

HOME SWEET HOME

I felt depressed, I entered the wrong university because my parents wanted me to go there. I felt weak, I didn't want to do anything; it was hard for me to live in another town, because I wanted to be at home. After 6 months of studying there, I decided to withdraw my documents.

Sloviansk 2019

This caused a lot of conflicts in my family. My granny was the only one who always supported me.

Don't worry, I'm with you, my dear Sanechka. I am sure that everything will be the way you want!

And if not...

Why not? You will cope with all the difficulties!

You think so?

You will see.



Everything went the way she said. I was 20 years old, had a lot of plans and was busy studying and working. One morning everything changed.



I lived at home with Granny. She was 87, healthy and everything was good. Until one morning in October, I heard a scream from her room.

I tried to call an ambulance,



To ask for help from a friend who was a nurse.



I held her hand and those minutes felt like an eternity.

Only a few moments later my granny breathed her last breath.



After her funeral, I fell into a black hole.



There was one thing that I can't forget.



For 40 days a little bird knocked on my window.

Thanks to the bird not giving up on knocking: I realized I was feeling Granny's presence in the house.

The house is not just a building.

It's the place where I can find calmness and where she will always be alive.



I felt much better, but there wasn't a day when I didn't think about her. I tried to live a normal life, to do usual things, to work, to study, to build a relationship with my boyfriend and to make plans together.

I didn't read the news, but all of my friends were.

What if Russia invades more parts of Ukraine?



Are you silly? I think you have too much free time to think and waste it on imagining meaningless things, ha-ha-ha!

Honey, my friend talked about a full scale war starting, what if...



Don't worry, why are you thinking about such messes, don't listen to him... everything will be fine.

Ma, what do you think? Is it true that the war will expand?



I don't know, I hope it's a lie.

24 February, 5:00am



SASHA, WAKE UP!!!
The full scale war began!
I heard explosions,
it's the end of us...

I checked the news, all my family woke up and we realised that this was the new reality...



25 February



My mother lost her job because the laboratory she worked at had to close. At that very moment we realized that we are running out of money.

Our city was in panic: shops were empty, everywhere there were huge queues...



We tried to buy a lot of food in advance.

27 February

There were free evacuation trains.
The train station was full of people who wanted to flee to a safe place.



Ma, will we go away?

I think we have to be ready for that.
We should keep our suitcases ready in case
Izium falls. Then we'll have to go away!

But go where?

We don't have any
relatives or friends
anywhere...

March

We stayed and I tried to remain
calm. I was painting a lot of pictures
with numbers and watching movies.
Those things kept me sane.



5 April



Russians invaded Izium.

My mum got a call from my friend's father:

I will go to Dnipro tomorrow.
We have to leave!
It's dangerous to stay here.



Pack your clothes and
be ready at 8 o'clock.

Ma, I won't
go anywhere!

I can't leave my cats and rabbits
at home and my boyfriend!

Nooooo!!!



We have to go! Stop
crying and Think!!! It's
dangerous here! How can
you not understand???

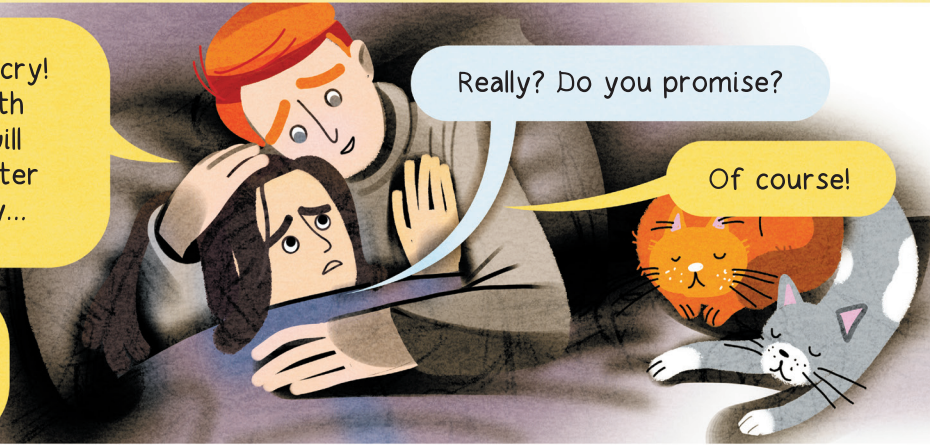
Leaving home was incredibly hard. I didn't sleep for the whole night... I was crying, hugging my boyfriend as if that night was our last one.

