

My Mother is a Dummy.

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My Mother is a dummy. She rejects all the advantages of civilization - gadgets, credit cards, e-tickets. Instead, she smokes regular cigarettes, prefers her newspapers printed, solves crossword puzzles, and watches TV. She refused to get a smartphone no matter how we insisted. For eight years, my Mother used an Alcatel push-button phone, and when it started to "misbehave", she said she wanted the same, because getting used to the new one was not her cup of tea. Two months ago, we bought her the same vintage Alcatel model. It lasts three days on a single charge.

My Mother's house is in Irpin'. She won her apartment in the National Lottery. This is another thing about my Mother. She is a gambler like Phil Ivey. Well, in a sense. She does not play poker in casinos, but she is fond of collecting bottle caps, stickers from cigarette packs and milk cartons; she falls for all possible bargain deals. Her apartment is full of blankets, towels, mugs and other less useful stuff received as a prize or bonus. She is not exceptionally lucky; but if you play all the time you sometimes win.

The story with the apartment is a real miracle. My brother Serhiy moved with his family to Kyiv, and then my family moved to the capital too. My mother remained in Lviv and missed us. She tried to take turns living with us or my brother, but she couldn't because she got used to her way of life. So she came back to Lviv and continued solving her crossword puzzles, watching her TV shows and smoking in the kitchen, rereading Dostoevsky and Tolstoy for the hundredth time. And then one day my Mother won an apartment in Irpin'.

The whole family helped her to move in. We pasted wallpaper, hung curtains and lamps, installed a washing machine and a boiler, and decorated her windows with geranium and ficus plants. We were finding places to put all those blankets, towels, mugs and other less useful stuff. Her apartment is 40 minutes drive from mine and 20 minutes drive from my brother's. My Mother was happy: she was with her children and did not have to change her ways. From time to time she happily announced about an opening of another park or green zone in Irpin', and invited us for a stroll. She came to visit us every week. Relic pine trees she saw from her window made her happy. These pine trees are the signature view of Irpin'. This is the happiest time of my life, right here, right now, my Mother repeated.

When the war broke out, my Mother refused to move in with us. Her habits are sacred to her. Around the corner there is her shop, around another - her church, a little further there is a little park and a library, where she, in her old-school ways, borrowed a book once a week. There is a special spot for a newspaper in her apartment, another one for her pills, and over there - the one for the icon.

- And who will bother me? I'm an old woman, there's nothing to steal from me.  
Nobody gonna touch me.

Then they started bombing Hostomel, which is very close.

- I'm still not going anywhere. There is a military airport in Hostomel. There is nothing here but parks and trees.

Then they started shelling Irpin'.

- Children, leave me alone, no one will touch civilians. They just need a passage to Kyiv. You'd be better here with me.

Then a bridge connecting Irpin' to Kyiv was destroyed and electricity was cut off.

- Mom, did you charge the phone?
  - I did.
  - Don't call, just text me in the morning and in the evening.

Then the water supply was cut off.

- Mom, did you collect some water?
  - I did.

Then there were reports of residents from nearby private cottages shot dead and photos of shelled neighborhoods.

- Mom?

A day without an answer. The evacuation began, one needed to get to the nearby village of Romanivka. I studied the map and planned the route. It takes 40 minutes to get from my Mother's house to Romanivka. There, people are escorted under the bridge through wooden crossings and taken to safety by buses.

- Mom, you need to go to Romanivka. Near the supermarket turn left and follow the highway. Take your papers, leave everything else.

A day without an answer.

- Sweety, I'm fine. I have gas, I cooked potatoes and eggs. All my neighbors who remained in the building spend the night in my apartment because they have electric stoves and I have a gas one. They bring smoked salmon and brandy.
- Mom, you need to go to Romanivka right now, otherwise Serhiy will come to get you and he is sure to get killed on the way.

A day without an answer. Photos from Irpin', news about families being shot dead in their own cars - they tried to leave the besieged town. Reports of numerous explosions in residential areas.

- Mom?
- Everything's fine.

