**Men in Daylight**

**Characters**

**Mikhail, 52**

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**Outsider who comes from time to time**

**Mikhail.** I entered the minibus. I saw unoccupied seats only at the back. When I was making my way there, my bag touched some girl. I sat down, and she turned around and began to look at me. I probably had to apologize. But a couple of minutes have passed already. I had to apologize immediately, and now it was stupid.

She looked and looked at me. I looked back at her. Her eyes were beautiful, but she looked at me angrily. Then, she jumped up, came up to me and began to poke her smartphone in my face. She was probably filming me. I tried to turn away, and she almost broke my nose with the smartphone. Not on purpose, just a minibus was shaking and jumping on the road.

The girl was screaming, “For people like you, our guys are dying! Our guys are in the trenches, and you are sitting here!”

She returned to her place and burst into tears. The minibus was driving without stopping. No one looked at us.

**Matvey**. Nowadays, when someone is addressing you, it is only to say where you fucked up, and what is wrong with you.

“This table is busy.”

“You talk too loudly on the phone.”

“Look where you’re going! Are you blind or what?”

“Are you a faggot?”

Once strangers could say something nice to each other:

“You look so cool. Do you have Instagram?”

“Your dog is very cute.”

“We are glad to see you in our cafe.”

It was before the war. It feels like it was in another life.

Now when someone starts talking to me, I always strain, because I expect an attack.

**Sasha**. Right after the outbreak of war, everyone became very polite.

Usually, we are all quarrelling because of everything, especially in transport. Close the window. Open the window. Why the air conditioner or heater does not work; why the baby cries all the way. In response, others were barking that and if you don’t like it in the bus, order a taxi.

So, when the war began, all this stopped. I would say, even babies began to cry less. Everyone was scared. Everyone was grateful that they were going at least somewhere. Maybe not to Europe. After all, men can’t go abroad. But you go to work, or in a safer place, or to someone. At least you go somewhere, and that’s already good.

This attitude lasted for about three months. Then everyone overcame the first shock, and the fights resumed.

We reached our pre-war level and went much further. Everyone began to lose it, more and more every day. Now it seems that if you step on someone’s foot accidentally, he will explode and swear you. This is hinky. It is not clear what to expect from people.

But I see it as something positive as well. If people have the strength for aggression, not everything is lost.

In principle, if a person yells at you, it is better than if he smiles politely, sits silently, and then nicely takes out the weapon.

**News**. Triple murder

According to preliminary data, a 53-year-old man went around three houses in the neighborhood and shot three neighbors (67, 63, and 47 years old) from smoothbore weapon, after which he blew himself up with a grenade.

**Public service announcement**. Turn your rage into a weapon. Join the guard of offensive. Brigade “Fury.”

**Slavik**. I tell to myself not to load myself with all that. I’m not a truck, why should I load myself?

**Advertisement at the metro**. Boost your male charisma.

**News**. The military forces of Ukraine are experiencing personal replacement problems.

In July, only about 50% of the required number of soldiers were mobilized to the training centers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

We remind you that in June, as well, only 50% of the military personnel were mobilized from the number of those who were supposed to start training in drilling centers to replenish the Ukrainian army.

**Philologist**. Recruiting centers.

If I heard it before, I would have thought that it is something about a job. Some companies that want to hire people.

Not at all. Recruiting center is a new name for military commissariats.

**News**. How to behave when a conscription notice is given to you and what cannot be said to representatives of the recruitment center?

Do not forget that you are talking to a military man. You do not know what he experienced. Accordingly, avoid any questions or statements that can upset him. For example:

“Why aren’t you at the frontline?”

“You sit here, but you want to send me there?”

Such questions do not break the law. However, in any case, you must comply with subordination. Often, it is precisely such talks that lead to conflicts and violence.

**Pasha**. Heroes do not die. This motto has been running here for about ten years now.

*Enters the Outsider.*

**Outsider**.

One, two, three, four, five,
Once I caught a fish alive.
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,
Then I let it go again.

*Everyone freezes. The Outsider walks around them, then leaves*.

**Matvey**. Half of the tweets are patriotic. All patriotic tweets start with “We have to...”

Facebook is even worse: the opening is the same, and then a five-screen long-read.

We “have to.”

We fucking “have to.”

My short manifesto is: fuck off.

**Leonid**. I signed up as a volunteer back in March, right after it all started. I came to say goodbye to my daughter. When I told her, she had a breakdown. She is generally a calm girl. But that time, she screamed, rushed around the apartment, smashed the dishes. With the dishes, it was not on purpose: her hands were shaking and everything fell.

