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Vitalii Havura

Our ResponsAbility

monologues from Ukraine

2022

SOUND CONTACT

On February 24, I woke up to two things: explosions heard in the distance and my son who came with a phone. I have a son, he is 15, he says: a friend of mine is calling from Kramatorsk, he says that the war has started. So, in five minutes we were notified at work - an emergency meeting. Well, that's how it started.

At work, I work in the rescue service, we pull people out from under the rubble, or during a fire, so at work they checked our current readiness to perform as assigned and we waited. Well, actually, no one knew what and how to do it. Therefore, they were waiting, let's say, for the next orders of our leadership, and they had to receive information from their leadership, from Kyiv. Well, it was also difficult in Kyiv... let's say, at the beginning they were a bit disoriented, but it seems to me that there is no need to talk about it now...

I am such an active guy, and as soon as I moved to Mariupol from Makiivka, I started looking for a place to use this active part of me. I was told that in Mariupol there is a group of strange people like me called "Halabuda". It was a time when I wanted to know something by heart other than "The fly sat on jam and that's the whole poem", and I started learning poems globally. And when I moved to Mariupol, I asked - where do you have poetry evenings here, they say - there are none. If there is none, it must be organized, and I started poetry evenings with "Halabuda". We met once a month.

I actually had a poetry evening coming on February 25, but I already understood that it was not the time. I knew that this "Halabuda" would not just sit and watch during the war. When it all started, in the mornings I arrived at the emergency management, for a meeting. Then I went to "Halabuda". There, as I expected, a volunteer center was already organized, where food, medicine, household items were brought, and food was cooked. It was a place where I charged my "batteries". Especially after connection was lost, we were... Well, a nuclear war could theoretically start and we in Mariupol would not know about it, because, there was informational vacuum... I went there for energy, for positivity, but ... maybe it sounds wrong ... I was like an energy vampire. I was filled with positivity there.

On the 7th or 6th our house got a lot... We moved into the basement of my rescue service. There were well over 100 people there... During the day, the men, if they were officers, were on duty, and at night they were, let's say, control the perimeter so that no outsider would get to our territory. But this territory was still controlled by the Ukrainian military. And including that, I went to this "Halabuda". We worked till the ninth. And on March 10... Wow! Now, excuse me!... Lyokha! (leaves, chats with the guy, returns). I last saw him in Mariupol. After we were... Anyway...

On the morning of March 10, we, like everyone else, were doing some chores. We were carrying water for the toilet that we had there. For the men they already dug a hole outside, and for the girls... it was cold was... simply freezing... The girls wanted some at least some comfort, so that they could wash up there in the morning, brush their teeth in more comfortable conditions than in the pit where the whole gang hangs out. So, we carried water again: me, my son and a colleague. And there was no connection, so until you have sound or visual contact with a person, you don't know where he is. My wife started looking for us. It was clear that we were either where the cell was, our control room, or we were on the

street, where the water was. And there she found us, just as we brought water and getting warm inside, thinking about drinking some coffee. There were four of us on the fourth floor of our four-story building.

We'd already known that we were surrounded, they were already harshly approaching our administration, there were already street fights. And just like that... another phrase was... "Perhaps we need to think about evacuation?" ... And here... And here is life... So, you know... before and after. At the same time... the sound of an airplane, but not such an airplane as we were bombed somewhere high, but right here. Then an explosion... And a flame... And here I am... I fell, I fell somewhere... And ended up two floors below. The floor slab and attic structures were lying on me. Well, I could see the street and I could be seen... I wasn't stuck there... I was somehow hanging from the outside, one might say... My right hand was free, my left was clamped, and my left knee was pressed to my chest, and I was lying on my stomach, and my right leg was extended, and I was not crushed... as I thought then... Because the plate crushed not only me, but also office tables. It seemed to spring up ... and I began to call for help and started calling those with whom I was under the rubble. I only heard my son, we did not see each other, but I had sound contact with him. Then my colleagues started to get there...

