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The narrative can be spoken by a single person or divided into 9 characters if desired. At its heart is the ironic story of a woman and child fleeing abroad and a description of the beginning of the war in Ukraine. It is about understanding the role of refugees, the prohibition of one's own happiness. There are many answers to these difficult questions. Many unanswered questions.

Read the text. Find out who the characters are. Let it be a surprise.

Scene 1

My name is Polina Polozhentseva... No, maybe it's a habit to start a play with a lie... My name is Polina Kislytsia. I've already been married twice in my dramatic career. Somehow twice... both times in vain.

So... I'm going to pretend I'm writing a play and that there are some actors in it thinking about the war. Later, people will recognize themselves in these monologues. They are sure to take offense. They will start writing on Facebook that this means absolutely nothing. They will stop talking to me. Or they'll follow a more elaborate path – saying that everything is fine... and then they will stop talking.

So in this text I'm going to make things simpler for everyone. Here we go.

Person 1 is Francesco. My Italian relative. Or something like that. He came with my first failed marriage. He is the husband of my first husband's sister Ivanka – who is person 2. Francesco lived all his life in Florence and never once thought of moving to another country.

These are the only people I know abroad and the only ones who agree to accommodate us for free. Actually, to be honest, only Ivanka agreed. When I asked her what Francesco thought, she replied: "Who cares?"

When Italians want to offend someone, they call him a 'mussolini.' That is why the President of Ukraine is Mussolini. His wife - Mussolini. My daughter and I are Mussolini and Mussolini Jr.

Ivanka has been living in Florence for the last 10 years. But she hates Italians, and dreams of returning to Ukraine. Especially now. Since her brother, my first husband, is there. But a week ago he was drafted into the army.

When I fled from Kyiv, I gathered all my belongings together in just 8 minutes. It was 24th February. There was no cinematic drama, sorry. Just ordinary things - routine.

I didn't wake up when the first explosions came at 5 am. I woke when a friend called me at 6.30. My first thought was to block her. But then I looked at my watch ... Sonya, like me, likes to lie in bed for a long, long time. We both work at night then sleep until noon. What was so important at 6:30 in the morning? Maybe someone died...

"Are you going?"

"Where?"

"So you're not going?"

"Where, for Christ's sake?"

"Well, when you decide where, call me?"

My friend hung up. Then I opened the news and learned about the beginning of the war.

That's when my legal 8 minutes began, during which time another friend with her own car – this is person 3 – got to me. Going from Osokorki to Kharkiv.

“Soooo... what do I need?” I wandered around the flat, chucking various odds and ends into a bag, like jars of pickled aubergines, and handfuls snacks, fruits and dried oatmeal. For some reason it seemed to me that I would be stuck somewhere in a basement, where there would be no food. That's why I added thermal underwear and a woollen blanket from Nepal. Stretchy trousers (honorary candidates for floor washing) went in too. Yet I forgot the laptop with half of my new play, about my first husband and his reluctance to pay alimony.

But here's the essence of the lost text.

We haven't been together for about 10 years. He hasn't tried to see his child for the last 3 years.

Yet when I meet the second man, the first turned up in an instant. He wrote to his rival on V Kontakte.

“Just try to turn my daughter against me. I'll kill you. I will kill you!”

“Who are you anyway?” He demanded – and at once started paying alimony.

After the first man went for a walk with our daughter, insulting inscriptions appeared on the second man's car. ‘Cuntface’ and ‘shit’. Mala and her father were both involved in this decoration. And he told her, “Let this be our little secret.” Oh, what a wonderful play it would be.

My premiere was due to take place at the end of April in the new theatre in Podil... After seven years of creative effort, I was finally going to see my text on stage. The actors studied it and took quotes from it. They turned out to be very useful later in the defence of Kyiv and for the Armed Forces.

When someone wrote in our chat: ‘Not funny.’ Someone answered with the words of the heroine ‘Grandma and Grandpa have sex’: ‘If I hadn't turned sad into funny, I'd have been fooled for a long time...’ Oh, what a wonderful production it would have been ...

On 23rd February, at the rehearsal, the actors all ate kebabs and I ate buckwheat. Because I felt fat.

I've now lost 7 kilos. And my hands are like my mother's. Let me explain: she has very brittle nails that easily break, and a Caucasus of wrinkles all over...

