA: He said a lot of things yesterday.

SLAVA: But did you hear what he said?

ROMA: What did he say?

SLAVA: When I brought that man...

ROMA: The saboteur?

SLAVA: The one that marked the clinic. When I spotted him, I ...

ROMA: Hit the shit out of him.

SLAVA: I didn't know what to do. I'd never hit anybody before. I yelled: stop!. He had to stop. I thought he would stop. But he ran. I ran after him. And when I got him I punched with a stock. And he turned to me and nearly got my gun. My gun! Am I even a soldier if I lose the gun. I punched him. I really did. With all my strength. He fell. I got the gun. I punched him again. I yelled. I yelled from fear. I nearly lost my gun.

ROMA: But you got him.

SLAVA: Pure luck.

ROMA: You did what you had to.

SLAVA: And then I brought him. And our officer said: you smashed that fag

ROMA: He said that?

SLAVA: He said that.

ROMA: It's just rude.

SLAVA: He said: look and that fucking fag in girly skirt. It's neither a man, nor a woman. That's what he said.

ROMA: He's moskal. A terrorist. A saboteur.

SLAVA: And I was holding my gun. I was looking at that guy. And looking at the officer. Why fag? Why skirt? It seemed like he was talking about me. Like he knows everything.

ROMA: He doesn't know.

SLAVA: The officer says that faggots are worth killing. It's not a sin to kill a man in a skirt.

ROMA: I've never seen you wearing a skirt.

SLAVA: I nearly lost my gun. I was so scared. I'm not a man. I don't feel being a man. I just want him to know that we are also here.

ROMA: Don't ask, don't tell.

SLAVA: Dreams must come true.

ROMA: Come on, enough already.

SLAVA: I came up to him and said: I'm asking you to stop using gay hating language referring to the enemy, because it insults the gay community that defends our country and wants to live here openly and liberally.

ROMA: And he?

SLAVA: And he asked: which gay community?

ROMA: And you?

SLAVA: And I said me and Roma.

ROMA: What?

SLAVA: Me and ... you.

ROMA: How come it's me?

SLAVA: So, it's not you!

ROMA: Don't ask. Don't tell. We talked about it.

SLAVA: He started it. About the faggots. He told first.

ROMA: You framed me.

SLAVA: We are 8 years together!

ROMA: I joined local defense to fight for the city I was born in, not for the global problems.

SLAVA: But global problems don't go away.

ROMA: We have to win this war.

SLAVA: What about the other war?

ROMA: The other will be later.

SLAVA: What if there is no 'later'? No Crimea, no jazz, no wedding, no black swans. What if I get killed by a bullet or explosion, and our whole post is gonna be a fucking mess tomorrow? And there will be no me. And nobody's gonna tell him that the stupid guy who died in the first month was a gay from Crimea. Nobody will ever remember. I start forgetting it myself. I'm just a machine, a tiny cog in the wheel of war, the one that checks the cars, watches the back, dig the trenches...

ROMA: You didn't tell him anything, did you?

SLAVA: Don't ask. Don't tell. Fuck. I couldn't.

ROMA: He didn't mean that.

SLAVA: He did.

ROMA: He was just saying that.

SLAVA: And I didn't say anything.

ROMA: Go eat that cake, don't make me sad. Are you feeling the orange peel? It's really important. I always add some orange peel, that smell, you can always say.

SLAVA: I feel that I'm fading. There is less and less of me. Day by day.

ROMA: There is you. You're next to me. There is no flour, no eggs. There is no milk, but there is you.

SLAVA: Don't just stand here. I don't want us to be seen together.

ROMA: Slava, I...

ROMA: I'm on duty.

#### 4

### TOOTH

(tr. by Valeriya Kosmidaylo, ed. by Olha Drobotai)

*Apartment in a high-rise building, equipped as a dentist's office. There is a noise from explosions outside.*

*Samuel, 87 y. o.*

SAMUEL (*looking for something in closets, in numerous notebooks, photo albums, diplomas, certificates*):

Fascists. Fascists. Fascists. Bombs. Bombs. Bombs. Ada!

*(He finds a piece of paper, dials a number)*

Is this the Israeli embassy? I need to be evacuated.

...

I don't have an Israeli passport.

...

Samuel Katz, born in 1935. Serhiy Kryvyi on my passport.

...

I don't have an Israeli certificate. I do have a passport. Ukrainian passport. Where should I get this certificate? We have bombs falling from the sky.