A rescue operation begun. They helped me at first, I was going crazy there, I say - take care of the child. They say - don't teach us to do our job! The rescuer climbed in, moved a bit and my hand was already free. I already have two free hands... I'm trying to wring it out, they say - don't panic, we have special equipment for that (it's on all fire trucks). They cut it with a chainsaw, one-two-three .., and I got out.

I saw my child. His legs were pressed by two plates, and it turned out that a plate was lying on his right leg, then there was his left leg, and then another plate, and the upper plate rested with a corner on the lower plate. And the upper one did not crush him completely, because it was holding on to this slab by the edge. And to free my son, it was necessary to simultaneously lift these 2 slabs. We need a crane here. The shelling continued! It was not like bombed and finished! Shells continue to fall... I can already see that the fire trucks that were standing near our building, which were being evacuated, are no longer trucks, they are scrap metal, no, that's wrong - just scrap! A Tavria drives by, I see that there are dead people inside. I constantly encouraged my son, held his hand. Sound contact was needed, sound contact! I said that we will run together to cheer him up, that the rescuers are doing everything possible, they are here with us under fire, they did not abandon you, that they are risking their lives. I said: you have to respect their work, if you start to fall apart now, then it means disrespecting these guys. But our people are not used to crying of pain... They cry of happiness or of hate... And we also agreed on cursing. Mythbusters, you know, the show, it's one of our favorites, they destroyed the myth that if you yell curse words, you can endure the pain longer, and they didn't bust it! On the contrary, they confirmed that it really helps when you curse. My son is 15 years old, he doesn't use that with us, but I understood that it would be easier for him.

Then step by step we were able to free the hand. It turned out that the skin was all the way to the bones... it came off like a glove... I applied tourniquets there, I have pre-medical training. Anyway, due to my capabilities and parental love... I sat there with my son and we waited for the crane. And the building continues to fall! It's not like something fell and that's it. I tried to cover him. I understood that if a large block falls, I will not be able to save him... but I can protect his body from at least small stones... I thought... well I've lived my life... I have to save my son... my son... Then the crane arrived. That plate, which was lying flat on his right leg, had mounting brackets on it. You can imagine these concrete slabs and mounting brackets on it. They grabbed the loop and slowly, slowly... come on, come

on, a little more... yes, yes and freed the legs... I immediately applied a tourniquet to stop bleeding. They dragged Ivan on a stretcher...

When accidents like this happen, "moments of silence" are always held in order to find those who are under the rubble and cannot be seen. So during this moment of silence, everyone shuts up, turns off all the equipment, and for a minute people shout and listen attentively to someone's voice. And so, during the first moment of silence, I call my wife: "Maya, Maya!" There is sound contact! But I did not understand how to reach it. The boys got it, looked into the gap there and saw that she was between the slabs. She was squeezed, but not crushed... But I didn't hear my friend's voice... There was no sound contact.

My son was on a stretcher. I looked at his right leg. An open fracture, the left one lies at a really wrong angle. Due to the fact that I applied 3 tourniquets to his arm and both legs, there was not so much blood loss. The regional hospital is 10-minute away at peaceful times. A huge building in Mariupol, which was opened five years ago, pompously, with a red ribbon... He was operated there. But there was a lack of water, heating, food, medicine was running out... That day it was completely full, just terrible... It was dangerous to be there near the windows. All the injured people were in the corridors. And it turns out that people who can live without surgery are helped right here, in the corridors. Someone has already died in there, just lying along the corridor... Well, apparently, someone is bleeding, and being taken along the corridor on a gurney, and there is a bloody river right here... The 10th was a horror... There was still an opportunity to take people there... And then the hospital occupied by orcs.

My wife and I went to feed our son, and the next time we came, the Russians had already been there and they didn't let us out because we would tell someone they were here. And they themselves put the tank where the emergency was. And it is just shooting the center of the city... And it is clear that HERE they are.