So no-one even tries to say I look young for my age. On Badoo, it's only Arab suitors for me now. One said angrily yesterday: “It's a pity you're Russian.” I replied that I was from Kyiv, then apologized.

10 minutes later the friend arrived. I went to meet her with my daughter in the yard along with rats, food and clothes... But the friend had parked near another entrance on another street. I'd made a mistake with the number when sending my address to Viber.

By the way, she's not exactly a friend ... She's the younger sister of my sister's classmate... You got that? Younger sister. Of a classmate. Of my Sister.

So, in Kyiv, we had lived across the station from each other for almost a year and lazily messaged once a month: "Coffee?". But somehow coffee never happened...

That's why when the classmate's sister went to another street, I was nervous. It was about 11 am, 6 hours after the explosions... Suddenly I was worried – maybe she won't meet me?

And blood was running down my arm. I forgot to mention that, because on the 24th human blood was no longer of great importance. I'd bitten by one of the rats as I tried to transplant it from its cage into a small carrier. The rat was just 2 weeks old. I don't know which it hated more – us or the war... or me...

I called the classmate's sister and was relieved when she took the call.

"I'll be here," I suggested as the 7th hour of silence began.

"Ok. I'll come and pick you up," she promised, and this time she arrived. Then we bought coffee at the gas station and laughed a lot as we drank it.

Nobody asked me where we should go. We headed for Zaporizhia, because it is our hometown, where my parents live. The classmate's sister has a mother and a father there. I have only my mum - person 4 – who takes care of my old grandma. Dad died a year and a half ago. I wrote a play about him too: "We won't talk about it. What's the point"... But when my father had a heart attack, I promised myself that I would never make a play out of it.

"Will we pass Bucha?" I asked when Kyiv was no longer visible. It was the 8th calm hour after the explosions.

"Bucha's somewhere on the left. It's kind of quiet there."

My close friend and her two daughters live in Bucha: Alya-Olya. Persons 5, 6 and 7! And her ex-husband, with who 'everything is difficult'... She was silent in friends' chats, so I willingly believed that everything is quiet in Bucha. Where explosions take place, people actively ask for help. The mother of my Zaporozhian acquaintance, who is now in Wroclaw, lived in Bucha too. She married a man 12 years older. They didn't have any problems until his 50th

birthday, but then they started out of the blue... She needed sex and travel – and he didn't...

On the 26th, an acquaintance wrote on Facebook that she did not want to receive messages from friends like “I love you,”. It was as if they were saying goodbye. No one in the world then knew where Bucha was. Even I didn't know, although I lived in Kyiv on the other side.

When Ali-Oli's mother wrote, “Come visit,” I said something like, “Let's meet in the centre.” Why bother to go to Bucha when i can walk down Volodymyr Hill from Maidan to Kontraktova?

On the way to Zaporizhia, the classmate's sister's dad called several times.

“Do you have a full tank? Refuel again!”

Stupid advice, because the tank was full... And even if it wasn't, no way could we refuel on the way. With three girls sitting in a car for the 9th hour of silence, you just go without stopping. Not everyone has their own car in wartime. And such a brilliant Mercedes.

My father beat my mother all my life (I hope she will never read this text, because there is nothing in the world more indifferent than the truth). When he was alive, he would never ask if my tank was full.

Once, in a rented apartment, I had a broken stove (it was the first day after the heating went off). I sat next to it all night with a pot of water. Waiting for it to boil. I fell asleep and woke up five times. I went kind of crazy. But my dad never came to help me. I guess he was afraid that if he showed up, I would immediately force him to pay the rent ... I was 25 then, or thereabouts. I'd just left my first husband, which made dad very angry. He couldn't imagine that my mum would ever leave him... And she didn't. Yes, she wrote and reported him to the police, but never once considered divorce... Although, maybe now she would have a chance of freedom – by killing dad and saying that the Muscovites did it.

Two years before his death, a police officer came to the house and asked him sympathetically:

“Why are you beating your wife?”

“Me? Never in my life! I love her.”

The problem was no one believed my mother. In company, dad was always the life and soul. So that blew this route to salvation. Even her best friend refused to believe dad was beating mum – even though he actually witnessed it.

"Oh no. This is a delusion," he said. "She surely provoked him. And where is the evidence?"

The policeman wrote in his report: "I do not beat; I love", because from childhood he was taught to believe in words. Especially if written on paper...