...

I won't go to the basement. I didn't mention bombs for you to send me to the basement. I survived World War II. I survived the Holocaust. Basements, pursuits, fake documents. My mother refused to be a Jew, my mother gave up her name to save me.

...

My documents are legitimate, but Ukrainian. Under the name of Serhiy. By birth I am Samuel. My son is in Israel. He's waiting for me.

...

What do you mean, why didn't I do it before? I am a practicing doctor here. I have an office. I am a respectable person. If I had known that the Nazis could return, I would have done it a long time ago. But they didn't. And it didn't matter, Samuel or Serhiy.

...

I don't want to go to Poland.

...

Are you mocking me?

...

Do you know what they do to Jews in Poland?

...

What do you mean, not a Jew?

...

I'm not confusing anything! I want to go to Israel. I want to go to my son. Put me on the list, Samuel Katz, born in 1935, I need to be evacuated.

*(He hangs up the phone)*

Fascists. Fascists. Fascists. Ada!

...

They say I need a certificate! I need the old passport. I need to prove that I am a Jew. I need to prove it. What a goddamn proof?

*(The phone rings)*

Hello. Is there a bus?

...

There isn't?

...

Who is it?

...

What teeth?

...

I won't provide care for any teeth. I won't. I'm going to Israel. I don't want to go to Poland.

...

I don't know what medicine you should take to soothe the pain.

*(He hangs up the phone)*

Crazy people. Bombs are falling from the sky. And they have a toothache. Is it a high time for teeth? They want to drink something to soothe the pain.

...

Ada! Ada! Where are my glasses?

...

I can't go to Israel without my glasses.

...

I need to find my notebook. There is Moses' phone number. He has to make me a passport. I'm not allowed to cross the border without a passport. Without a certificate proving I'm a Jew.

...

Fascists. Fascists. Fascists. I don't want to go into the basement.

...

I want to go to Israel. Where is my bus? I'm an old Jew. I need a bus.

*(He dials a number)*

Ibuprofen!

...

Do you have ibuprofen?

...

Drink it and go to the hospital. To any surgeon. It is necessary to remove the abscess. If you don't get rid of it in a day, it will be getting worse.

...

Not necessarily a dentist, just a surgeon who would simply pull out a tooth and pump out pus.

...

So what if it's a permanent...

...

Do you want to save your tooth? Do you know what carpet bombing is? Take some ibuprofen! Find a surgeon.

*(He hangs up the phone)*

Crazy people. A permanent tooth, they say!

...

Ada! Woman! Have you packed the documents?

*(The phone rings)*

At last! Are you already leaving?

...

What medicine? I don't want any medicine.

...

Do I have somebody to look after me? My wife is packing the documents.

...

She can't pick up the phone. She can't talk to you.

...

She's busy right now. I have a son, Moses, he's in Israel. He'll meet me there.

...

In Kharkiv? Why do you ask me about Kharkiv?

...

Where did you get my number? Who gave you my number? You are frauds.

*(He hangs up the phone)*

Ada! Ada!

...

Fascists. Fascists. Fascists.

*(He finds his notebook, dials a number)*

Moses! Finally! I couldn't find your number.

...

I don't know how to do that on a mobile phone. How do I escape, Moses?!

...

Can you take me out of here?

...

What do you mean - you can't?

...

What do you mean - to Poland?

...

Do you know what is happening here? Bombs. Bombs. Bombs. Fascists. Fascists. Fascists.

...

I don't know where Mom is. (*He cries*)

...

Ada! Ada!

...

She was supposed to pack our documents. I need my glasses. I need my passport.

...

I don't know how long I've been here. For a long time. They've been bombing since morning. Damn Germans!

...

What do you mean - not Germans?

...

What medicine?

...

I don't need any medicine, I need a bus. I want to go to Israel.

...

Do you promise, Moses? Do you promise? Don't hang up, don't leave me alone.

...

Where am I? Where am I? I'm here. Bombs. Bombs.

...

What people?

...

Will they take me to Israel? Aren't they frauds?

...

They won't take me to Poland, right?

...

I won't go there. It's decided!

(*He hangs up the phone*)

Ada!

...

He's sending us to Poland! It's impossible! He says people are evacuated only from Poland. How come? I said I wouldn't go.

(*The phone rings*)

Hello!

...

Is it you? Did you take ibuprofen? Did you find a surgeon?

...

What do you mean - they aren't working?

...

Impossible to reach?