My lovely little girl. Don't cry! You will return. I'll be with your pets, everything will be fine! I'll take a look after your house. Don't worry...

We will stay in touch all the time. I love you. And I'll be waiting for you.

Really? Do you promise?

Of course!



April 7 th

My long journey has started... but I felt like my soul had remained at home with my grandma.

It was hard to find accommodations because most were already rented.



And those available were very expensive.



My mother and I managed to find a flat in Dnipro for 5 days.



There were three rooms and we were living with another family. There were 6 of us in total.



For these 5 days we were looking for a flat or a house. We were searching all over the internet all day long and calling all the propositions.



All the time I missed my home, my pets, my boyfriend.

I want to go home, ma...



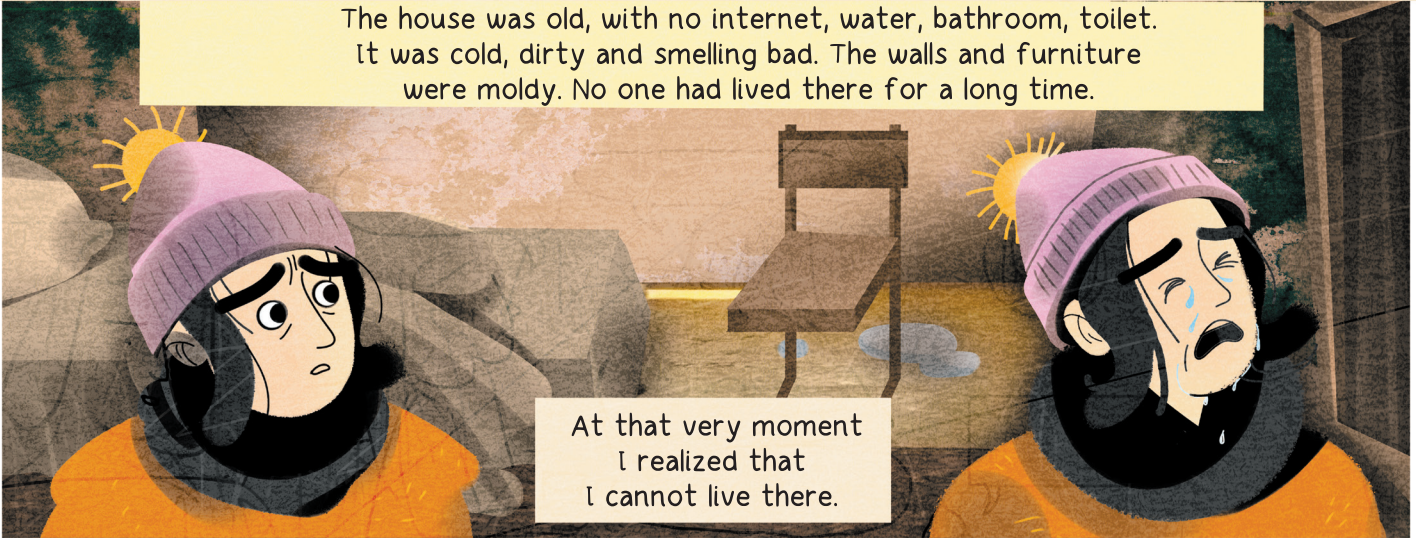
Why are you crying all the time? Don't you understand that it is hard for everyone?

Your tears won't change anything.



Some unknown people promised us a house in Oleksandriia. We went there. I was hoping for a new start. But I was wrong...

The house was old, with no internet, water, bathroom, toilet. It was cold, dirty and smelling bad. The walls and furniture were moldy. No one had lived there for a long time.



At that very moment I realized that I cannot live there.

I ran outside in a freezing rain in a panic attack. I couldn't breathe. There was a ball in my throat.



I felt so small...

It felt like the whole world was against me.