This officer was sent to us after a doctor's report from the local hospital. My mother had been there to photograph the beatings... There weren't many, but her friend pushed her do it.

Bruise on the temple.
Scratches on the hand.

The doctor was very indignant that he had been asked to attend to such trifles. After all, there's got to be a lot of blood for it to really matter... I mean, a LOT of blood. And if you die, that matters even more. Death is a great tragedy. But the fact that your husband beats you - no.

Scene 2

My name is Polina Kislytsia. All my life, I've been writing in Zaporizhia texts about types of beginning, about Cherenkov, about good deputies, about adult orphans, about the revolution, about the violent dispersal of the Maidan... and more recently plays. Sometimes I write plays where I don't think about how people should act and why. They do the same in life.

You can like this.
Or not.

There are no reasons. Nor explanations.

The first siren in Zaporizhia came on the 25th night. It launched a 12-hour silence. After - there were no explosions. You could barely hear the siren in the classmate's sister's home. Mum had to let her know via chat that she should run to the shelter. And I didn't have time to get back to the apartment. So I had to stay with their family. The father who was interested in a full tank was sitting on the couch. If I say in a robe, it will sound banal. But - yes, he was sitting in a robe.

"Siren! Go to the basement," his wife shouted.

"I'm not going anywhere," said the man, surfing the news on social media.

So for several hours my daughter and I sat alone in the basement. For entertainment, there was a table, a sofa and two windows through which you could see the feet of passers-by.

Meanwhile, the classmate's sister drank tea with her mum and dad and talked about the long traffic jam at the entrance to the Dnieper. We had thought we would be stuck there all night. At that very moment, my colleague was crossing the Polish border. She's from Melitopol, and the Crimea. The first explosion there had hit the military town where she lived. So she went straight to the railway station and asked for a train. The ticket inspector let her on free without waiting for instructions from above... And she travelled through the night to the border. Yeh, so why don't we just stay at the entrance to the Dnieper?

The war had begun. And in wartime, people should not be well ... If someone is killed or raped, then you should at least suffer hell at this time ... For example - imagine being killed or raped.

Two hours passed. Or maybe 20 minutes. In a basement where there is no Wi-Fi, time flows differently.

"Maybe it's enough already, but more tea?" The mother looked in on us ... that is, the sister now and me and my daughter. By the way, her birthday is the same as mine. The little grandson (he was with us) too. She'd had a Caesarean section, and decided to give her mother a gift – choosing the same date. Over tea, the sister took a picture of the three of us together and said that she would post it on 22nd January. There will be peace in Ukraine then, and we will look at ourselves and shout: "Why do I look so terrible here?". In the meantime, they were going to flee to Germany. The eldest daughter, by the way, was against this plan, jokingly saying they wanted to kidnap her.

I usually wash my hair every two days. After that, there's flea hotel in there. It gets so tangled it stays in a bunch even without an elastic band. This was the second day after the 24th.

On the 26th, I signed up for a beauty salon. 1st March for cauterization of the nasal mucosa with liquid nitrogen. This is my post-code. I wrote about it (believe it or not!). For a play staged by students of the Wild Theatre.

On the 19th I stood in a queue for hair lightening.

Every spring, it's the same thing - lose weight, paint, buy new dresses, which over the years become longer and longer... There's nothing to talk about, if not the explosions at 5 am and sirens at 10 pm...

"Black / green / fruit?"

“Black, please. And if there is, lemon.”

Lemon came with cane sugar. So delicious to drink tea with lemon and dark brown sugar after a tiring trip.

Friends are about to have a trend. They’ll start saying: if you’re not in Kyiv or Mariupol, there is nothing to complain about. And in a week I’ll lose the chance to tell ironic stories about Francesco. Friends just hear his name, and immediately imagine me with a glass of aperol... So I lose the ability to judge what I like and what I do not.

During the war, you need to banish all feelings with a positive sign. From now on it is forbidden to go on dates, fall in love, have sex, joke about hostilities, throw mindless memes at each other, post stories from Florence...

Person 8 - Eleanor. I met her on the Budapest-Florence train. She spoke Russian without an accent and did not admit for a long time that she was leaving St. Petersburg. Eleanor paid for my tea, which cost, wow, 3 euros. Almost no drinking black tea! And with regular sugar and without lemon. Although... maybe that's how I love it now? Eleanor listened with a slight smile to my stories about the Zaporozhia bomb shelter. *I poked her in my pants, which I hadn't taken off for the 9 days of the war.* Showed a map of new and old spots.