...

Damn Germans!

...

Of course it hurts! Purulent inflammation! Do you have a fever?

...

Good... so... get some ultracaine. If you don't have it - then analgin or novocaine. Anything in ampoules. Two dice. Maybe three. Right under the abscess, where you feel the bony part, make an injection. The cheek will be numb for a bit. Hush, keep calm. Aim the soft tissue under a purulent sac. Do you have a syringe?

...

Then listen. Take a knife...

...

Any knife, a kitchen one. Disinfect it with rubbing alcohol and cut your gums. Cut into the inflammation zone. Drain out the pus. All of it. Squeeze until you see bright blood. Disinfect the hole with rubbing alcohol. Wrap it with cotton wool. You'll need a lot of sterile cotton wool. When the bleeding ceases a bit, take a needle and thread. A sturdy thread. And sew up. Make each stitch 5 millimeters long. Make two or three stitches. Take immediately an antibiotic.

...

What do you mean - you won't do it? Of course you will.

...

Do you need sepsis? It ain't a joke!

...

If it doesn't get better in a few days, take pliers...

...

Don't cry. Don't be afraid. It's a regular manipulation. Hush, hush. Did you write it all down? Ultracaine, rubbing alcohol, knife, needle and thread, cotton wool, antibiotics.

...

You won't die. In case you don't catch sepsis.

...

Look for it. I'm not hanging up. I'll be with you.

...

Take your time, don't cry... When I was a kid, we used to hide from the Germans in the neighbors' basement. Good people they were, the Tkachenkos. My mother and I, we used to eat rotten cabbage and hogwash, which our hostess would bring us once a day. I was six. I cried all the time. My mother said we would be kicked out if I carried on crying. So to lift my spirits a little bit, she sneaked out at night to pick apricots. She collected those on the ground so that no one would notice. The apricots were delicious, sweet. I ate my fill. Then - an immediate stomach ache. An immediate diarrhea. Mom hid me. She was afraid to confess. Only on the third day did she come to Tkachenko, who was a doctor. He gave her one penicillin pill. One pill. And diarrhea stopped. The next day he brought us our new documents. And said: from now on you will be Serhiy. Then he smiled. Do you listen? One pill. And the man is saved. It would be better to have a full course, but during wartime one is pretty enough...

...

Do you listen?

...

It started! Hide!

...

Into the corridor! To the ledge! (*crawls under the table*) Cover your head!

...

Hush, hush.

...

It's not here yet.

...

You're scared, because it's your first time. The first time is always scary.

...

O'kay, are you alright?

...

Did you find ultracaine?

...

Novocaine! Great!

...

Well? Ready? Do you have a mirror? First of all - the injection! Hold on. Hold on. Did you poke the nerve? Ay-ay-ay, bad luck! Hold on, now it'll numb the pain. Soon it'll numb.

...

Does the pain go away a bit? You're doing great! Let's cut? Let's do it, carefully. Let's cut into the abscess. Done? Did the pus drain out?

...

Are you still there?

...

Did you do it?

...

Where are you? Where are you?

...

(*He hangs up, dials a number, no answer, dials again, then lies down exhausted...*)

Fascists. Fascists. Fascists. Bombs. Bombs. Bombs.

...

Ada! Ada! Where are my glasses?

...

Where is my notebook?

...

Has Moses called again?

...

Ada, can you hear me?!

*a Kharkiv metro station*

*Tonia, 18 y.o.*

*Asya, 22 y.o.*

TONIA: We all will die. We'll be dumbly trapped in rubble.

ASYA: Even kids don't cry, but you do.

TONIA: You saw it! You saw it! You saw it! You saw it!

ASYA: We have to wait until it's over.

TONIA: The plane. The shadow. The sound. The explosion.

ASYA: It was far away.

TONIA: But then it turned around.

ASYA: And that's why we hid.

TONIA: But it's still there!

ASYA: And we are here.

TONIA: It was heading right toward us...

*ASYA takes out a "Snickers" candy bar and gives it to TONIA.*

ASYA: Take it. It must help. And now listen: the metro is a fortress. The fortress of our own. We've been lucky enough to get here. We're still alive. We're in a secure shelter. Here we could survive a nuclear winter. Here we are safe. In here nobody would get to us. We'll stay here until it's over.

TONIA: Do you promise?

ASYA: I promise. (*Pause*) Now I'm gonna call Alick.

TONIA: And Mom.

ASYA: And Mom.

