



A Voluntary Charity working in Ukraine and Moldova

with roots going back to 1990



Voices from Ukraine – Grief and Survival in war

Anya's husband, Oleg, was on his way home from the front. It was just after Easter, and he had been granted a brief reprieve from the war—only a few days' rest. Just a few precious days to rest, to be with his family again. But he never reached them. On that road home, a drone struck his car.

There were four men inside. When the remains were returned, it was only by his body—his arm in particular—that Anya could recognize her husband. His torso no longer bore a face. There was no head to weep over. But she knew him. Even then, she knew him.

There is no psychological support. None. The family has had to carry their grief in silence. Vika, Anya's daughter, suffers the most. When her father's coffin was brought back, she saw it from a distance but couldn't bring herself to attend the funeral. The grave lies close—just within their village—but she has never felt able to visit.

To survive, the family relies on humanitarian aid. And to keep despair at bay, they keep moving. Vika, despite her own pain, persuaded Anya to join her in volunteering for the front. There is solace, sometimes, in service. It gives shape to the days.

I asked Anya what she thought about ending the war. Her voice trembled. Her brother, Oleg, is still fighting—he is 48. So is her nephew, Dima, only 18. She wants to see their land returned. But she also wants the war to end—desperately. She is tired of watching those she loves vanish into it.



As we spoke, Vika listened in silence. Then, suddenly, the words overwhelmed her. "Stop the war now," she cried out, "Stop the war now, Stop the war now," her voice cracking, she ran from the room. Until that moment, there had been no sign that her sorrow might rise like that. But it had been there all along. She returned after five quiet minutes, composed but I expect the pain remained hidden once more.

When it was time to leave, I asked if I could visit Oleg's grave, just to say a prayer. I hoped Vika might come too, that it might bring her a small step closer. She couldn't. But Anya did. She walked with us, grateful.

Before I left, I thanked Anya for sharing her story. As with many families I met, she thanked me in return—not just politely, but with sincerity. "Thank you," she said. "Speaking about my husband has helped more than you will ever know."

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Continued

It seems that, in trying to be kind, friends and family often avoid the grief—skimming over the pain like skipping stones on water. But beneath the surface, so many long to speak: of husbands, fathers, sons, brothers... to remember them aloud, as if the telling might keep them close just a while longer. There must be many like Anya who truly want to speak. They want someone to listen as they talk about their husbands, their fathers, their brothers and sons—those they've lost in the war. It's not just memory they're sharing. It's love. And sometimes, sharing it is the only way to keep going.



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