She was crying like I was already dead. At the moment, I couldn’t understand her reaction.

“Why?” she screamed, “Why did you go there? By yourself!”

I said that everything would be fine. That we would soon win. That I would be paid decent money. That I want to do something meaningful. She cried even more and screamed that I was a moron.

After six months of service, I understood why she was screaming. I myself began to tell her: do everything possible for your husband not be taken away. Don’t reside where you are registered. Move to grandma’s apartment. Don’t open the door to anyone. He shouldn’t leave the apartment at all. For a year if necessary. For two years if necessary. It is very serious.

**News**. An unemployed man from Kropyvnytskyi will go to prison for three years for evasion of military service.

According to the materials of the case, at the end of December 2022, the accused, whom the medical board found fit for service, refused to go to the military unit. In court, he explained that he feared for his life.

This criminal offense was intentional. The accused understood the consequences of his refusal to perform military service. Moreover, the man said that “it would be better to be in prison than go to war.”

**Slavik**. Currency exchangers used to always put the exchange rate on displays or boards.

Then, it was forbidden to them, so as not to frighten the people with how our currency drops. Now on all electronic boards the rates of all currencies are set to zero.

I walk the streets and don’t know the euro exchange rate.

What am I talking about? Suppose I knew the exchange rate, can I buy the euro now?

Even if I bought some one or two hundred, where would I go with them? Perhaps to Europe – as long as the currency is euro? Haha. As if we are allowed to leave the country.

**Sasha**. Dad is home on leave. He tells me, “Come here, I’ll show you a video.”

He never watched any videos, never sent to me anything. Even before the war. Even videos with raccoons, funny dogs and the like. He took the phone in his hands only to call someone. In general, dad and video are a strange combination for me.

I come to his room. He shows a video on the phone.

A man on the pavement face down. In military uniform. In our uniform. His head is smashed. Pieces of skull and brain.

Dad tells me: this is our commander. He wanted to send us to Bakhmut without training and equipment. Machine guns and armor, nothing else. One soldier broke loose and shot him. At least someone didn’t hesitate to do that.

Dad almost smiles. I’m scared. Not because of a smashed head on the pavement, but because of my dad’s half-smile. I’ve never seen him like this. Dad is delighted that the commander was murdered. Dad regrets that he didn’t do it.

Usually, he reflects on everything for a very long time. But once he decides, nothing can stop him.

I’m scared. I say, “Dad, just don’t kill anyone there.”

**Leonid.** At the very beginning, I served in Kyiv. We were sent to demine the forest on the left bank. This is a forest in the city, the locals always went there for jogging, walking their dogs, making love.

Many forests around Kyiv and right inside the city were mined immediately, when the war started. Then, when it became clear that the city would not be surrendered, they slowly started demining.

So, we have barely entered into this wood, and we are overtaken by two funny old women with sticks for Nordic walking. They went there for a walk!

I had to explain for a long time about mines, demining and about “you can’t go there.” The old women either did not believe, or were not afraid.

But we still managed to force them out of the forest. For this, I was then rewarded with a certificate for my good service.

**Matvey**. Grass is being mowed today. Damned bastards. I hate this noise. And I just want the grass to be here.

I walked and looked at the cut heads of dandelions. A man overtook me, he was talking on the phone. I heard, “Oh, mom, they are mowing the grass here! So that there was only dust, and no fresh air, nothing but dried dust!”

He walked on, and I watched him go and whispered, “Come back, come back, my heart, we are meant to be together.”

**News.** The veteran urged the Ukrainians to prepare for mobilization.

They cannot take everyone to war at once, because Ukraine must function. However, “There will be a moment when someone who was at war for a year or two, will be replaced by someone else. This means that they will take everyone who has not yet been there. And so, everyone will end up there.”

The veteran advised Ukrainians who are not at the front to get ready for the service on their own.

**Sasha**. I think I strained my back at a training. I booked appointments with a physiotherapist, kinesiologist, and massage therapist. All in the same clinic. A holistic approach is always better.

This clinic deals with recovery after training, rehabilitation after strokes and fractures, spine problems. Everything about bones and muscles, they work with it.

I enter, put on shoe covers – the clinic is empty. No one anywhere. I sit down on the sofa, leafing through the anatomical atlas.

The administrator comes out of the toilet. Her eyes are swollen. She says, “I’m sorry. Vadim Nikolayevich will not be able to meet you. Yaroslav Alekseevich is also absent.”

It turns out that they went to an elderly woman’s home for a visit: she is learning to walk after a hip fracture. On the way back, their car was stopped by a patrol. Both were given conscription notices.