---

TONIA (*or her voice only*):

The silence. So weird. When you go outside, you hear everything. An engine roar. A gasp of wind. People scream. Hurry up here. An air-raid siren. Where is auntie Liuda? She's already downstairs. Doors slam. Artillery shells whistle. Bombs explode. Debris cracks. TV news reports that once again the city is under shelling. But it's all quiet here. Only people keep landing. Their gurgling is barely audible, so the words are soundless. People shuffle their feet and nestle, trying to keep warm. Time is measured in steps of a station attendant.

What is going on outside? Are there any people left? Do the wounded moan? Do tanks rumble? Does a plane fly? Like a massive owl chasing after its prey. And we are like mice. Hiding in burrows, afraid of making the slightest noise. Just not to expose ourselves...

---

ASYA: Mom's crying, she wants to come.  
TONIA: I found a place for us...  
ASYA: I told her to stay in Italy...  
TONIA: ...here we'll have cookies and the food...  
ASYA: ...roads are dangerous, and we'll get by on our own.  
TONIA: ...and here we'll sleep...  
ASYA: Alick joined the Territorial Defense.  
TONIA: ...by turns or top to tail?...  
ASYA: Alick says we should get out.  
TONIA: ...like in our childhood...  
ASYA: 'Cause it'll only get worse.  
TONIA: ...come on, get inside...  
ASYA: Tomorrow we will think about it.  
TONIA: ...damn, 'cause it's cold.  
ASYA: Let me hug you. Is it warmer now?  
TONIA: Yep, a bit.  
ASYA: I've told you, a proper winter coat must cloak one's ass.  
TONIA: I never thought that I'd be forced to live underground.

---

ASYA: Tonia, let's go. We have to brush our teeth.  
TONIA: I didn't take a...  
ASYA: People have brought everything.  
TONIA: What people?  
ASYA: Zombie apocalypse's been canceled. There are still people outside.  
TONIA: And they brought us toothbrushes?  
ASYA: Apparently.  
TONIA: I think I caught a cold. My whole body aches. I had a dream, that I... forgot a flashlight. Grad rockets are striking on our block, we're rushing to the shelter, and I'm thinking: if electricity is cut off, I'll need a flashlight, but I don't have one; there was a flashlight at "Epicentr" shopping mall, a black and yellow flashlight on batteries, 230 hryvnias and 20 hryvnias - for the batteries, you'd be yelling at me if I didn't buy it. So I'm rushing to the "Epicentr", and I see people carrying full trays, the "Epicentr" is being grabbed out, I must make it, but I'm running so slow... And I notice a dot, a black dot in the sky, my feet are like cotton wool, and the dot is growing, it's a plane, it's roaring, it's flying too low, 10 meters above the city, and I fall down and I'm walloped. I press my ear to the ground. And I hear voices, there, underneath. They're laughing and listening to music. And I'm outside, and I can't reach them. And I hear the bomb drop off the suspension. Then I wake up. May I not brush my teeth?

---

ASYA: Truth or dare?

TONIA: Truth.

ASYA: So did you buy a flashlight when I asked you to?

TONIA: E-e-eh.

ASYA: What the hell, Tonia?

TONIA: I went to buy it. I went to "Epicentr" and I was looking for a flashlight. And for an adhesive tape. And wires. But what I found was a coffee table. So bloody stylish. Red, made of metal. And I thought... I thought...

ASYA: Did you buy a table?

TONIA: Delivery's tomorrow.

...

TONIA: Truth or dare?

ASYA: Truth.

TONIA: Have you got it on with Alick?

ASYA: Well... once.

TONIA: In our apartment!

ASYA: We couldn't help it.

TONIA: On our couch! I will never sit on it again.

ASYA: We were in the kitchen.

TONIA: You're such a slut!

...

ASYA: Truth or dare?

TONIA: Truth.

ASYA: Are you jealous?

TONIA: You're nuts!

ASYA: Did you like him?

TONIA: Come on.

ASYA: Have you got it on with anybody at all?

TONIA: I'm not jealous. That is my answer.

ASYA: Have you got it on with anybody at all?

TONIA: My turn.

ASYA: Tell me the truth, are you a virgin?

...

TONIA: Truth or dare?

ASYA: Truth.

TONIA: When will all this end?

ASYA: Dare.

TONIA: Do you think it will last a long time?

ASYA: Dare.

TONIA: Will Mom come?

ASYA: I told you, dare.