My story was about how we’d moved in with my mum and run five times a night to the basement of the high school. The homeless man was expelled with loud cries from the mothers. This basement had been his home. Then a third world war began in the vault... a battle for a place near the wall. Two women quarrelled fiercely. One threatened to call the police.

“How old are you?” The first one dreamed of being older than her rival.

“18” she would not admit her true age.

“You look bad for 18!”

People waited for the alarm to go off, then went home in the dark...

Well, just a maniac's dream, not conditions. Then Russian troops entered Bucha. My second husband wrote in Viber:

“If the Russians take Zaporizhia, we’ll go together after that. They’ll give us green corridors - it will be safer than now. ”

“Did you hear the explosions?” Eleanor asks.

“No.”

At that moment, I was ashamed I was a playwright who had not heard the explosions. What could you write about after that? Why did I intervene in the shelter in a quarrel between two women? One even thought I was a relative of the other. Another thought the same thing. In the end, they both stopped talking to me.

In my nine days in Zaporizhia a bomb hit only once, at the airport outside the city. My mother's neighbour from Maly saw the explosion. She was in the maternity hospital after her 5th abortion. It was nearby. She hid beneath the blanket, scared the windows would smash and fall on to her bed. In Soviet times, the maternity hospital was well appointed and had a panoramic view of the field ... You lay pregnant, watching the sunflowers grow...

In order not to look like a fool at all, I say I heard the first explosions in Kyiv. I live near Gostomel airport. Yet I still did not hear! Even though my windows rattled! And actually it's not completely untrue... if I hadn't been drinking wine with my friend until midnight on the 23rd ... Then, of course, I would have heard explosions. When I woke up at 6.30, my neighbour was already loading things into the car and closing the locks on all the doors.

“They will not fire on Kyiv. This is Kyiv!” I replied when she asked why we weren't leaving.

I told Eleanor something else, because a Russian plane was shot down near Osokorki, Babin Yar was shot down and a rocket hit a skyscraper in Obolon.

“Are you from Kiev?”

“Are you from Peter?”

I was from Zaporizhia, and Eleanor was from Kazan. How come I hadn't heard her Russian accent before?

Eleanor is a freelance artist. She signed me up to her Insta on the train, even though there was almost no connection.

On the first day of the war – we didn't even argue that it was a war...Eleanor spoke to me in ordinary words: war is war, life is expensive, dick is dick...

...On the first day of the war, Eleanor rushed to Kaliningrad. There were rumours that there was an open checkpoint here. There was. But she was not let through. In her place, I would have returned to Peter in tears, but she tried again the next day. The guard had changed. And she got through.

Eleanor painted like Picasso. She was bisexual and wanted to seek refuge in Britain because of sexual discrimination in her homeland. Girls should be free to love each other, so the whole world believes...

By the way, I hated myself for not hating Eleanor. I asked her about Peter and even remembered how I dreamed at school of going on a field trip there. The whole class went to the Hermitage, but my family had no money for it...

Eleanor can't write well in Insta. But she wanted to come to people's notice, so she made 10 reposts of other people's thoughts every day. In response, her friends covered her with their dicks. They said that 'Ukraine above all' is the slogan of fascism. When we parted, Eleanor gave me a souvenir - a packet of foil. As I crossed the Italian border, I thought, "What kind of drugs are these?"

Scene 3

At Cherenkov's I progressed to be editor of a news feed ... That's why I received a jackpot every summer - in the form of interns from 1-2 courses of the university.

I immediately tell them about the first rule of journalism:
Write. Simply. In plain words.

Then the second:
Take information from several sources. This gets the fancy label 'pluralism'.
Pluralism of thought.

At the beginning of the week we're given a list of enemies of the 'party' who need to be nailed. Call them corrupt, thieves and propagandists... Several speakers talk about this at the same time. Because all opinions must be balanced.

The pay is about 5 thousand hryvnias a month. This is enough for a single mother to rent an apartment in the centre of Zaporizhia, feed herself and her child, and pay for a private school. At that time, no one thought that Cherenkov's enemies had to be denazified and demilitarized...