All this was going on until the nineteenth, that is, from ten to nineteen. And on March 19th, there were no more medicines... And slowly the doctors, apparently, began to analyze that, except for the military, they do not treat anyone here... They decided for themselves that it was the time to dump... The doctor comes to me and says – I'm out of here tomorrow. And Ivan...? This is a nightmare... My child is lying on the floor, on a mattress, next to him there is a woman with an injured leg, then a small passage, a woman with damaged lungs and an arm, then her husband, who was taking care of her, another man, who was shot by a sniper. A lot of people spent the night in such a small room without heating, without anything. My son's left leg had, you know, a weight hanging from it, and 4 bolts were sticking out of the right leg. All this is bandaged, blood is oozing, his arm is in a splint... Anyway, when the doctor tells me - "I'm going out of here and you should do the same", I say - "how can I carry a child like this?" He says - "I will put a temporary tire on him for all this stuff, just go, - he says - to Dnipro." I understand that waiting for green corridors is not an option for me. This is how we loaded: me, my wife and Ivan. They stuffed him in the car lying down, wrapped his leg with an elastic bandage and we just drove, without any corridors, first to Zaporizhia, then to Dnipro. Along the way, my son had a bed sore, a bunch of Russian roadblocks, constant searches. They say - go to Russia for treatment, the Dnipro will soon be captured too.

While there was a connection, I remember myself crying. You know, of the information that someone was saved. And it's not that I'm crying anymore, but I can't hold back my emotions... It felt that the Ukrainian people rallied against... this bloody avalanche. And when Ivan was finally saved, he was crying of happiness... and anger at everything that was happening around him. Now, I'm mostly angry.

Why poetry? I remember we were rafting on kayaks, it was raining, bad weather, cold, I said - I won't open the guitar, because it will get wet. And one girl said, nice girl, by the way, blonde, says - "let's read poems." Everyone is like: okay. She says - "I can start", and she begins to read some poem, of course, I don't remember it, but she read it like on stage. We stood by the fire because it was warm there. And she is reading that poem and I'm just having goose-bumps. I thought, damn, I don't know anything. It was so embarrassing. I thought I had to learn something so that I don't look like an imbecile... Oh, this is a wrong word, I can't say it... It's a disease, I'm sorry, cross it out... To look like an ignorant person.

Just as there isn't one single person who will win, there isn't one single person who is guilty here. I am also guilty of not realizing that I was in Ukraine in 1991. It's just that everyone has their own level of guilt. And the level of responsibility as well. That is, if my colleague, for example, does not speak Ukrainian, he shouldn't go to The Hague, but he is also guilty.

My first education is in building, so after the victory I will go and rebuild everything.

Maksym, State Emergency Service

Mariupol

CIRCUS AND RAILWAY

Some time ago I decided to study to be a conductor and I realized that it's my calling. Before that I used to work at the circus. I performed aerial acrobatics. Why did I decide to change my occupation? I fell. I had to learn to walk, talk, live ... Had to learn everything from scratch. Circus and railway are really similar if you think about it. What is circus? It's a travel. Well, you go from town to town. What is a railway? You also go from town to town. Who do you perform for? For the audience. Who do you take? People. This is your audience. Thinking about risk, well I risked my life in the circus. Here, when the controllers come in the train, you'll get your adrenalin. You risk your job! I was looking for a job to feel at home. And I found it.

On 24th I was at home. I was scared, but I've been feeling it since 2014. I come from Donetsk and I had to leave my hometown. I moved to Vinnitsky region, rented an apartment for many years, now I own it.

When we were called to work, we came to Lviv. The train got equipped, fixed and sent to Zaporizhya. That time Zaporizhya-2 station was bombed, just between the rails. We were turned from Zaporizhya to Kharkiv, it was even scarier there. We were on duty 24/7, picking up people, taking them somewhere, running into the tunnel, hiding... People were scared, 10-12 in one compartement, others crowded all over the aisle as well. It was just impossible to go through that carriage. I still have no idea how my train crew could handle it, it was mentally difficult. I'm telling you this now and there a lump in my throat. It's just difficult, but nobody was thinking about fear during that time. How can I explain it... There's a train

with 15 carriages, and there's an 8 thousand-people crowd coming at it. And you realize that you can only take... Well, 2 thousand top. It's the maximum capacity, because the carriage's overload leads to difference in autoconnection, it can cause self-disconnection on the turns, but the most important was to get the people out of there.