TONIA: Do you think our apartment is undamaged?

ASYA: I think: dare.

TONIA: But is there still shelling?

ASYA: How would I know?

TONIA: What shall we do?

ASYA: Tonia, dare.

*ASYA takes out a "Snickers" and gives it to TONIA.*

---

TONIA: Where've you been?

ASYA: Sorry, you were sleeping.

TONIA: Where've you been?

ASYA: I went out to the city.

TONIA: We agreed to stick together.

ASYA: We do.

TONIA: Did you go to your lover?

ASYA: You're breaking my balls.

TONIA: Did you?

ASYA: That plane has been shot down.

TONIA: What?

ASYA: The plane. Which we saw on the first day. It has been shot down. It burned down. It's gone. Everybody saw it.

TONIA: Is there still anybody?

ASYA: The other planes will also be shot down. One after another. I gave Alick some stuff and blankets. He says the guys feel forceful. They slay like war gods. And there we are - today's plane. Such a fiesta.

TONIA: You have your lipstick on.

ASYA: So what?

TONIA: I thought you wouldn't come back. I thought you were dead. I imagined how I would collect your body parts. You know, the sight of blood makes me feel sick. I won't collect your body parts. Your guts will be scattered around the city until stray dogs eat them. Altogether with the lipstick. I've warned you.

ASYA: Thank you kindly.

TONIA: I thought you were dead.

ASYA: I just can't sit like this doing nothing.

TONIA: You just can't stand without your Alick.

ASYA: When was the last time you looked in the mirror?

TONIA: Why should I look in the mirror?

---

ASYA: Latte!

TONIA: Latte?

ASYA: Weigh up, coffee shops have been opened.

TONIA: Did you bring a "Snickers"?

ASYA: It's sunny outside. The snow melted away. There is a guy playing the guitar on the square.

TONIA: Did you bring me a "Snickers"?

*ASYA takes out a "Snickers" and gives it TONIA.*

ASYA: Did you hear? The guitar! Monuments are being covered with sandbags.

TONIA: Have you come over to our home?

ASYA: Take it.

*ASYA takes out clothes.*

TONIA: At last (*changes her clothes*).

ASYA: Everyone's staring at you.

TONIA: I couldn't care less.

*ASYA covers her up.*

ASYA: Alick says that we should get out...

TONIA: If Alick says so.

ASYA: We cannot live in the metro.

TONIA: People are living.

ASYA: People are leaving the city. The railway station is open. If you're afraid of living in Ukraine - let's go to Italy...

TONIA: ...Outside there are bombs...

ASYA: ...So many people have already left...

TONIA: ...And shattered window glass...

ASYA: ...People will help us...

TONIA: ...People die under debris...

ASYA: ...We'll go to Mom...

TONIA: ...People queuing for bread are shot to death...

ASYA: ...Evacuation trains continue to run...

TONIA: ...Without any warning, they shoot from the sky.

ASYA: That plane was shot down!

TONIA: There will be another one.

ASYA: I can't go on like this. I can't go down here any more. It's a half-life. And for what. It's sunny outside. It's spring. We can still go away. Without Alick. Just the two of us.

TONIA: We can live here as well.

ASYA: No, we can't.

TONIA: You said that we would stay in here until it's all over.

ASYA: And what if it won't be over?

TONIA: What do you mean, it won't be over?

---

TONIA (*or her voice only*):

Time has stopped. And it won't move on. Aerial bombs killed time. Time was raped. Collectively and on purpose. Time is lying in a well and waiting until spring waters usher its body to the surface. But spring waters don't flow. Because time ceased to exist. There is no more spring. And no more water to flow. No more sun to rise and go down. There is an endless February. And we're all in it. Children are no longer able to walk. They're forgetting words. They cling to their mothers as if they want to return to the womb. But there is no way back. No way forward. It is endless now. And the damn plane is circling, and circling, and circling endlessly, though it was shot down a long time ago. But it is still there, in the sky above us. The new sun of the new world.

---

ASYA: I'm working in the kitchen.

TONIA: You and the kitchen?

ASYA: What's so funny?

TONIA: I hope you feed the enemies?

ASYA: Very witty. I'm slicing vegetables. Such therapeutic stuff. Cooking's done by others.

TONIA: And during an air raid?

ASYA: Well, an air raid it is. Guys still need to eat.

TONIA: So guys.

ASYA: And girls too. Everybody needs to eat.