Soon, there will be no one to work at all, except for women.

**Slavik**. I went to my favorite cafe. Nothing special about their coffee, but the atmosphere was always good. Somehow everything was smooth, without tension, quick and polite service.

This time everything went wrong. Two new waiters, trainees or whatever, came twice to take my order, because they couldn’t remember it. In the end, they still brought not the coffee I asked for. I think, well, okay.

The moment comes to pay – the two of them look at the computer for about five minutes, they cannot find my order and print out the bill. Then, they cannot figure out how to turn on the card reader. I suggest paying with cash because I have to leave, I don’t have time to wait there for a whole day. They don’t have change. All this is frustrating, especially in the morning.

Of course, I didn’t want to tip them. What is more, I wanted to complain to the administrator. I am a patient person, but these guys are too dumb.

And suddenly it hits me: what are these guys doing here at all? They must be barely 18. Where are the waiters who always worked here and did a good job?

I realized that they were mobilized, and it just knocked me out when I began to think about it. You get used to people, greet them, exchange a word, and then one day, they are gone. Pulled out of your life. Or maybe from life altogether.

The next day I went there again. Normal waiters didn’t show up. Yes, clearly they were taken. It’s good if they come back at all. It not to this job, then at least to the city. On their own legs, not on prostheses.

Out of the new trainees, only one remained. I want to think that the second did not get a conscription notice. He just failed the trial period and they kicked him out. Or he just didn’t want to work here himself.

They couldn’t give him a conscription notice, he’s still a kid. He just found another job.

I didn’t ask anyone about him. And for the new one who remained, I put some money on the table, as a tip.

**Sasha**. Uncle called, dad’s older brother. He asked how dad was doing. I say: you communicate with him. He tells me: yes, but you know him.

Well, yes. Dad tells everyone that he’s fine. In general, he says nothing else.

Even before the war, he didn’t talk much.

He could talk a lot about only one thing: Soviet Union and what a cloaca it was.

**Leonid**. When I just started serving, the hardest thing was getting used to the fact that my time was no longer mine. Someone decides for me when I go to bed and get up.

You don’t belong to yourself.

**Mikhail**. A guy is on the city bus with me. He is sitting right in front of me and talking on the phone. I see his clean-shaven back of the head, but I don’t see his face.

He is talking to a woman. Something between a groan and a howl is heard from the phone. The guy waits for pauses and gently speaks into the phone, “What do you mean you don’t know how to live? How did you live before me, before we met?.. Honey, what can I do?.. Honey, don’t cry, I need positive attitude now… Look, I will have a job, let’s say. Let’s call it a job that I got. I used to go to work abroad, remember... Let’s say, now it is a business trip to earn money. I will be paid. We’ll live well, you’ll see...”

**Matvey**. People in uniform are everywhere: at the entrance to the subway, at bus stops, in shopping centers. They stand and look at passers-by. Some girls glance at them and smile. There was time when I also thought that men in uniform were hot.

I was dumb.

Now I walk past them and think of one thing: they should stop someone, but not me.

They stop some people passing by and give them conscription notices. Someone starts arguing and tries to film them on the phone. They quickly surround him and push behind the coffee shops. We all move on as if nothing is happening. The sun is shining, there was no air raid for now – life is good.

I don’t understand how they decide whom to stop. After all, some men still remain in the city, and hundreds of people pass by these thugs. Why are some people stopped and others not?

They should stop someone, but not me.

**News**. The “man-hunts” will continue: the territorial recruitment center explained why conscription notices are issued on the streets.

“Only about 20% of people whom we must mobilize according to our plan, come voluntarily to enlistment offices. If there are no these searches and detainments, then mobilization may be at risk.”

*The Outsider enters*.

**Outsider**.

One potato, two potato, three potato, four
Five potato, six potato, seven potato, more.

*Outsider walks around the group of characters, selects Leonid and takes him away.*

*For a while, everyone is silent.*

**Sasha.** Did he die?

**Slavik**. They just took him to serve.

**Sasha**. He went to serve before. It means, now he died.

*Everyone is silent*.

**Philologist**. I am standing in the middle of a subway platform. People push me from all sides.

Sometimes, it happens to me: moments of confusion, when I stand in stupor and cannot wake up and move.

Before the war, there were trains every 5 minutes. Now, every 15 minutes. It is to save electricity. Therefore, even more people than usual gather on the platforms.

They push me aside and press me against a column. I understand that I will not get into the next train.