From 24th February, I do not work. Funding for my project stopped, and in a few days the boss found himself in the defence of Kyiv. He is as fond of memes as I am. In addition to the usual "How are you?" we hurl pictures at each other. He sends memes from the trenches where rockets are screeching in and I from the basements of Zaporizhia, the evacuation train from Zaporozhye 1-Lviv, taxi Lviv-Uzhgorod, cars Uzhgorod-Budapest and the train Budapest-Florence.

From an early age, my father 'taught' me a psychological trick. It's called avoiding conflict. I love peace and tranquility so much that I will never start a fight. Once on the street I was attacked by a drunk, but I couldn't spray pepper in his eyes. Sorry. Instead, I just sprayed his head.

And if they snatch my bag from my hands, I will shout after the thief: "I give it to you!" Yes, I'm usually smart and don't get into a chase.

I ignore conflict with all my might. I'm silent. I cross the street.

Am I a mussolini? Well ok.

A fascist? Oh, no question.

Banderivka? So blatant I don't see any point in arguing.

Later, I was repeatedly asked abroad, what about nationalism in Ukraine, who is Bandera, how many people died in Donbas?

Facebook even targeted me with several advertising articles 'How to talk about the war abroad.' Mark's team must have thought: 'This fool has been found out... At least give them a lecture on Bandera. You were even at his grave in Munich in 2008... Look, there's a photo in the 'memory' section.

Guys, Bandera is a dude who made everyone want to leave Ukraine.

Such a natural desire. For example, how do you like to live with your parents or your husband's parents? Everyone says no except the Italians.

When it comes to genetics, I have a place to live near the airport. In solitude. Without men.

And there is something primitive and romantic in this ... If you don't lower the blinds before going to bed, you wake in the morning looking at the planes take off in Gostomel ...

In Kyiv, I worked for an important company and went to work across a street named after a terrorist. You get knots in the stomach about this. This 'hero' killed so many people, yet the street was named in his honour. In my beloved Kyiv.

When I was 7 or even 10 years old, this devil staged terrorist attacks in the centre of Moscow. I remembered this as the last piece of the puzzle. Eleanor said that when she was little, she was coming up from the metro with her mother. Then a loud explosion erupted behind them. She said, you can imagine the ceiling falling on people, and my mother and I were already on the top step of the escalator ... But she needed some crazy amount of rubles to work through the trauma of this injury. She is still afraid of explosions, although she has never heard them again.

After the 24th, the name 'hero' began to be used more and more often in Ukraine... I remembered vaguely one from childhood: Dzhokhar Dudayev. I open Wikipedia: The first president of the self-proclaimed Chechen Republic of Ichkeria ... The leader of the militants ... Was destroyed ... There is a square named after Dudayev in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In Latvia - an alley. There is also a square in Lithuania. In Poland - the area. In Turkey - a park... It's only on the fifth page of a Google search I suddenly find an article where the word 'destroyed' is replaced by 'killed'. Because in war only their own are killed, or destroyed - of course.

Dzhokhar Dudayev wanted everyone to leave Ichkeria. And he was anything but a terrorist.

So they don't tell that on TV right after they say 'Good night, kids'.

In 1989, Dudayev said that Russia would attack Ukraine, The Baltics and Moldova. Aunt Nadia took a family photo with salads. Then we ate these salads. And then the adults argued loudly about politics. Our family has no relatives in Russia, although my father called himself a Russian all his life. He wanted it so badly that one day he just came to believe he really was from Russia. He began to tell everyone that his grandfather had come from St. Petersburg after the war. I mentioned this in a school essay. The teacher was very interested then.

"Your grandfather was a nobleman?"

"Yes" (why not?).

Instead, our family has relatives in Mykolayiv who voted for Yanukovych in 2007, went to pro-Russian rallies at 14, and managed to escape to Germany before the war.

My mother's sister recently wrote in Insta: *"As commanded by someone who cannot be named, learn, learn and learn again."* I posted a photo near the university.

My mother just went crazy because of it. I regretted that I had not stopped communicating with relatives when I was 14.

My mother often wishes people death... Russians especially... She cursed their world so powerfully that Zhirinovskiy died the next day. My sister and I laughed and said she was a witch. My sister is a real antidepressant. She has such a talent - to say horrible things in a seductive tone. And my mother and I were killing ourselves...

Since the full-scale invasion, 3,000 Ukrainian servicemen have been killed and 20,000 Russians killed.

