

THE WAR TOUCHES EVERYONE...
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"Men said goodbye to their children and wives at checkpoints, who became refugees, and after these men went to war.

This way back that they were going for me was a way of silence and inexpressible anguish."

Zoriana Hoshovska,
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PeaceLESS sky 24

The morning of 24 started neither with coffee nor even with the news because at 4.40 am I woke up because of explosions outside the window. I realized that Kyiv is being bombarded. I took a phone, and as soon as I opened a channel with news on Telegram, I saw a still frame of video, above which there was a message from Vladimir Putin... There was only a brief instant before it became clear – the war has started. At this moment I didn't feel helpless, I didn't feel any fear, I just realized that I must act, preferably now. We packed up in 40 minutes, took a last glance at our recently bought flat, loaded up our car, and went to Rivne – the native city of me and my husband, where we were born and got married, where all our family lives. On the road, I was reading the news out loud and we understood, that this was nothing else but a full-scale invasion, which nobody believed in – neither us, nor anybody from our acquaintances, nor experts, nor militaries. Because it was not logical, because all the world will never forgive it, because... but as we saw later, the logic doesn't work in this case. There was no fear, there was only rage. On the way to Rivne, we were afraid of being bombed by Grads, because we read messages that there are explosions also near Zhytomyr, and the tanks from Belarus are coming.

The atmosphere in Rivne was calmer. Last year my brother retired on the military pension, so now he was going to join a territorial defense. We discussed this situation with him and at the same moment a siren went off. This constant anxiety was killing us. I can't manage to understand how other people get used to it. It is constantly bothering you and doesn't allow you to think, as usual, to do anything, you are under constant stress. I told to my husband that I was going to Poland because here I can't feel secure. We didn't know where to go, where to live...

The next morning in Rivne, I also woke up because of an explosion – our airport was bombed. At 7 am we took a car and went in a direction of Volodymyr-Volynskyyi. There we were picked up by another car and we went towards a crossing Ustyluh. Then my husband went back to join a territorial defense.

After 8 km of road, we got in line. In 16 hours, we barely crossed 3 km. My son was sleeping in my hands, and I was afraid to move and wake him up. I wanted him to sleep as long as possible because the most difficult was yet to come. It was impossible to sleep, so I was just observing people going from the border on foot: with little children on hand, in baby carriages, with cages with their pets in them, with old parents, holding them by hands. All the men were going back. Serious, full of thoughts, often they were smoking on the way. They said goodbye to their children and wives at checkpoints, who became refugees, and after these men went to war. This way back that they were going for me was a way of silence and inexpressible anguish.

At half-past 4 pm I woke up Zahar, and we went to the border on foot. We arrived pretty fast – already in 2,5 hours, we were at the checkpoint. Ukrainian border guards seemed pretty confused, they were constantly retelling news, they were sad, depressed, and anxious. To my mind, it was their first reaction to all this horror reported in the news. When we were leaving the Ukrainian side, one of the border guards told us: "Come back as soon as possible". In his voice, I heard hope and best wishes. We told each other "Glory to Ukraine!" and went our separate ways.

Polish border guards were very helpful. They were constantly asking if we need some help, they gave us flyers with a link to a website containing all the necessary information for the refugees. They asked if we had any transport. Those, who didn't have any transport to get to the city, were picked up by minibuses and taken to the spot for refugees. There were lots of volunteers at the border, who also helped with transport. I was helped by a man, who gave a hand to me, and one more woman with two children. He took us to Warsaw. He gave candies to the children and the Wi-Fi

to us so that we can get in touch with our relatives in Ukraine. Our native language and the feeling of security improved a little bit our mood, and our stress was a little reduced.

We came to the western bus station in Warsaw. Nearby, there were lots of cars and buses with Ukrainian flags. Inside the bus station, the volunteers were distributing food, the others were helping to find accommodation or just spoke with people giving a piece of information about where they can get any type of help. It was comforting after a sleepless night and all these worries. Even simple hugs and words of support cheered us up before the unknown.

Leaving home is very difficult. We realized – it was possible that we wouldn't come back. The complete unknown scares. But in fact, it is nothing compared to the feeling of security of your child. Yesterday I understood the price of the wish – «Have a peaceful sky above your head! », and I thought how much I love Kyiv, though. So beautiful and so proud!