On the platform, words and phrases in different languages are heard from phones. People lean on their phones and try to repeat, outspeaking the hum of the crowd and the clatter of the train that has arrived at the opposite platform. Some phrases I understand:

“we saw a blue rabbit”;

“the cat has wings”;

“this man loves his husband.”

If the phrase is repeated correctly, the phone happily croaks and offers a new one. Well, everyone knows this application. In general, there are now a million apps for learning languages. I have a feeling that everyone around began to learn languages, because they hope for something. They hope that the metro train will come, they will squeeze into it, and it will take them directly to Norway, Sweden, Brazil, the Netherlands.

**Mikhail**. Now I mostly travel by bus. My wife took the car to go to Poland and take our son there. He was 16 in February 2022. This summer he turned 18. If he had stayed, they would not have let him out of the country, and then they would have taken him. I didn’t see him all this time.

**Matvey**. My friend warns me, “Now the conscription notices are being distributed even more actively. Use transport carefully, otherwise you will end up in the LGBT troops.”

I tell her, “I mostly ride a scooter.”

She relaxes, “If you ride a scooter, then everything is fine, of course. They will look at you and think: some dumbass on a scooter, we don’t need him.”

In fact, I had to sell the scooter. I don’t earn enough to survive. One can’t get a new job without a military registration card.

**News**. In the Cherkasy region, two administrators of Telegram channels were sentenced to 5 years in prison

The accused disseminated information aimed to help Ukrainian citizens escape from mobilization under martial law. In particular, they disseminated messages about the places where conscription notices were distributed by representatives of territorial recruitment centers.

**Slavik**. I mostly try to walk on foot. I especially like it when there is an air raid. Unpleasant sound aside, there are plenty of good moments.

For example, there are fewer people on the streets. During the air raid, some go down to the subway. Not everyone. Few, to be honest, and every day fewer and fewer. But still, someone comes down, and then the streets become less crowded. You can walk and breathe, look at the architecture, at the girls.

Although there have been a lot of disappointments lately. Sometimes I look at a girl, her face is beautiful, sweet. I always look at the face first. Then I look at her body, and she is wearing shorts. It enrages me. I want to come up and say, “Why are you wearing shorts? If I saw only your face and breasts, I would fall in love with you. But you walk in front of me and show me your cellulite. You show your cellulite to everyone on the street. You and I, we cannot be together.”

**Mikhail**. If I call a taxi, the app offers to rate the trip. There are options like “The car is clean”, “The driver knows the city well” and so on. And there is an option “The driver is a great person to talk to.”

If the driver is taciturn, I always give him the highest score as a great conversationalist.

The best conversation these days is to sit silently.

**Advertisement**. We invite you to the online training program “Management of Suicidality”!

**News**. In the city of Dnipro, the body of a man was found in the bushes, with fragments of a grenade scattered nearby.

It is preliminary established that the 54-year-old man committed suicide by blowing himself up with a grenade.

*Enters Outsider*.

**Outsider**.

Six little ducks went out one day,
Over the hills and far away.
Mummy duck said, “quack quack quack quack,”
But only five little ducks came back.

**Sasha**. (*yells*) Go fuck yourself! Get lost!

*Outsider leaves.*

**News**. Which students are not subject to mobilization?

According to Article 23 of the Law on Mobilization, those who are not subject to conscription during mobilization are, regardless of age, specialization, already accomplished education, etc.:

• students,

• graduate students,

• doctoral students,

• assistant trainees of higher educational institutions,

• applicants for professional vocational education and professional higher education,

• full-time or part-time students.

In Ukraine, the number of male students has significantly increased, especially those on a contract form of studies.

Men in Ukraine enjoy the right to go to a university in order to avoid mobilization. According to the Ministry of Education and Science, this year the number of a paid-form students at universities has increased unprecedentedly – by 82%, talking about male students. There are fewer female students and students under 20 compared to last year. Instead, the number of male students aged 30-50 has increased dramatically.

**Philologist**. Our society will become exceptionally educated.

To be serious, I was also thinking about going to study somewhere. But I couldn’t pull myself together. It’s like I’m in some kind of stupor.

**News**. Mobilization continues in Ukraine due to the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation. On the Internet, they complain that Ukrainians liable for military service cannot even get married without being registered in a recruitment center.

**Slavik**. My dearest unmarried girls, do not be sad! Now, if he does not marry you (if I do not marry you), this does not mean at all that he (I) does not *want* to marry you. The marriage registry requires military registration. Without this, the application will not be accepted. Also, they can issue you a conscription notice right at the marriage registry.

The desire to marry you cannot be stronger than the desire to live.

