

THE WAR TOUCHES EVERYONE...
READ PERSONAL STORIES FROM CFA FAMILY



"My 5-years-old daughter didn't understand what was happening, and till the last moment and then asked: "Will we never go back home?"

Till now I don't know the answer to this question."

Anna Anzina,
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Mom, should I be afraid?

The comet roared with its flaming tail right through the valley, across the forest and the mountains, and then disappeared again over the edge of the world. <...> But it just gave a whisk of its tail and swept off to another solar system far away, and it has never been seen since. But in the cave, they didn't know all this. They thought everything had been burnt up or smashed to atoms when the comet came down, and that their cave was the only thing left in the whole world. They listened and listened, but all they heard was silence.

'Mamma,' said Moomintroll, 'is it all over now?'

'Yes, it's over, my little Moomin-child,' said his mother. 'Now everything is all right, and you must go to sleep. You must all go to sleep, my dears. Don't cry, Sniff, there's no danger now.'

<...>

'Don't think about it anymore,' said Moominmamma. 'Cuddle up to me, little silk-monkey, and keep warm. I'm going to sing you all a lullaby.'

Tove Jansso, 1946, "Comet in Moominland"

On the 24th of February in the early morning, our friends called us and said, that the war had begun. We started packing up to escape from Kyiv. We called our parents, discussed our plan, what we were going to do, and we went to the village of Nemishaevo, which is located 7 minutes by car from Bucha.

When we went out of our entrance, we were a little disoriented and didn't quite understand where we should have gone, because there were explosions everywhere. We didn't understand whether we would meet Russian troops, and if so, what we should do in this case. Katya, our little 5,5-years-old daughter didn't understand what was happening, and till the last moment, we were telling her that we were simply going to visit her granny Olya to play with a dog. It turned out that we were going to hell...

We were driving in two cars, and when we were passing by Hostomel, my daughter asked me why there are so many militaries and tanks on the road. It's only then that I told her that the war had started. And she asked me: "Will we never go back home?". Till now I don't know the answer to this question.

On the same day, the powerful firings of the Hostomel airport started. It was very close to us – if go out to the yard, it was visible where the explosions are, and where the rockets landed. It was scary. But we were trying to stand firm. The same way we heard the explosions in the village of Ivankove. But on the 24-25 of February we were even living in our house, were doing usual things, and we were even trying to work.

In the night of the 24th through the 25th of February, the bridge in Irpin to the direction of Kyiv was blown up. Because of this, our way back to Kyiv got more complicated. The cruel military actions took place then. Russian tanks went through Ivankove pretty fast, they were coming to us, also the tanks from the side of Borodyanka started coming. The men from the Territorial defense told us, that Borodyanka no longer exists. In two days, our electricity was cut off. Overnight the same was with water. During this time, we neither know nor understood how much time we would have to stay in our basements without light, water, and food. We could simply look at the map and wait... Approximately on the third day, it became obvious, that we were practically cut from everybody. On the fifth day, Russian troops settled in our village.

Russian militaries dug into the local schools. We realized that going outside is dangerous. It was impossible to escape to the West, and the bridges to Kyiv didn't exist anymore. We turned out to be in occupation. We should have gone even to our yard with a lot of precociousness so as not to be bombarded.

The single topic for adults is the war. That's why we didn't need to explain anything to the children – they saw, heard, and understood everything. They understood, that when the bombardment began, they needed to go to a shelter. When they heard explosions, they asked: "Should we be afraid?". The children taught each other how to recognize tanks, and how to hide when something was flying by. If something is whistling above, it's necessary to squat and close their ears with their little hands.

On the seventh day, the house of our neighbors was bombed. All the glass in our house was also broken, as well as cars and fences. Half of the neighbor's house was destroyed. At that moment, we were going to the shelter. The next missile fell on the neighbor's area, where the ditch was formed directly in the yard. A shard got to a little boy's belly. He was handicapped, and there wasn't enough time to hide him. The next day he died, because obviously in the village there wasn't any medical help because the first objects that were bombed by russians were hospitals. This little boy was buried directly in the yard. Going outside the area was dangerous. We realized that the next missile can get to our house.

4 days before our departure, approximately on the 6th or 7th of March the gas also disappeared. So, it was very cold not only in the basement but also in the house. It was obvious that we needed to escape immediately. It was very scary. In order to take this decision, we weren't sleeping two nights.

It's only on the 9th of March in the morning that we managed to get out from Nemishaevo. The main risk consisted of the possibility of being bombarded during our departure while going through the uncontrolled territory. We didn't know whom we can meet on the way.

Our acquaintance told us that he would move out on the 8th of March. This column was escaping with a lot of difficulties, but they escaped. On the 9th of March, we saw, that the first cars had already gone, and one of the principal militaries from the Territorial defense advised us to go immediately. We packed up in 20 minutes and went. Our cars were in the yard and they were bombarded. We didn't know how far we could go with them. Before that moment we knew that the official corridors from Irpin were bombed. On purpose.

We were in a big column, maybe 60 cars. We were led by the Territorial defense militaries through fields and villages. We came to the Zhytomyr highway. When we were coming to this highway, and there were approximately 15 kilometers left of the uncontrolled territory, the way was blocked by a russian tank. The First 5 cars in our column were fired upon. Everybody stopped. It was in the field where on the right side is Makariv, on the left – Bilohorodka. At that moment both of them were under bombardment. We were staying on a narrow road leading to the highway. There were also 60 cars with children, dogs, and elder people. It lasted for 3 hours. In 3 hours, this tank went away. So did we.

Maybe 15 kilometers to Makariv there was a block post of our militaries. But these little 15 kilometers were very difficult emotionally. We saw a way where just a month ago we were coming back from the winter resort in Ivano-Frankivsk, where we were skiing. We drank a tasty coffee at a petrol station, ate, and planned something for our next vacation. Now we saw a place, where life had almost finished. Destroyed buildings, bombed or burned cars with flags with signatures "Children" that used to be white. Destroyed military technics – Ukrainian and not. Burned human remains on both sides of the road and in cars. There wasn't any road. We were driving practically in the remains of the military actions. We had an impression, that these tanks were riding through private houses. And then we were passing by a zone of military actions, which took place half an hour from us. We were driving through a narrow corridor made up of big pillars of fire on both sides of our car.

But it was distracting Katya. The fire drove her attention and she didn't see human remains. At that moment she got some sort of a defensive reaction which lasted maybe two weeks after we came to a safe place. When we were sitting in the basement, I read her a book by Tove Jansso about Moomintrolls "Comet in Moominland". In the scariest moments for her, when the explosions were particularly noisy, she came to the basement and asked me to read her this book. "Mom, read me" – asked Katya also at that time when we were driving through this corridor. Everything from this novel was alike to our situation, including hiding in the "cave" (in our case it was a basement) and going through the Dead Sea (in our case – the highway in Zhytomyr). In the novels of Tove Jansso the characters are very bright. It allowed me to dip Katya in these fantastic actions and she was distracted by this. It allowed her not to concentrate her attention on the events taking place around her.

The first two weeks after our arrival to Lviv region we couldn't move away from stress. Our organisms were so exhausted, that we constantly wanted to sleep. It's only in three weeks that we realized that now we are in a safe place when we didn't react so emotionally to the air alerts. Now we still don't know when we will be able to come back home, but we believe, that the end of the end will come soon...

