



christian
response
to
eastern
europe



Over time, I've sat with many of the men who remain in Ukraine—fathers, sons, brothers, friends. I've listened quietly as they spoke, sometimes plainly, sometimes with deep pain, about what life has become for them. Many opened up to me, telling their stories, sometimes with hesitation, sometimes with raw honesty. What I heard has stayed with me. This piece is my way of holding their words, of trying to do them justice. In truth, it could have been written by any one of them.

I write these words with trembling hands, as if each one could be my last. I want you to know everything—my fears, my prayers, my hope—so that if tomorrow does not come for me, you will understand my heart.

The front is bleeding. Land is lost, soldiers are dying, and there are no men left. The city has turned into a hunting ground. Vans prowl the streets like predators, filled with men who leap out, beat strangers, and drag them away, 'press-ganged to fight in the army'. Ten, sometimes more vans, circle through the city every day.

It doesn't matter anymore if your papers are in order or if you are supposed to be safe. None of it matters. They have their quotas, and if they fail, they themselves are sent to the slaughter. Human life has been reduced to numbers, to bargains, to a cruel market where a man's body is worth \$200.

So each time I step outside, I whisper a prayer: Lord, let me return. Let me see my wife's face again. Let me hold my son again. Let me tell bedtime stories to my darling little girl. Every car that passes makes my heart race. Every man looks like a threat. Even neighbours look at me with suspicion—asking in silence, why am I still alive when their sons are buried?

I live each day as if it could be my last. My mind cannot rest; my body cannot relax. Always alert, always afraid, yet clinging to the thought that love and faith might keep me alive.

Our land is emptying. In the universities, only girls sit now; the boys are gone. In our church, no weddings for three and a half years. The young women leave for other countries, too weary of waiting for a future that will not come. Those who remain move through life without hope, only counting the days they are still breathing. Men drink to drown the despair, and families crumble under the weight of this lawlessness.

Life grows darker each day. There is no planning, no tomorrow—only the desperate wish to survive. To not be taken. To not leave a widow. To not leave my son as an orphan. Sometimes I feel this war is not about land at all, but about clearing this place of its people. As if we are no longer needed here. Death comes from both sides, senseless and cruel.

And yet, in the middle of all this horror, my heart clings to my wife and children. I whisper prayers as I walk, as I sleep, as I wake: Lord, let me see their faces again. Let me grow old beside her. Let me raise my boy to be a man. Let me see my little daughter marry. Do not let them take me away. Do not let death steal me from them.

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