**Philologist**. Not all marriages are the same.

**Website with explanations of legal norms**. Persons liable for military service are prohibited from crossing the border of Ukraine during martial law. However, there are a number of exceptions that still make it possible. In particular, men married to women with disabilities and accompanying such women to travel abroad have the right to cross the border.

**News**. A female doctor promised to establish a fictitious diagnosis to the wife of a military man. This could make it possible to officially qualify her as a disabled person. The military man would get guardianship over her, and this would be the basis for dismissal from service in the ranks of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

The doctor was caught red-handed while receiving illegal benefits in the amount of $ 3,000.

Part 2 of article 369-2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine previews a fine of two to five thousand five hundred non-taxable minimum incomes of citizens or imprisonment for 2 to 5 years.

**Matvey**. Recently I was asked: if there was a woman who would promise to settle all my problems, buy me off all the conscription notices and take me abroad, and she would have the resources for this, would I agree to sleep with her for this?

I said probably not.

Not with a woman.

**News**. “I’m ready to marry even an old hag.” Mobilization evaders are testing a new way to escape abroad.

A whole industry is developing in Ukraine with proposals to conclude a fictitious marriage on a paid basis to make possible an escape abroad for men liable for military service.

Among the ads, there are also those where women are looking for women with disabilities. It turned out they do it to help their loved ones leave the country.

**Mikhail**. It’s good that our citizens with disabilities are finally getting decent financial help thanks to the new state laws.

**News**. In the Odessa region, border guards detained a mobilization evader.

He had found an ad on the Internet about the possibility of marrying a woman with a disability in order to avoid mobilization, and to leave Ukraine.

The “bride” and the “groom” got married in Odessa. Immediately, on the day of the wedding, the “couple” went to the border.

At border control, law enforcement officers had suspicions about this couple. The age difference was more than 20 years: the man is 32 years old, and the woman is 56. They were detained.

**Slavik**. I am depressed. I have a feeling that all beautiful girls left the country.

**Question in chat**. If we get divorced and I give up parental rights to the child, can it be arranged so that the husband becomes the only guardian and they leave Ukraine with the child?

**Answers**:

- You cannot just refuse the parental rights at your own will((

- How old the child is??

- 15

- This is good. From the age of 14, the child himself can file an application and deprive you of parental rights. It might work.

*The Outsider enters.*

**Outsider** (*walking around the characters*).

Five little ducks went out one day,
Over the hills and far away.
Mummy duck said, “quack quack quack quack,”
But only four little ducks came back.

**Slavik.** He doesn’t need me! He doesn’t need any of us! He just needs someone, no matter who. He is blind. He doesn’t know anything about us.

*Outsider walks around the characters one more time and leaves.*

**Pasha**. News from my apartment. A stupid fly flew into my room. I open the windows all day, show it where to fly but it doesn’t get it. It crawls along the wall, and hits the glass.

How to help the damn animals? I have no idea.

I don’t want to kill it. I cannot catch it either. I don’t like watching it choose a slow death locked up.

It’s even pretty, by the way. Large, gray striped. At the end, my home spiders will eat it. I cherish them, because they bring good luck and protect the place from evil forces such as burglars and military enlistment officers.

**Matvey**. My ex called in a panic. He says, I can’t go into the kitchen.

Why, I ask.

He says in a trembling voice, there is a spider, come here, do something.

I would have thought he was looking for a pretext to meet. But no. He really was always afraid of the dark, spiders, cops, dogs, thrillers, violence.

If they take him, I’m scared to think what will happen to him there.

**News**. They kick, swear and shoot: the Web discusses how military commissars detain men

Over the past 24 hours, several videos at once have appeared on social networks. They show the detention of civilians by people in military uniform.

“According to the law, representatives of the territorial recruitment centers do not have the right to detain people and bring them to the recruitment centers by force. Such detention is an abuse of power and kidnapping,” the lawyer said.

He suggests that employees of territorial recruitment centers can apply such methods because they could be given a choice – either they staff military units with mobilized people, or they go to the frontline themselves.

**Mikhail**. News of war crimes terrify. But there is nothing surprising there. This is war. Is it possible to expect anything good from the enemy?

But if our own people torture each other, I lose heart.

**News**. In the Vinnitsa region in May 2022, a soldier, being in a state of alcoholic intoxication, during a verbal conflict, on the basis of a suddenly aroused hostility, threw an RGD-5 combat grenade towards his fellow soldiers.

As a result of the explosion, they received injuries.

The court found the soldier guilty of an attempted murder.

By court decision, he was sentenced to a ten years imprisonment.