“3,000 is a full house at the Zaporizhia arena,” my mother wrote. Before the war we went there for the Ocean Elzy concert, so we understand that... We fall asleep peacefully, knowing that 20 thousand is much more...

I now live with the Italian relatives. My sister rents a house in France. Mum is in hell because she can't leave grandma. We don't even discuss it. Grandma is 93 years old, and has not left the house for five years. It's mum we're trying to protect from terrible news.

“The Russian military is already near Zaporizhia. I hear explosions,” she wrote in a chat. Sounds of explosions are usually best heard at night.

“It is the air defence” I answer.

“Why do they want Zaporizhia? They don't have enough strength. To hold a city of 800,000 people, you need a huge force,” my sister wrote.

“They will start firing on the city centre,” says mum again.

“No, they won't go for the city. At most, two districts will be affected: Kosmos and Shevchyk.”

(Then I fell asleep - the chat is silent.)

We travelled by train to Western Ukraine for 29 hours. On the way, the train changed direction several times. We came to a halt in the Carpathians, then we were told we were going to Uzhgorod, but finally everyone was dropped off at Lviv and the officials said ‘arrived’. On the way the train had stopped only at large stations. At others, desperate women lifted babies to the windows and banged on the doors with all their maternal strength.

The conductor meanwhile drank tea.

“What can I do?” she said to me, waiting her turn at the toilet.

“Do you have anything to eat?” I also tried not to look at the babies, because I too had no idea what to do.

“A student shared noodles with me. He gave me half his share. There he is, sitting in the aisle.”

The conductor pushed back the shelf, and I saw transparent noodles on a napkin. I went back to the compartment and collected food for the conductor

from the neighbours. Nobody has anything normal, like noodles. We all eat biscuits. Then at midnight we can't go to the toilet.

Two apples. A pack of peanuts. Open pack of dried apricots. I gave it all to our conductor instead of just not thinking about the babies.

Since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, 200 children have died. This is a 15th part of the Zaporizhia arena, but that's not the point. When it comes to children, calculations are different... Children are not statistics. They are a barometer that measure your ability to empathize.

The first was a girl called Polina. Very beautiful. With pink hair. My daughter pleaded from November to March, wanting to dye her hair the same colour. But I would not allow her to damage her hair. She's my blonde with blue eyes. Everyone wants to be like that, and she wanted change. When I saw Polina's photo, I thought about how beautiful her hair looks. The girl was probably popular in her class. You know, school stars are usually seen at once. By the gleam in their eyes or something. Or a high chin, not otherwise ...

Polina and her family were shot by a sabotage group on the way out of Kyiv. It was when we were sitting in the basements of Zaporizhia. In the first basement school there was a lot of glass, which interfered with normal breathing. Everyone sneezed and coughed. Off and on, someone grumbled that it was an outbreak of covid. But then this person calmed down – after all, if you get sick with covid, you will live at least a couple of weeks. During this time, much can change.

When photos of Polina appeared on all websites, we were drinking tea with cookies in the bomb shelter. Uncle Kohl donated a thermos that kept tea warm for several hours. After the alarm, I turned on the kettle, waited seven minutes for it to boil, threw bags into it, cut a lemon. Then I shouted to my her daughter: "Hurry up!"

Polina's mother probably also scolded her too when she tried to put comics in her backpack. She was categorically against it.

"It's the dearest thing I have," Polina must have said.

"We have to load 6 litres of water," the unmovable mother probably said.

While we were sitting in the basement in Zaporizhia, Alya-Olya's father ran away from Bucha. His girls were in Germany at the time. He called them when he was on the road to Odessa. Their house was gone. He didn't know what happened to their cat either. It had stayed in Bucha because it refused to climb into the carrier, spreading its claws stubbornly and biting one of the girls. Ali-Oli's mother went crazy and let him out in the yard ... These were

the only minutes of silence in 10 days. At that time, of course, they could not know. The friend just closed her eyes and realized, "Now!" Their neighbours who left 30 minutes after them soon turned back with smashed windows. The Russians had fired at their car – and they could not go on.

By the way, Ali-Oli's father saw many of the same cars. Many had full families... These people were not afraid of shelling. Dad. Mom. Child. Grandfather. Grandmother. Dog. These fearless people lay in unnatural poses ... and were dead.