TONIA: Girls cook, boys fight. Then they all fuck.

ASYA: By the way, you have somebody to bring you food, you too. Though you've got both your hands unharmed.

TONIA: I'm glad that you and Alick have found each other.

ASYA: I haven't seen him for a week.

TONIA: But you're eager to see him. You'll cook some borsch and set off. An outstanding volunteer from the kitchen front. This is all because of him, isn't it?

ASYA: You do know how to screw things up.

TONIA: Before we used to tell each other things like that.

ASYA: Before you wouldn't act like a bitch.

---

TONIA: Why are you here?

ASYA: I brought you a "Snickers".

TONIA: We have food in here.

ASYA: Food brought by people who go outside.

TONIA: What do you want?

ASYA: I want you to talk to a psychologist.

TONIA: Fuck off.

ASYA: You've got a problem.

TONIA: And you've got Alick.

ASYA: Alick doesn't answer my calls.

TONIA: What's up with him?

...

ASYA: Tonia, if you go on like this, you may stay forever in the underground...

TONIA: You promised you would be by my side.

ASYA: I am by your side.

TONIA: You promised that we would stay in here until the danger is over.

ASYA: It will never be the same way as it used to be.

TONIA: We need to wait a little bit longer.

ASYA: The coffee table won't be delivered. Not today, nor tomorrow.

TONIA: I need guarantees.

ASYA: There will be no guarantees. And there never were. It's just we didn't know about it. But now we know.

At any moment any place on Earth may be attacked by a missile. And there is nothing we can do about it.

Terrorist steal a plane to crash it into a skyscraper.

Mad adolescents buy weapons on the Internet and shoot their classmates to death.

Destroyed Syria is starving to death, but busy white collars have already put away the newspaper so they could finish their sandwich.

All of this is happening right now. It's just that from now on it's happening to us too.

We need to adjust. Do you understand?

TONIA: I don't want to adjust.

...

ASYA: I'm leaving.

TONIA: Will you come over on Tuesday?

ASYA: No, I won't.

TONIA: On Wednesday?

ASYA: You're impossible.

TONIA: Will you bring me a "Snickers"?

ASYA: Good bye, Tonia.

TONIA: O'kay, Friday it is. Two "Snickers" and a latte. Do you hear? Alright? On Sunday. Or Monday. I'll wait... On Tuesday. On Wednesday. I don't count days.

Come whenever you want. I'll wait a little bit longer here. This is the fortress of my own. I can't leave it. I am extremely lucky to be in here, to be safe. To be alive. It is very important - to stay alive. I think Mom will be glad to hear that. Asya, listen. Call Mom! Tell her to come in here. You and Alick, you too, come. We'll live together.

You won't need to go outside. I won't need to collect your body parts and recognize you by the lipstick. The sight of blood makes me feel sick. Asya, can you hear me?

## WHAT TO DO WITH BREIVIK

### WHAT ARE "SECURITY ASSURANCES"

#### HOW MANY WEAPONS DOES UKRAINE NEED TO ELIMINATE ALL OF THE BUSTARDS

#### AND OTHER QUESTIONS THAT ARE DISCUSSED IN A PUBLIC BOMB SHELTER DURING A NIGHT AIR RAID ALERT

(tr. by Oleksandra Shvets, ed. by Olha Drobotai)

*Andrii, head of OSBB, 35 years old*

*Mr. Oleksandr, 60 years old*

*Uncle Misha, 50 years old*

*Neighbor OIia, 30 years old*

*Irritated Oksana, 35 years old*

*Girl with a cat, 30 years old*

*Mrs. Hania, 60 years old*

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Weapons! Weapons! Weapons! Weapons! We need a lot of weapons.

UNCLE MISHA: They cannot sleep, those bitches. I'd shoot them.

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: First of all - personal weapon. For your own safety. But collective as well. All these "Patriots", the "Iron Dome", submachine guns, revolvers, Stugnas, Nwals, tanks, the multiple launch rocket systems. Everything that fires. Everything that explodes. Everything that can destroy enemies. Not a single agreement, not a single document can give any real guarantees. Budapest memorandum. Nuclear Disarmament. Ukraine gave away the rockets to Russia which are now flying towards its cities. And Budapest itself, you might not have known this, drove troops to our western borders in hopes of biting off Zakarpattia at the time when Russia was tearing apart Livoberezhzhia. It was in February.

GIRL WITH A CAT: I won't be at peace unless there is not a single rocket left on Earth.