**Slavik**. We went to the cinema with a girlfriend. Before the movie, as always, they are trailers of other premieres. And then a social advertisement, “sign up for the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”

A bunch of children of 12 years were sitting next to us. Do not ask what movie my girlfriend and I went to see.

So, when the children heard the offer to enroll in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, they laughed and said sarcastically, “Yeah, sure, we are already rushing there.”

But there was no girlfriend. I came alone.

That day, all this hit me so hard that I just ran into the first cinema that came across. They were saving electricity, and the lobby half-dark. It was soothing. It smelled of popcorn. I bought a ticket for the next movie available. It turned out to be 12+. Many children and parents with children came. The children were surprisingly quiet. Perhaps because the film was good. I don’t know, I couldn’t concentrate. Don’t ask me what movie I went to see. I don’t even remember the title, I had a kind of a panic attack.

In the middle of the film, an air raid started. And here’s the strange thing: when the siren began to howl, I felt better. When you expect something bad, and it happens, you don’t need to be afraid anymore, because it has already happened.

A woman looked into the hall; she resembled a nice elderly school teacher. She began to explain that they have a basement in the cinema, and if someone wants... If you go to the basement, the tickets will remain valid for the next show, or you can come with them tomorrow. They waved her off, laughed and said that they wanted to watch the film now.

Not a single child or adult left the almost full hall during an air raid alert.

**Sasha**. Over the past year, I have not been able to finish watching a single movie. It feels like if I dive there for an hour and a half, I will leave the real world unattended, and then dad will get under shelling.

Films, I don’t even try. I can’t even watch YouTube videos. I can’t concentrate even for ten minutes. Only very short tiktoks I still can watch.

**Philologist**. We went to a supermarket with a girlfriend. She began to look at all sorts of pink notebooks, pens with fluffy feathers, pencil cases in the form of cats. All this was brought in for the new school year, although it is still far ahead.

My girlfriend loves such trifles. She reached for something and almost destroyed the whole pyramid of this stuff.

I tell her, “Be careful, don’t be a vandal.”

She tells me, “The Vandals are an ancient Germanic union of tribes. Do they have problems here with the representatives of other cultures? Do the employees of this store are xenophobes?”

“Yeah, you first should explain to the store security what xenophobia is.”

It’s good that we can still joke at least somehow.

**Pasha**. My wife brought a friend to our place. She hasn’t invited anyone for over a year now. Only my parents and hers come to us.

At first, I thought that she did not invite her friends because she was jealous. It was even somehow flattering to me. She thinks that someone can like me even if I’m not in the best shape.

But gradually I realized: she is simply afraid to invite people she is not sure about. Now, no one can be sure about anyone. She is afraid that someone will report it: a man is evading mobilization, here is an address.

I can’t go to war. It is impossible, honestly. I have a heart condition. Not a single normal medical board would accept me. But now they are just shoveling everyone. Just everyone.

The neighbor was caught on the street. He has two kids. If there are three kids, the man can get a deferment. If there are two kids, they don’t need a father.

The neighbor had a stroke recently. When he had a stroke, he fell and injured his spine. He still hasn’t recovered. He came to the medical examination and put x-rays of his spine on the table. The doctor said, “Your spine is perfect.”

His wife sobbed and howled. The children were confused. They did not understand where dad had gone. And dad was sent to Donbass. My wife went to comfort them. Then, she returned home and said that she would not let me go anywhere anymore.

I do not want a conscription notice myself, but still, before my neighbor was taken away, I somehow lived, moved around the city. And now, if I’m going to leave the apartment, my wife gets hysterical.

I recently ordered a new charger. Just a charger. Pickup point is in our district, very close. The wife turned pale and said, “Don’t go there, I’ll pick it up myself.”

I haven’t left the house for over a year now. Good thing my job is remote.

So, my wife invited her friend. She is not pretty but funny. I looked at her and thought how long I had not seen people from the outside world. Just some people, no matter if they are pretty or not. Who can freely walk the streets. Maybe they are afraid of missiles, but at least not of enlistments officers.

I hope she doesn’t betray us.

**News**. Tricks of military registration and enlistment offices: what conscripts need to know.

According to the lawyer, there are abuses at military medical commissions. Many problems with the right to a deferment as well.

“A very large number of people suffering from chronic diseases are sent to the front lines,” the lawyer said.

**Philologist**. There was time, the word “fit” meant someone who is into sports.

Now, it means someone who fits to be a soldier and can be sent to the war.