I wanted to live but in that moment I couldn't find the strength to fight.

I couldn't stop crying and was flooded with thoughts and questions:

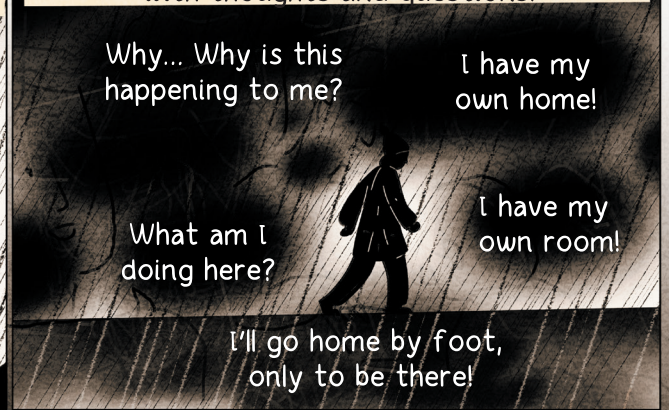
Why... Why is this happening to me?

I have my own home!

What am I doing here?

I have my own room!

I'll go home by foot, only to be there!



In two or three hours, after I got completely wet and cold, I came back to my body.

I realized that I must do something.



15 April

We rented a small room in Kropivnitsky.



Our roommates were complicated people and the owners were very demanding.



It felt like hell and I was thinking only about one thing.

I cannot live here anymore! I want to go home!

My house, my hose... Why am I here, why must I suffer from it?

I cannot stand this anymore...



Finally later we found a very good flat for a nice price in a very pleasant neighborhood in Kropyvnytskyi.



Once again I felt a small hope for a better life.



Sasha, I got a message from a friend that your neighborhood is being bombed now!

What?! I don't believe it! Probably it's false information.

Again?

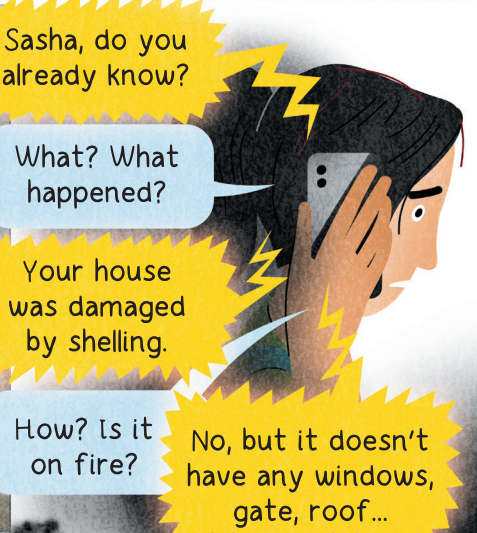
Sasha, do you already know?

What? What happened?

Your house was damaged by shelling.

How? Is it on fire?

No, but it doesn't have any windows, gate, roof...



Maybe I won't be able to return home.

I had to do something: at least to repair the house, to protect it from rains and thieves.

How will I tell mum?

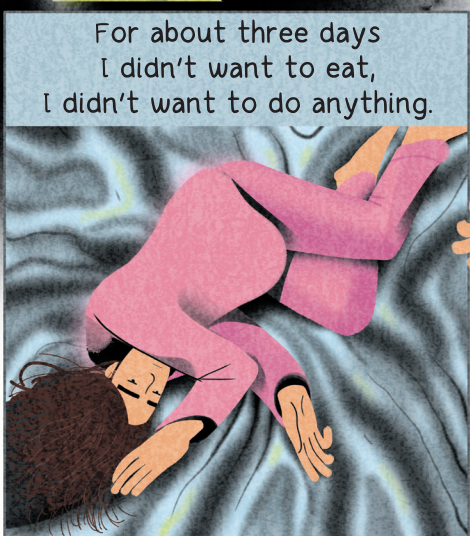
But I couldn't imagine how to do that. I was really far from my house and I couldn't understand what I should do...