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Bullshit! Bullshit! I won't be at peace unless there is a normal air-defense system at our borders, which patrols the sky day and night. And if a single shitty drone crosses our airspace, or a small fishing boat enters our territorial waters, there must be an adequate immediate response. A fire response of high power. That's what security assurances are. Modern weapons are security

assurances. Any agreement, any memorandum is just a piece of paper you can wipe your ass with.

MRS. HANIA: There is tea in the thermos, help yourselves.

MR. OLEKSANDR: But there are also terrorist attacks! Let me note that the Israeli army tax is 20% of income per capita. The Iron Dome closes its sky while hightech weapons cover the borders. However, historically, almost all of Israel's neighbors have sought to destroy it and for that reason arrange bloody terrorist attacks on a regular basis in which ordinary Israelis continue to die violent deaths.

GIRL WITH A CAT: Any weapon is created to kill. There are no such things as "good" and "bad" weapons, there are only cold weapons or firearms, automatic and pneumatic, point-defense and mass destruction, short-range and long-range, phosphorus and nuclear. But in fact - they are all the same.

IRRITATED OKSANA: Like men. Also all the same. Because war was invented by men. They fight because they lack brains. Women are wiser. Because women have children. For a man, his weapon is his second penis. But women suffer. Is it fair? The first thing people face a shortage of during any crisis is sanitary pads. Because no one has thought about that. Kindergartens are the first to close. Women flee to other countries and become victims of labor and sexual slavery.

NEIGHBOR OLIA: Ukrainian women are fighting! Do you know how many women there are in our army? Do you want to let them go unarmed? Do you want to see them as victims? Tearful girls in dark basements?

GIRL WITH A CAT: It's all about politics, politics, politics. The ones who resist - suffer the most. You can compare, at least, Kherson and Mariupol.

UNCLE MISHA: Kherson was betrayed. Stupidly betrayed. When the horde came, everyone fled. SSU, army. There was no one there. Hundreds of boys from the Territorial Defense, who were with machine guns, were chopped to pieces.

MRS. HANIA: So you tell me, why were those boys given guns if it was known that the city would be surrendered?

UNCLE MISHA: Liars! I would shoot them all!

GIRL WITH A CAT: What did they die for? Wasn't it better to not take the weapons? To stay at home with their families? Why were they sent there to die?

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Because we are not pussies but a warrior nation. Because we have dignity and we will defend ourselves.

MRS. HANIA: Twenty-year old boys!

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: That's the price of freedom. Humans tend to war and slaughter, that's the way they fight for their right to live. Western people almost forgot about that. They turned into elite alpine calves, which no one's allowed to scare to not spoil the taste of meat. But there are still nations that will remind them. Taliban, ISIS and dictator regimes around the world. But first of all - Russia. When evil is not restrained, it spreads.

MR. OLEKSANDR: I will tell one story. Such an American story. In the USA, you can buy a revolver in a shop. Cigarettes, gum and a revolver, please. Thank you so much. So, a woman was driving her car. Her child was in the back seat. And there was a biker driving, you know, such a rude biker. A brutal man. And there was a conflict. She didn't turn when he thought she would, so she blocked his way, he was uncomfortable. So he cut her off and made her stop. He pulled out his revolver and started waving it, screaming that she did wrong and caused him mental anguish. And then the woman opened the glove compartment and, with a deft hand, grabbed the two-millimeter Browning and aimed it between the biker's eyes. She immediately called the police, drew up a report and in 15 minutes the woman went on to buy milk, feed the baby and watch the evening TV show.

UNCLE MISHA: And what's the moral here?

MR. OLEKSANDR: There is no moral.

MRS. HANIA: To kill is a sin. She will go to Hell.

NEIGHBOR OLIA: In your opinion, it was better to give the initiative to the attacker? Let him shoot? Rape. Steal a child. We will not defend ourselves - because we are what? We are against violence? We don't eat meat? We recycle plastic bottles and we value conscious choice and individuality? The conscious choice of this scum is to be a murderer or to be killed. She was protecting the child!

GIRL WITH A CAT: Poor child! No child in the world must witness violence.

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Then go to Mars. There is no violence there. Although, there is no atmosphere there either.

MRS. HANIA: We have to pray to our God, Jesus Christ, his mother Maria and his Great Martyrs for them to protect our land. It's all in God's hands.

