

The last melody before dawn

I wish I hadn't been the one who opened my eyes. The sharp and loud ash burns my skin and bones. I can still hear it, like drums, creating a funeral melody that goes on and on and doesn't stop until it achieves what it was for, announcing the death of all.

I got up from the grave they had dug for all my family and all the people around me. My house was bleeding, as it had never done before and there was nothing left of it but broken bricks and our cold memories. I looked in all directions, as if someone or something was going to tell me that it was just a dream, that no one would let all this happen. No one came looking for me. I spent several minutes looking at their white and twisted bodies on the road, but it only took those few moments for the image of them to be etched in my mind forever.

I walked down the street that I used to go to my university every day, that colorful and lively street, which now I could only recognize by a fallen sign on the ground. It was as if I had traveled to a different world, I don't know anything under the rubble. I walked and walked, with the little strength I had left. My ears were ringing and I could feel blood pouring down my forehead and right arm.

I want to scream, scream in pain and not only physically but also because of the damage they are doing to my country. I still see their faces, smiling when we could. But I can't help but see those mutilated corpses in my mind that I will always remember as my parents. My tears run down my dirty face and I'm hungry but I can't eat, I want to hug someone but no one is there.

It started raining. I felt my skin cleaner but my wounds were more painful. The noise of the rain did not let me see clearly and I felt more afraid than I had. Then I saw his eyes in the ground, as if that was the only thing I could remember about him. Green, like the grass where we used to go to play together.

The small basement of his house was all that was left of it. It had essentially necessary things and everything was as I remembered it. His face was like a mirror where I could see myself reflected. I could read on his lips the same uncertainty and fear that I was going through.

-Are you alone Iryna?

-Yes, I think no one was following me. What about you?

-My father went to fight from the first moment, he has always been very patriotic, you know. I tried to go out with my mother and sister from the city about two days ago but we were shot. My little sister is dead and I was shot in the leg. I was knocked out on the road for several hours and then was able to crawl back home.

-Where is your mother Petro? I remember she was a good doctor, right? She always healed our wounds when we played in the children's park. I really need her...

-She is dead, Iryna. I can't speak or even think about what I saw without crying and regretting even continuing to breathe. Her body...was naked...they didn't even think she had the slightest dignity to cover it up. Damn bastards! If only I had been a little stronger like my father, nothing would have happened.

-Petro, don't cry and look at me. It's not your fault those bastards have a macabre mind. We can't keep complaining, we have to survive and tell the world what they are doing to our families. I am also alone, a bomb has fallen on my house and everyone has died, except me. This madness has to end.

My skin was white as snow. Petro cleaned my head a bit with an old t-shirt and tore it up to bandage it. His tears peeked out like small waterfalls of sand that little by little created mountains. I broke my dirty sleeve to show Petro my wounded arm. He picked up a small box that was on top of his makeshift bed and then I could see a sewing kit

-You are so lucky Iryna. I found this in a nearby house while looking for food. When I had to close my bullet hole I only had a stapler.

His leg was purple and marked by a series of staples that squeezed his skin. For the first time I came out of my shock to see my childhood friend carefully. He was whiter than me and almost in the bones. It seemed that he had only eaten a few canned vegetables in 5 days. His knuckles, full of dried blood, betrayed the times he tortured himself lamenting the life of his family.

His little fingers trembled, he was afraid of doing it wrong, but there was no other alternative. The cold needle burned my skin and I felt that thread moving in the holes that my friend clumsily made. I almost fainted, I was very weak. I couldn't stop thinking about my parents and all the life I led before this.

Night fell like a soft veil. The cold seeped through all the cracks of that place. Petro made a little space for me in his clumsy bed made of three blankets, and we slept what we could. I could hardly sleep, nightmares took over my mind. I felt like Petro was shivering with cold and sometimes he called his mother in his dreams.

Three days passed since I realized that I would be alone forever. Petro's health was only getting worse. His leg was more purple every day and he could hardly move it. We looked for some food in nearby houses and some medicine but all we found was four expired cans

of soup and pain pills. Every day I could sleep a little more and escape from the reality where we were living. But waking up and continuing cost me my life every morning.

But, this little comfort zone, sometime had to be broken. On my fourth day with Petro, while we were eating a small piece of bread, we heard the noise. All of this had been the calm before the storm. An instant and short noise, but one that changed our lives forever. We stood speechless, until we heard another shot. We quickly realized that this time they were inside the city, and that could only mean that they would search house by house.

-We have to get out of here and get to the forest. There we can hide and continue on our way.

-Speak for yourself Iryna, with this leg I can't go very far without getting caught and I don't want that to happen. They may kill me, they don't need a failed musician. But you are a woman, and I refuse to let them do to you what they did to my mother.

-Petro, I don't know what you're thinking but I'm not going to leave you here alone. We have to go to another city or leave the country and you will recover.

-We'll think about it tomorrow, it's too late and I need to sleep.

I woke up colder than usual. I turned my head a little and he was gone. My friend wasn't there. I panicked; where he was, what had happened. My vision began to blur and my mind clouded over with bad ideas. Suddenly, I heard an organ. A great organ chord. Big and solemn. So then I fell into reason. A shower of notes and dramatic melodies began to sound from the village church. A small note appeared on the table that said:

-Music is the only language that knows no borders. The only language that can clearly convey human feelings. I hope you feel my anger, sadness and regret in this little work. Run and head to the forest when you hear my signal. Take the bag that I have prepared for you, inside is all the food that we have been keeping, some medicine and a small blanket. Don't worry about me, I won't need anything from the basement. Thank you for making me feel less alone the last days of my life. Consider this a small sacrifice for love, let me do one thing right before I go to the other side. Please mother and sister, forgive me.

-golondrina blanca