We called our train "The Flying Dutchman", because there was no schedule, we could go anywhere. I contacted the company, the traffic controller and he told me where we were supposed to get. On the 7th of April we got to Kramatorsk. It happened like this: we left Lviv and got to Poltava-Pivdenna, we spent the night there and thought that we would go back to Kharkiv. But we were turned back. When we arrived in Kramatorsk, the attack started and the bridge behind us was destroyed. I realized that it was the only link that connects Kramatorsk with Ukraine. So there was no way back. We were cut off Ukraine. We won't leave until the bridge is fixed.

That moment I re-defined the meaning of fear. Our crew consists people who I've known for years. I personally know these people very well. And every single one needed support then, but I can't be with every single one at the same time. I created a chat in Viber and named it-"My Crew". I constantly wrote there: "You doing great, you can handle this. You are such a strong bunch!". Some people panicked hysterically. I had two girls like that. I went to them personally, tried to calm them down and I told them: "Look at me, I am a human too, I also have family, a child, and look, I'm coping somehow". And little by little you get the person out of anxiety attack. Then I said: "Show me something in your phone" so the person gets distracted, starts looking for something. I tried to get them out step by step. And got broken inside myself step by step. I tried to get through no matter what. After the circus I could get used to anything. You know, sportsmen can hold everything inside, without showing it. I try not to cry when someone can see me. Only when I am alone, when I get home, I can sit there and cry my eyes out.

We all understood then that we might not get back home. Everyone started calling their parents or their children. I also called to say good bye to my son. I said: "I'm sorry for everything..." (cries). Apologies, I can't speak right now (falls silent for some time)

We are people... we make mistakes. We hurt somebody with a word or action... or a look. We are not perfect...

Under the attacks and bombs... screams ... and the boys are fixing this bridge. We had two options then: either stay in Kramatorsk (in the morning of the 8th we wouldn't have survived. There was shelling and many people died), or risk and cross the bridge. Our train operator accelerated the speed of the train to 2 km per hour and we were determined to plough through. At this level of risk you can't slow down and you can't speed up. We could fall off that bridge any moment. So, finally the train operator took us out. I don't remember his name, but if I would meet him, I'd worshipfully bow down to his feet.

When we passed Slov'yansk and Losova and I realized that we were saved I fainted. Just switched off. I can't explain it, you have to live through it to understand.

And, you know, after all this, it's so bitterly sad that there is no bomb shelter here at the station for us, for the conductors. Well, there is surely an option: you just jump into the hole in the ground and sit there. But can they at least cover that hole? Why is there no shelter for us? Aren't we humans?

After the victory I... I don't know... I guess I will just kneel and kiss the soil... I wish, it was today

My brother died in Donetsk, killed by a shell. My son went to look for him and couldn't get back. He is there now, in Donetsk. He found my brother's body buried with just a number. I can't even explain how I feel now.

Lilia, trainmaster

Kozyatyn

MEDICAL PRACTICE

My parents are doctors. I've always known I'm gonna be a doctor. I knew that I'd be a medic, a neurosurgeon. I just liked it. I don't know, for me it was ... It might sound like... for me this is medicine. For example: would you like to be there during the surgery, would you like to see how it goes? Would you like to participate an operation? And I always knew, I would love to...

I was in Chernigiv on my internship. 24th was the last day of it. So, we were supposed to go to Kyiv, all of us, to our professor, to take our final internship exam. I woke up at 5 a.m. and started packing up. My mom, who had a shift, called me and said: "Kostya, don't go anywhere, Russia attacked, the full scale war has started". I thought: "War? What war? What kind of news she was reading?". So I go outside to the bus stop and see our airfield on fire. I got back home, put my bag down and went to work, where I had my practice. That's it. It's not like I couldn't go out. It's just... I knew there was few of us in the hospital. I had to be there, I had to help my doctors. There is no neurosurgery in Chernigiv except for regional clinics. And any war means head injuries, spine injuries. This is a job for neurosurgeons, so all those patients would be taken to us. I got to work, there was one surgeon, it was his shift. He says: What are you doing here? Get out of here. I say: I have my duty. after that there was no questions.