**Ad**. Guard of offensive. It’s time to regain what is yours. The modern history of Ukraine is being written now. Don’t watch, act! Fill out a volunteer form and join the assault brigades of Ministry of Home Affairs. They will liberate the cities of Donetsk, Luhansk and other occupied territories, including Crimea.

We guarantee combats on the front line.

**Philologist**. “This is probably a very bad commander, because he needs brave soldiers. If he has enough sense for a good plan to defeat the enemy, then why does he need brave soldiers? Any soldiers will do. In general, when virtues are mentioned, it means that the thing is rotten.”

I often remember these words now.

I heard them from the stage about ten years ago. Brecht, and also *The Good Soldier Švejk* were removed from the repertoire of the main stage in Kyiv shortly after Crimea happened. The agenda has changed. It became irrelevant to ridicule the war, because our own war was beginning little by little.

**Matvey**. If they take me, maybe I will finally have sex? Maybe I’ll be fucked there for the first time in a year and a half?

**Ad**. A storm is coming. Guard of Offensive.

**Pasha**. I hear children screaming in the courtyard below. They are playing air raid. The girl climbs a pile of sand and screams with all her might. She is the siren. Other kids should run and hide as quickly as possible.

**News**. A man in the Kyiv region was handed a conscription notice for listening to Russian rap on the street.

In Boyarka, a couple turned on the music of the occupier during a walk outside. The man sang along and even danced to the songs of the Russian rapper. Administrative protocols were drawn against them, and a conscription notice was issued to the man.

HE EVEN DANCED!

**News**. 19 mobilization evaders drowned in the river of Tisza

Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, border guards have found the bodies of 19 men on both banks of the Tisza River. They drowned while trying to swim across the border river.

Over the past month alone, the border guards of Ukraine, Hungary and Romania found three bodies of men without signs of life at the border.

**Matvey**. I am actually not in the position to complain. First, I live. Secondly, I live in Kyiv, in a normal district. Outside of Kyiv, even before the war, it was better for me not to go. In any small town, I would have been beaten right at the railway station. Perhaps even, right in the train. My voice is not okay. My face is not okay. Clothes are not okay. “Come here for a talk, faggot.”

If I traveled outside Kyiv, it was mostly by taxi, to the airport.

**Sasha**. They say that Europe is now studying the geography of Ukraine from the news. Nobody there knew about any Bakhmut, Mariupol, or Bucha before this war. But the fact is that inside Ukraine, we also knew little about ourselves.

Who in their right mind would have gone from Kyiv to Bakhmut or Mariupol? If someone suggested that we go there at least for a weekend, just to look at it, we would be terribly offended. Are we considered such losers? What is there to look at? Why go to the Sea of Azov when you can fly to Turkey?

If you don’t have money to go on vacation abroad, it’s better not to go anywhere at all than to travel around Ukraine. We didn’t give a damn about all these towns and villages, even when the green trees were lush there, and they didn’t shoot there. That’s how we thought then.

It was possible to live all your life in Kyiv and not have a clue about these names on the map, for which we are now dying. We have never seen them. We here did not know these names, just like real Europeans.

There were Kyiv, Odessa, Lviv, Kharkiv. Outside these cities, the world ended and the ocean began. There were some fantastic islands. Lands where iron trees grew and dragons lived, with giants, people with dog heads, one-legged.

However, about one-legged people, these are not ancient legends. Soon, many of us will be like that.

**Slavik**. I ordered a laptop. The collection point was in a large shopping and entertainment center. I arrived there and wandered for a long time among food courts, boutiques, supermarkets, bowling alleys, cinemas. The last time I was here before the war. Now half of everything has closed down. There were almost no people, and it became obvious how huge this building is – it is the former workshop of an old factory.

So, there weren’t many people, and I could see everyone. A man in military uniform with crutches. A woman was holding him by the elbow. A lone guy in military uniform, also on crutches. Mother, father and little boy – the father in military uniform, in a wheelchair.

**Sasha**. I got caught by a terrible shower. The sneakers were already falling apart, and now they got wet top and bottom.

I have good sneakers for training, and the ones that are worse are to wear every day.

I would just keep on walking, but I can’t afford to catch a cold now.

I was in the middle of the street at that moment, and the downpour hit very hard, without warning.

I started running, trying to figure out how much money I have on the card. I didn’t remember the exact amount.

I burst into the mall, found the sportswear section. I chose running sneakers. The money on the card was enough. I even bought new socks as well. Right there, on the sofa for fitting, I put on clean, dry sneakers.

I threw the old ones into the store’s branded package. I wandered around the mall a little more, waiting for the rain to stop, and went outside.