Scene 4

It is not enough to read Remarque to understand war. It is not even enough to sit for more than a week in the basement of Zaporizhia. It's getting a little tingling inside when the news of the death of neighbours or acquaintances suddenly arrives... Stronger - when your ex-boyfriend's hand is torn off by a missile. Violently, when the missile passed through three floors and got stuck in the kitchen sink. It almost exploded. But he survived, because he fell next to the icon of the Mother of God. And if this was given to you by relatives from the West just before, then at this moment you become a believer.

You really begin to understand war when you lose something important. When you cry for so long that there are no more tears. You read about the bombing of a maternity hospital in Mariupol, about the torture of civilians in Bucha, but you just frown. People around you think you can't sympathize. And they, fuck (fuck, fuck, fuck!) are right. Where to get that sympathy for 22 thousand people? These are the highest numbers of losses of the population of Mariupol.

To evoke some emotions, I watch 20 videos in a row in Tik-Tok. Everyone has no more than a minute to talk about their suffering. And in the first 10 seconds we need to talk about the worst.

You say you were raped and people give 10,000 likes. It is possible that some of them were also raped 'in a distant childhood' in a normal way. So that your psychologist does not need another psychologist.

The mayor of Kyiv reports that lattes are being sold again in the capital. And then he asks people not to return, adding that transport is going from the right to the left bank, and again asks to stay where you are now...

I live a 15-minute walk from the Piazza del Duomo. I think I was lucky. This place is recognized as one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. It is so beautiful it makes you cry. The Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore - 5 minutes walk. The Campanile Giotto - 30 seconds. The Baptistery of San Giovanni - 2 minutes ..

You look into the distance - cypress trees turn green, magnolias bloom.
You close your eyes - Polina and her relatives are going to the West. She has to go to high school in a year. Menstruation will soon begin...

You open your eyes - the waiter is interested in Russian, what wine can he bring you? Because he heard you talking on the phone in Russian.

You close your eyes - Russians are walking around your apartment in shoes. And it's good that you hid all the sex toys in the breadbasket before you left. Because it is inconvenient somehow ... They will still take me for a pervert...

You open your eyes - Ali-Oli's mother calls and says that Russian soldiers lived in her parents' house. They didn't take much away because there was no money or equipment. But they left chaos. They took all the rubbish out of the neighbours' apartments: TVs from the 2000s, old video cartridges and Sinatra records... Someone romantically wanted to send his wife a letter then quietly left them in someone else's bedroom.

"I don't want to live anymore," Ali-Olya's mother whispers on the phone, although it seems to me that she is sitting next to her.

"I've fled war twice. Twice. With my luck, the Russians will soon capture Germany. What's the point?"

Ali-Oli's mother had been through a full course of psychotherapy only that year. Free, of course. Because people usually pay for every piece of garbage. The man left. Left without work. Life is gray and joyless for no particular reason... And - shitty covid... In countries where there is no war, everyone is desperately fighting covid. On the Budapest-Florence train, the conductor urges everyone to wear masks with FFP2 protection level. If you have another – you won't get to your station. Be prepared to be dropped off. Of course, you will say that you are from Ukraine, that your neighbours were shot, and your house is no more. And they will say, I believe you but rules are rules.

Ali-Oli's mother sent me a photo of her mutilated refrigerator. The Russians threw knives at it.

"We bought it on credit. Paid off 3 months ago. For what? A field, for what?"

Francesco smokes by hours: 9, 12, 16 and 22.

Francesco eats at 10, 13, 17 and 21.

He watches all the Italian channels and is registered in Tik-Tok. He knows exactly why Ukraine is hell and how to end the war.

“Two tyrants are face off, and ordinary people suffer.” Francesco drinks espresso, which has been nominated for UNESCO heritage status, and smokes a cigarette.

“And the second tyrant – is who?” I ask Ivanka to translate my question. She does not do this because she attacks the man with her fists:

“Rasha podorasto! Russia is growing up!” the only thing I can deduce from her speech. Francesco covers his face with his hands and does not even try to attack his wife in response. It even seems to excite him.

When Ivanka calms down, she speaks in Italian for a long time, then concludes: "mussolini".

“He says that Ukraine must give up Crimea,” Ivanka sums up with the ironic overtone only we Ukrainians can achieve.

When her husband smoked a cigarette, she said she should go to her brother. Ivanka can't help him, but at this difficult moment she wants to be there.

about it.”