So, my working hours started. You sit and wait, because they can bring somebody whenever and anything can happen. There were days when we operated in each and every room. You see, so you wake up, if you were lucky to have some sleep, go round the patients, check the prescriptions and keep running to the emergencies.

Once a week, a week and a half, you may go home, take some fresh clothes, see your family. Also you need to know that we had no electricity for 30 days. I charged the powerbank at work from the generator in surgery and took it home. If it was a good day and there was connection, my mom could send a text message. I'm at work, I haven't heard my mom's voice in a week, and someone says my district was shelled by mortars. And I can't go home, can't contact a single person I know...

One day they brought a man who didn't .. he had a fragment in his spine, in spinal cord... he didn't feel his body... anything below the nipples. He couldn't move his legs, just couldn't. Only the hands. We operated, got the fragment out, his spinal cord is ruined.

And before that his 'combatant buddies' had visited... They told that his wife had cancer, his child was handicapped. He himself had been in ATO. He was a real soldier, with shooting and scouting missions... So I come to intensive care, where he is, and I have to say something to make him stop crying... And I'm doctor, I know that nobody can get up with an injury like that... How should I say that to him?

Or when a girl after the attack... Taken here as an unknown... I look at her head and ... her brains go out and she dies. And then the nurse who was doing her CT scan says: I know her! My daughter was attending her classes... she is a dance teacher, she has a studio... I have only one question then: "Why? Why did the children's dance teacher die? And I can't do anything..."

Or on the first day of war a father and a son got in. They were trying to evacuate and their car was shot. Father is fine and his son got injuries incompatible with life. We operated on him and... well, he died. And the father says: My wife is dead. Now my son. How can I live? And the boy was a tractor driver in his village, he planted crops... His father lived for him... And in situations like this I am standing there, looking for words...

There was a woman with cancer and she walked out of the window. She tied a note to herself: "I don't have medicine I require, and there is no medicine in the city. I can't handle this pain, I found the only way out." You need to have the guts to do that. Those moments are tough, really tough... They don't teach that in medical university...

It was scary when they started attacking hospitals in the city, one after the other ... and at some point there were only two hospitals left in the city. Ours became a military hospital. One evening we see something flying above. Soldiers explained to us that it is reconnaissance drone. And it was about 7 p.m. at the time, so that meant at 10 p.m., at 2 and 4 a.m. they will bomb us.

You see, when a plane is bombing somewhere close, doctors-men are mostly fine. But we also have nurses who are women. They got really scared, and by the time of 10th, 20th day of war we didn't go down to bomb shelter. We went to the hallway. And then the head of neurosurgery offers to see whose legs are longer! And everyone is laughing, making jokes... This is ... family

Every man who went to the front line and protected us... They thought we would help. I could run away but how could I live after it. What's worth fighting for then, if I simply can't perform my duty?

You know what differs the nation? It's not the language, history or culture. Nation becomes one when people are ready to die for its values, you see? We are ready. We are dying. We are dying...

There's a saying that a surgeon becomes one during the war. The best surgeons come from war where you see the worst injuries, you have to make the toughest decisions. This experience is really important for me. I think I passed my exam. I made those tough decisions, some where right, some weren't. I learned a lot, professionally and personally... I realized the value of life, small things. When it's plus 7 outside and plus 12 inside everything you want is cup of hot tea or one more blanket, to sleep under three not two. I started valuing simple things.

I never think: "Ugh... I have to go to work again, have to stand there over the operating table during all-night shift. I don't feel that. Maybe it'll come later, now I only have this excruciating desire to go to work and learn something. Excruciating desire for life.

And after the victory? Yeah, then I'll just stay in my bed all day and sleep. Nothing else

Kostyantyn, intern neurosurgeon

Chernigiv

COINCIDENCE

On the 24th at five in the morning, I thought I would go to school. Even when I heard the explosions, I still thought I would go. I was in such a good mood, I wasn't even worried. I was standing by the open window eating popcorn. I even had it in insta stories, I just didn't care. Then they turned the lights and water off, but we had a pump, a well, a generator, so we didn't worry.

We saw the missile attacks all over the city, there were victims, but we still were not leaving. For some reason we weren't leaving. We thought that there would be nothing so completely terrible, just some... I didn't even ask the question why we aren't leaving.

