

My name is Halyna. I am 48 years old and I live in Lviv.

Every morning begins the same way at our place: My husband wakes up early and goes to the kitchen, where he makes coffee.

That morning, when I woke up, I heard explosions in the distance. I realized that the war had started and that it could take a long time before my husband would make coffee for me again. I wanted to preserve this moment in my memory and to make it last a little bit longer. So I stayed in bed for a while.

My husband is a lawyer, but he has served in the army for several years, so we stored his uniform and all his other army equipment. Immediately after breakfast we began to take his army stuff out from suitcases and boxes all around the apartment.

My husband needed my help because I knew where to find everything. We took out his sleeping bag, sleeping mat and uniform. And there was a lot of technical equipment there as well. Small things like a tourniquet, knives and screwdrivers.

We also had to prepare for the situation where I would be left in the city on my own. So we bought a camping gas stove and looked into the nearest shelter. I cooked enough food for a whole week. We did not know how much time we had. We didn't talk much.

I decided I would stay in the bathroom during air alarms, because the shelter in our house isn't safe. In our apartment there are a lot of windows. It will be hard to survive a shelling if I stay in the living room. Because of all the glass.

The next morning we went to the army office with all his stuff. As a former soldier my husband was obliged to turn himself in. When we arrived, there was an air alarm.

This part of Lviv has a lot of highrise buildings. All the shops were closed because the siren was on. We were walking on the street and we understood that there was no place to hide. It felt so unfair. It was very, very dangerous.

We hoped that the army enlistment office would put my husband on a list and then let him go home for a while.

I waited in the supermarket nearby. All the shelves were empty, so I started looking at people. I saw the other women that wandered around aimlessly with red eyes. I realized, that just like me, they were in the same situation. Hoping their husbands would come home with them.

My husband called me to say they wouldn't let him out. I went to the bus stop alone. I saw a woman selling oranges. And suddenly the siren was on again, but she couldn't leave her oranges. That was such a weird feeling to realize this. That we live in another world now.

I only saw my husband again two or three months later.
I had this feeling it was easier if I just cut off the emotions fully.
When you are intimate with someone you become very vulnerable.
This vulnerability is very badly connected to the war state.
You start to feel weak. You start to have self pity.
You start to empathize with everyone.

That's what happens to soldiers who are coming back from the frontline trenches for a short vacation. They allow themselves to feel a little bit more.

But when they go back to the frontline they have lost their animal ability to survive. They become weaker. And they often die.

The reality of war demands a black and white view of things. When you start to see all these half tones, it becomes hard for you to react fast. It's much easier to react fast if you live in a black and white world.