MR. OLEKSANDR: Passionate God and vengeful Lord, vengeful and fierce Lord. Our Lord is vengeful to those who hate Him, He remembers His enemies' wrongdoings.

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Let's pray for Mariupol.

IRRITATED OKSANA: Let's pray for the boys who were tortured at the block-posts for non-standard appearance.

NEIGHBOR OLIA: At the Ukrainian or Russian?

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: These stories are spread by agents and traitors.

NEIGHBOR OLIA: Those men, the radicals, we met them at the feminist meetings. On both sides, of course. The rights are the rights. All sorts of things happened. It happened that they threatened us, spayed cans. But I cried today when I found out that one of those whom I knew personally, died in a battle. War erases all contradictions.

IRRITATED OKSANA: And redistributes the privileges. Establishes militarism. A man with a gun is a new idol!

NEIGHBOR OLIA: Or a woman.

IRRITATED OKSANA: So far, Ukraine has not overcome corruption, has not carried out economic reforms, has not achieved basic rights and freedoms. And these people need to be given weapons?! Can you imagine what will happen after the victory?

NEIGHBOR OLIA: Europe will not let us down!

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Europe is for us. Although they are cowards. But at least they provide weapons.

MRS. HANIA: And our children are still dying. For some reason they do not send theirs.

GIRL WITH A CAT: They are playing war by the hands of Ukrainians. But they do not sit in the basements at night. They sleep at home. In their beds.

MR. OLEKSANDR: Breivik effect!

GIRL WITH A CAT: Who?

MR. OLEKSANDR: Breivik. The guy shot 68 kids. A true nazi. Do you know what the Norwegians did to him? They put him in a comfortable three-room cell. With conditions for intellectual work. With dates and access to social networks. He writes books, and people publish and read them. And someday, time is passing so fast, he will be released. Because life imprisonment is too cruel for liberal Europe.

MRS. HANIA: Bastards!

MR. OLEKSANDR: For the Europeans, life is of highest value. Even the life of a scumbag.

NEIGHBOR OLIA: To tell the truth, if I was given a gun I would kill him.

MR. OLEKSANDR: Breivik?

UNCLE MISHA: Putin?

NEIGHBOR OLIA: Anyone of them. Give me the one who was in Bucha, who raped our girls, shot our boys. And I will kill him. I want to kill him.

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: We all want this.

MR. OLEKSANDR: And his wife?

NEIGHBOR OLIA: His wife as well. Did you hear his wife? The one that said "rape Ukrainian women." And she laughed out loud. I would like... if not to kill. Then at least shoot her hand. So it would hang down like that one guy's hand who took out civilians from Mariupol and came under fire. There was a video where he was holding his hand but it was gone, it was hanging like a piece of rag. He could just sit quietly in safety, but instead he went out to save civilians. And she, that bitch, calls her husband and says: rape, just use protection. I wish I could grab that bitch by the hair and shoot her hand! Let it hang like a piece of rag and bleed dry!

MR. OLEKSANDR: Between Scylla of revenge and Charybdis of forgiveness.

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Shoot them all!

MRS. HANIA: God have mercy!

IRRITATED OKSANA: Why aren't you in the army?

ANDRII HEAD OF OSBB: Each has his own place.

GIRL WITH A CAT: It struck Ternopil. We can go home.

UNCLE MISHA: They cannot sleep, those bitches, cannot sleep...

## 7

### THE FUTURE OF ALISA

(tr. by Oleksandra Shvets, ed. by Olha Drobotai)

*Somewhere in Ukraine, the yard of a private house*

*Igor, 40 years old*

*Katia, 30 years old, dead*

IGOR: Damn, Katia!

KATIA: You get scared every time.

IGOR: It's hard to get used to it.

KATIA: I brought a newspaper for Alisa.

IGOR: Why?

KATIA: Well, let her be glad that her mommy is in the newspaper. It doesn't happen every day.

IGOR: I'll pass it on.

KATIA: (*Lights the cigarette*) Do you mind?

IGOR: Your mother might see.

KATIA: My mother?

IGOR: She helps here.

KATIA: So that you could work...

IGOR: Look after Alisa. She needs a lot of attention.

KATIA: And no personal life.

IGOR: What's that about?

KATIA: About personal life.

IGOR: Are you kidding?

KATIA: Your shirt is crumpled.

IGOR: It's allowed at home.

KATIA: You grew a beard.

IGOR: I always wanted to.

KATIA: Kissing a mustache is disgusting.

IGOR: So are you, flower,