Looting began in my grandpa's shop. And then he started going out, just giving people food. He simply took everything out so that the doors and counters would not be broken. Everyone knew my grandpa and tried to treat him with respect. Well, at first.

When tanks started passing by our house, we had already decided not to go upstairs. Several shells fell on us, and we had gas tanks behind the house. Grandpa went to check whether they exploded or not. And just at that moment, a projectile flew just half a meter away from him. He was at the door, but didn't have time to get in... I was on a direct line from it at that moment. You could draw a straight line where this projectile flew. I would have died if I'd gone any further. All the walls were badly damaged. I immediately shouted - "I'm fine, I'm fine!". And then grandpa started calling grandma: "Natasha!" A bunch of times just "Natasha! Natasha! Natasha! Natasha!" I don't know how he managed to shout that, he's great. Then the grandmother shouted: "Sasha! Sasha! Sasha!" She went out to look and said - "God, he's under the rubble", but he wasn't. I don't know why she said that... She was stressed, I guess. She opened the door where grandpa was, we dragged him into the house. Grandma says - "help pulling!" And in the end, I pulled it myself. I don't know how I managed to. Well, noradrenaline, that's how... And now my grandpa is lying wounded and my grandma does nothing. She didn't know what to do, and I quickly say - "give me a knife". I cut the sweater to see where his injuries are. Why is that? If something terrible happens, they always come to me and ask what to do?

Then I asked my grandmother to give me an extension cord, the one for a socket or something like a harness, only thick, not thin, because you can't make bandages with a thin one, you need something thick. Ideally, it would be some kind of harness, I don't know, a belt, but we didn't have one at hand. We understood that his arm was most severed, and the arteries pass there, I said - "that's it, we'll tie it up near the shoulder." So, we tied it around the shoulder, then started looking at the body, and realized that there was a big hole in his head. Well, there's no way to fix it, actually... We bandaged this hand, my grandmother kept shouting something at him. It was annoying.

In fact, this was the most terrible feeling in my life. There were many other terrible things... I had some hopeless situations: a suicide attempt, car crashes... But this one was the worst. When he was already bandaged, we were sitting and my grandma brought me a chair. Then cognac, then she offered me a cigarette, I said - "no, I don't want to drink." I didn't want to drink or smoke at all! I have never even tried! My heart was skipping to beat. I had a feeling that I was going to tear the heart out now, I don't know why... I tried to keep calm, I remembered the advice - in order not to panic, you need to look

around and just name the objects or their color in your head or out loud. We had a storage, there were bags of products, I looked around. The bag with cabbage is green, the refrigerator is white, the tiles are black, the window frame is orange. Green, white, black, orange. I'm sitting, trying to calm myself down, because I thought I was going to pass out. Although I've never fainted in my whole life. Grandma gave me water, I drank water and could not get enough I'm really thirsty when I'm nervous. I started calling, the connection was very bad, we got the phone out of my grandfather's pocket and I started looking for an ambulance.

In the emergency room, they said no, they are no longer working. "If you want to bring someone, pickup, only pickup!" I understand that there is a tank near our house, I will not get my grandpa out and grandma won't. Then I called my uncle, told him that grandpa was injured. Uncle left for us. I was sitting next to my grandfather, I understood that... well... he wouldn't survive at all... and I had those thoughts - "it would be better if he died sooner now", because he is suffering a lot, I can see it, I know that his heart is bad. I know that if he doesn't die from blood loss or fatal injuries, he will die from a heart attack because he has a contusion, his body just can't take it. Actually, he died quite quickly then.