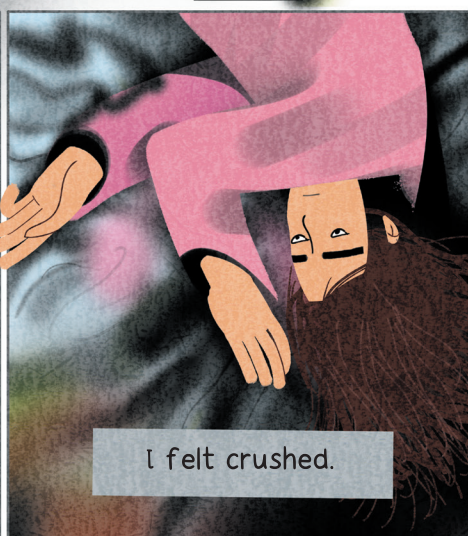
I felt broken.



For about three days I didn't want to eat, I didn't want to do anything.



I felt crushed.



Maybe I saw my sweet home for the last time in April.



In the middle of July I had the desire to start working again.

I started to look for my future pupils.



Can you teach my son?

After our first lesson we talked a lot.

Where are you from?

I'm from Kramatorsk.



Oh, really? It's very close to my town!

My husband is there now and I really want to go home.



I miss him so much.

29 August

One day, Mila told me:



Mila's son was visiting my lessons for some time.



I'm going to go back to Kramatorsk. Let's continue our lessons online.



By the way, there is a place in our car. Would you like to join us?

Oh, I like this idea! I haven't been home for many months.

Then I started to think a lot.

How will it be?

It's not quiet now in Sloviansk.

There are a lot of explosions every day.

But I feel that I must go home.

I have to prepare the house for winter and my boyfriend, my pets are there.

I am afraid of going back.

So I decided to go.

We left at the beginning of September. Our trip was very hard and very long.

A fire from the explosion was the first thing that I saw in my town.



There weren't any people on the streets.



My Sloviansk was empty.

I went to my house and I had nothing to say.



I felt shocked.

I was heartbroken.

There weren't any houses in front of mine.



They had been bombed.

My house looked heavily damaged...



But then I saw my precious,



my darling boyfriend,



my little pets.



I instantly felt happy.

The first night was very hard.



I sensed a strange smell in the house that reminded me that nobody lived there for a while.



I heard explosions at night.



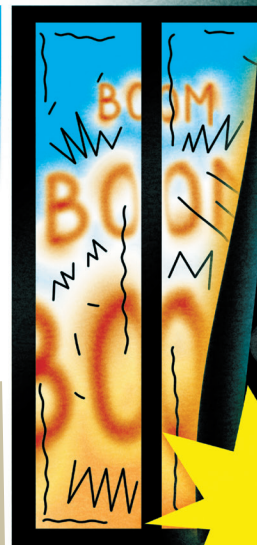
I want to go back to Kropyvnytskyi!



The next two days I was cleaning my house.



One day at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon the bombing started.



I can't!

I have to go away!!!

Sasha, why did you come here? To go away after two days?



No!

You came here to repair your house and to feel the calmness of being at home.

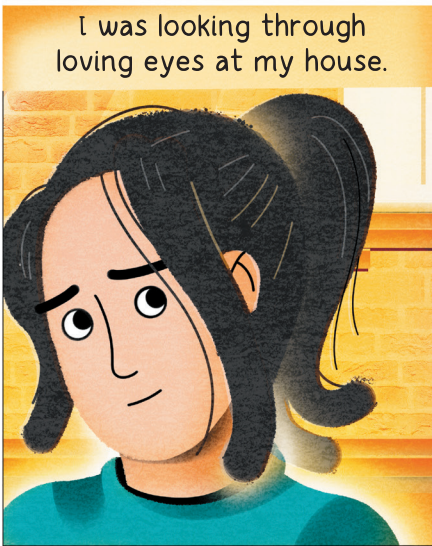
That night I slept better.



The birds singing woke me up and I went outside to meet a new day face to face.



I saw large ripe grapes in the sun. Their scent was beautiful. It reminded me that I'm not alone. I'm with my granny again.



I was looking through loving eyes at my house.



The zucchini growing in my yard brought me back to the past where I lived happily with my family and planned my future.

And even if the war doesn't end, I will feel happy here and now.

Now I'm at home.

I'm free now.



My soul is calm now.

I won't go away ever again.