Streams of water still rushed under my feet, but it was no longer pouring from the sky. I thought that old sneakers might be useful for someone. They can still be dried, glued, patched up.

I remembered that when I ran to the mall, I flashed past some arches, and courtyards behind them. I dived into one of these arches. Yes, I remembered everything correctly: there was a courtyard and several garbage cans inside. I decided to leave the sneakers next to the garbage bin: someone will definitely pick them up.

I came closer to the garbage bin and froze. There were open shoeboxes on the ground. Dry ones. It looked like someone took them out just a few minutes ago. The shoes of all kinds. Gym shoes, sneakers, boots. And in each box – only the left shoe.

Someone came from the war one-legged. He realized that he would never need half of his shoes again. He took it all outside. He had kept his right leg and shoes for it. And someone with only his left leg remaining will pick up those discarded shoes.

I didn’t want to think about it.

**News**. A moment of silence. Every day at 9 am, Ukrainians remember those whose lives were taken by the Russian-Ukrainian war.

We light candles and bow our heads during a nationwide minute of silence. We honor the memory of the citizens of Ukraine who gave their lives for the freedom and independence of the state: all the military, civilians and children, all those who died in the fight against the Russian invaders and those who died as a result of the of enemy troops attacking Ukrainian cities and villages.

**Advertisement**. Monuments. Large range of ready-made models. Various designs. Manufacturer’s prices.

**Philologist**. UPD. I did the right thing when I did not apply this year for the second higher education. It would have been just a waste of time.

You can pass all the exams, fulfill all the requirements, and then the university says: we cannot enroll you unless you are registered in the enlistment office.

To register, you need to go to the territorial recruitment center aka the military registration and enlistment office.

And you get a conscription notice right there… While the whole point of getting a higher education now is not to get a conscription notice.

I often think: they don’t need me. I mean, the Russians don’t need me. The military commissars don’t need me. They just need someone, no matter who. They have no idea who I am, what is good and bad about me.

And I comfort myself that I won’t be taken away if I remain myself. If I remain myself, a personality. Because they do not need personalities, they need statistics to fulfill their mobilization tasks.

And I comfort myself with a book that my ex-girlfriend gave me... In this book...

*Enters the Outsider, silently takes Philologist by the hand and pulls him away.*

**Philologist** (*hastily, to have time to tell it*) This was my first girlfriend. She taught me how to smoke. She was a year older than me. We lived at her place all summer and sunbathed naked on the balcony. You don’t know anything about us, about her, you won’t take her away from me.

*His voice fades*.

**Mikhail**. A girl came to me after an ultrasound. On ultrasound, they found small cysts in the mammary glands and sent her for examination to me.

She entered with two telephones in her hands and constantly looked at one after the other. Something important for her was happening there, and she did not pay much attention to me.

I liked it. It was kind of easy.

Often girls are frightened by the mere words in the appointment card: a mammologist-oncologist. They are afraid to hear the word “cancer” from me. They come in and sit as if paralyzed. They’re trying to read the diagnosis from my face expression. It is unsettling, even after all these years.

This one didn’t even look at me.

In fact, she really had nothing to worry about. I immediately saw from the ultrasound images that the cysts are small and do not pose any danger.

But I still did everything I had to. She undressed, I probed her lymph nodes and breasts in a sitting position, in a lying position. I asked if it hurt. She didn’t feel any pain.

I let her get dressed and sat down to draw up the conclusion. She got dressed and took her two phones again.

“You’re all right,” I said. “This evil thing has not touched you.”

“That's good,” she replied. “There is enough evil in the world right now.”

And then I said,

Whoever desires to love life
and see good days,
let him keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from speaking deceit;
let him turn away from evil and do good;
let him seek peace and pursue it.

She looked up from her phones for the first time and looked at me.

“It’s the Bible,” I explained. “The first epistle of St. Peter.”

She did not seem at all surprised that she came to the mammologist, and he quotes the Bible.

“Good book,” she said. “I like this thing there about the lilies, who don’t work to get clothes, but are always well-dressed and beautiful.”

I took a Bible out of my desk drawer and quickly found what she was talking about:

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

“The Gospel of Luke,” I explained. “The Apostle Luke was a doctor.”

“I thought the apostle Luke was a painter.”

She was not at all surprised that the mammologist had a Bible in his desk drawer.

We share an office with a gynecologist. One day, he sees patients; the other day, I see patients here. Therefore, there are several huge colored posters on the walls: ovaries, uterus, uterine appendages, bladder. She was not at all surprised that I was sitting under these posters and reading the Gospel.

**The End**