Uncle came to us. He has a Mazda car and there are 3 sixes on the number plate. It would probably be scary for Christians... He came in, looked at us... saw grandfather's body... burst into tears... We had no time to think. We got into the car and quickly drove off. He's been driving fast all his life. It turned out that he'd drunk half a bottle of cognac then, but he drove perfectly, just superb! So, we go, we see tanks burning. And then, by the way, the sun was shining. It was a shock, because it had been snowing all the time, it had been gloomy, and then it was sunny... We arrive at my uncle's, I see my younger brother, I think - how can I explain grandpa's death to him? And I came up with a brilliant plan! I told him that we were evacuating because it was dangerous there, and my grandfather stayed to look after the store. And these adults, my God! These adults began to say - "he is dead, he is dead!" I say - "shut up! Children are here!" My cousin... He loved his grandfather very much. I'm standing in front of him with this scarf of mine, and it is covered in blood... And I always walk with my scarf... I am like Napoleon, I am very afraid of draughts... I panic about that all the time. The adults are sitting on the floor in the kitchen, grandma is covered in blood, asks: "Eva, what should we do, what should we do? What about the body, how can we take it away? Who should I call?" I'm just standing... I don't know what to say. There were always these questions - "What should we do, where to get gasoline, what should we do with the generator, how should we hide it so that it is not stolen?" For some reason, all these questions were for me!

When the fierce fighting began, we were sitting in the basement, we heard someone knocking on the door. Who could it be? They say - "military", I thought I was going to die! I don't know... that I was going to be raped or something, because the military - it was very scary. Then it turned out that they were our militaries and they said that we have five minutes to get ready. We packed up quickly. I took the documents from the basement, everyone forgot about them. I put my dog in a school bag. I always had a school bag with me, I had the most necessary things there, but for some reason there were also... these... aroma sticks. You know? Scented. I just decided to put them there... well, never mind. They put us in the car, it was so funny then! They put the mother-in-law in the... what's it called... in the trunk, and she was claustrophobic, she started screaming, so we had to move her to the front seat.

We drove and I thought that we were going to be evacuated from Volnovakha. But they brought us to the hospital, put us in the basement. I think - "we will sit for a few hours until the people are all taken out", but it turned out not... We were there for several weeks... we celebrated the 8th of March there...

Well, 'celebrate'... Everyone just came up and said to each other: "Happy 8th of March." There were many dogs, I gave them water, because the people were all very nervous and scared and nobody thought about it.

In this hospital, I did push-ups, exercises, pulled up on the tubes, I had burst of energy. I had post-traumatic stress disorder even before the war. Because my stepfather beat me. People who have post-traumatic stress disorder are constantly stressed, and when they get into a really stressful environment, they feel fine... I don't know... so I guess that's why I wasn't so lost.

It was difficult to breathe because of the dust. Many people had nosebleeds, capillaries could not stand it. People in our room had parrots, they shouted something for the first two days, and then that was it. They died. I saved charging on headphones, listening to Queen, "I don't wanna die", as they sang, "I sometime wish I'd never been born at all" (sings the song). There were other teenagers there, I saw that there was a shortage of music, I say - "do you wanna listen? Here. you go" There was another guy who brought a computer unit and a monitor with him. It's so interesting, someone didn't take anything at all, someone didn't have any documents, and someone took a computer with them. Someone had certificates from the 1st grade, a plasticine snowman.

Then I finally got out of Volnovakha, and grandma stayed to bury grandpa. She was staying in that hospital by herself. Everyone had already left, and she was sitting and waiting to bury grandpa. Then she told me that when they took him out of the house, they just put his body on a door. She was talking to him for a long time. He was buried near his relatives. Grandma was lucky, she found people who could help with the burial when the city was already occupied. Grandma and grandpa spent all their lives together.

By the way, I'm an atheist. I don't believe in God, but I tried to pray. All my life I think - "damn, it would be cool to believe in God", but I can't. Prayers did not help. And then I understood - it's cool that there is no fate. It's cool that it's just a coincidence. Because... I don't know how to describe it... it's probably a good thing that I don't dependent on something out there. But who should I thank when I go to sleep in a warm bed and alive? "Thank you, God, I'm fine?" "Thank you, fate?" I finally realized. "Thank you, coincidence!" It all depends on the coincidence of circumstances. When a rocket arrives, everything depends on it. No matter how much you pray, it can still come to you. I'll resign if I die, resign if I don't die. It will be as it will be. I don't know which level of consciousness I reached then. (laughs)

After the victory... I will go to a psychiatrist... Actually, I want to fly to Mars, I would be more comfortable there.

Eva, a schoolgirl

Volnovakha