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#### VOICE OF A PLANT THAT DOESN'T WANT IT TO BE UPROOTED FROM THE EARTH:

I've been to Paris, but never to Donetsk. I've been to Munich, but never to Kherson. I've been to Rome, but never saw the old monuments of Chernihiv. There are many cities on the map of Ukraine I've never been to. Some are already completely destroyed. I always wanted to go on a big trip around Ukraine, but kept saying let's go to Croatia, let's go to Europe; Ukraine won't go anywhere. I'd work, do some maintenance on the flat, buy a car, more maintenance, then – let's go to Europe; Ukraine won't go anywhere. Then came a pandemic, then war. Will there be a famine? Ukrainians remember times of breadlessness in previous generations – especially the artificial famine of 1932-1933. The man I love always carries a small cracker in his pocket. He always has a little piece of bread, wherever he goes.

I visited North Donetsk two weeks before the start of the full-scale war. Yes, I was in Donbas then for the first time in the eight years of war. Severodonetsk is the easternmost Ukrainian city I've ever been to. The name comes from the name of the river Seversky Donets – the Donets, one of my favourite rivers. This deep river in the east is where I saw real water lilies for the first time. So white, so gentle, with a yellow middle. It is as if the sun floats on the water and looks at its reflection in the sky. I read on the Internet that the rhizome of the plant can protect people who go to foreign lands. It must be dried then held near the heart as an amulet.

## THE CHOIR OF DEATH OF RUSSIAN IMPERIAL STRUCTURES

Hey, you steppe flowers  
Which bloomed so well  
in the dark chernozem soil!  
Hey, you steppe flowers  
And you, deep water  
Flowing into the sea –  
We have come to protect you!  
We have here our orders  
To trample you with tanks,  
To stir up the post-industrial wind,  
To spit at you with Kalashnikovs,  
To hurl missile damage at you.  
We will call it our own.  
We will invent toxic family ties,  
Toxic brotherhood,  
And if you refuse  
Then in the name that we give you,  
We will kill you.  
But there is a risk  
We will all perish from the post-industrial  
Wind and fire.

## VOICE OF A PLANT THAT DOESN'T WANT IT TO BE UPROOTED FROM THE EARTH:

It was at Saltov in the Kharkiv region that I tried paddleboarding for the first time. With the man I love. We sailed in a wooden boat there too. The water lilies were so close - so white, so beautiful. That was in 2012, when the European Football Championship match between Ukraine and Poland took place, the end of the world had not come and it seemed everything would be fine. It was such a beautiful summer and for a short time it seemed that we were about to be in the European Union. At least we chose this direction. For such a short time, it seemed everything would be fine. We would not have to line up in humiliating queues for visas at consulates and at borders. We would be able to study freely in Europe, go on residences, create art. Let's go to Europe - Ukraine won't go anywhere, we will always have time. These hopes came to an end in the fall of 2013, when students were beaten up in the main square of Kyiv. The nightmare began. And continues. Now there are Russian tanks in Saltov. The city of Vovchansk - where the person I love comes from – is occupied. It's in the Kharkiv region.

The Donets flows from Saltov to Donbas, and yes, I was in Donbas, in Severodonetsk, two weeks before the full-scale Russian invasion. It was 12th February, my father's birthday, and I was close to the line for the first time in my life. I didn't give any gift to my dad, I just congratulated him; our family doesn't pay much attention to gifts.

I had long wanted to go east. I had such an inner need, and besides I had a theatrical premiere there. I had an inner need to go to my favourite eastern river. Many friends from Poland said I was crazy because there were Russian tanks on the border. And it's not safe. But the last eight years were also dangerous. In Severodonetsk, people have already seen the war with their own eyes, heard it with their own ears, and know how to behave during shelling. They say you can get used to explosions.

I was very impressed by one scene in the city. Young trees had been planted next to the ruined empty, windowless buildings of an old industrial plant, and there was a beautiful square with new benches, a playground and a fountain. Such are the contrasts between the background of old Soviet infrastructure with the new landscape designs for public spaces. Life next to death next. In public spaces. The death of the age of the old empire, next to new life, new trees, freedom. There were many such images in the city. Such an energy for life in public spaces! And I thought that when leaves and flowers appeared on these saplings, when birds perched in their leaves, these contrasts would be even more pronounced. When I asked Tatiana how many kilometres it was to the demarcation line, she said she didn't know. Maybe 30, maybe 40. She's calmer not knowing for sure. Tatiana has already lost her house in Luhansk once, and may lose it again. We may all lose homes again, in a generation.

#### THE CHOIR OF DEATH OF RUSSIAN IMPERIAL STRUCTURES

Instructions on how to surrender:

Forget your name

Discard the letters *ï, ɛ, ɾ* (*yee as in yeast, ye as in yellow, huh as in hood*)

Because they are not in the Russian alphabet.

If not, there will come a nuclear cloud

Beautiful as a Russian ballerina –

We will admire her flourish,

We will choke on her.

We will become familiar with the Gulag, repression

Forced deportations,

Executions of intellectuals

On the street of Friendship of Peoples,

With what green men from the Crimea did not do.

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