

Iryna Tetera – *Finland* – English text

Between the lines of any author lives the imagination of the reader. In essence, we are just screenwriters. But those who open our books have a completely different role. They are casting directors, composers, cameramen and stage directors of our ideas. Our main characters come to life in their imagination, the locations where the events take place are pictured, and they even sense the sounds and smells in their mind. That is why the film adaptation of any book often seems unsuccessful to those who managed to read the original source just before viewing. They have already seen this movie – between the lines, and for this particular viewer, it was its best interpretation - much deeper, more evocative and more realistic.

Everything in life is like in books. When I wrote my first novel *Kyiv-New-York*, the manuscript fell into the hands of a well-known Russian writer, and she offered me cooperation. But with some conditions. She wanted the main character to live in Moscow, not in Kyiv. To draw her paintings on Moscow's Vorobyovy Gory Park, not on Andreevsky Hill - the creative heart of Ukraine. And, of course, she could not have traveled to New York. The Russian market is much larger and, therefore, more profitable than the Ukrainian one, and the book might be turned into a blockbuster movie. But between the lines I read that she wanted to exorcise from my book Ukrainian culture and literature, so I refused. I was lucky, for eventually my book was published the best publishing house in Ukraine – Bright Books. It keeps up with the times and respects its authors, cooperates with foreign publishers and does not impose its vision of the world on any of us, since it aims to bring the readers only the best.

In 2014, the illegal annexation of Crimea took place. Ukrainians lost a part of their territory legally belonging to them and I have lost my home. I was born and raised in Yalta, Crimea. And now, returning there, it seems to me that someone uninvited visited my house and messed it all up. By the way, I'd like to note that when I graduated from high school, my relatives living in

America offered to help me with admission to one of the universities in New York. But I refused. I was perfectly aware that if I would settle down in the city to study, I would never come back. I didn't want to live in a different country from my family and I chose Kyiv. You have all seen the film adaptation of the annexation. I read it between the lines and see the illegal borders which separate me from my family.

I was born and raised in a Russian-speaking family. I know Ukrainian, because it is the official language of my country, but I always spoke Russian, because I dream and think in Russian. Even while working on TV I spoke Russian, and no one ever commented on that. But now we can see the film adaptation of the "rescue" of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine. And between the lines, I work on my pronunciation and improve my Ukrainian, because I don't want anybody to come to rescue me again.

Right now, the whole world is watching a film adaptation of the war in Ukraine, and we are reading it between the lines.

Before the war, many of you probably didn't know very much about my country. Mostly people who heard about Ukraine remembered Chernobyl - the film adaptation of the biggest nuclear disaster in Europe. But between the lines, Ukraine ranks fourth in the world in terms of the total value of natural resources, and its agricultural produce, grain etc, can satisfy the nutritional needs of 600 million people. That is why February 24th will remain a terrible date in the history of humanity.

That morning, I woke up from explosions and a terrible roar - fragments of a Russian drone which was shot down fell on the roof of my house. I quickly packed my suitcase, put the kids in the car, and looked in the rearview mirror before I left. They slept in the back seat and didn't understand at all what was going on. And I thought at that moment: maybe this is that I have now! A car, my kids, my pets and just one suitcase. I have worked hard for many years to have my own house. But I was leaving it and I didn't know if I would ever come back. You all have seen the film adaptation of Russia's attack on Ukraine. But between the lines, thousands of civilians became homeless and

orphaned. We were forced to from our homes and we have scattered all over the world. We are very grateful to each of you for opening your doors to us.

For example, a friend of mine now lives in Switzerland. Before going there, she spent two weeks in the basement of Bucha. She bought an apartment there a few years ago, but was able to move just a day before the war started - she had to save money for the repairs, and they took a long time. She is a widow. She was hiding in the basement with two children, and the younger one of those is autistic. Can you imagine an autistic child who spent two weeks in a dark, cold basement listening to the sounds of exploding shells? They were saved by a miracle. When they ran out of food and water, she decided that it was better to take the risk than slowly die from dehydration, so she put the children in a car and joined in a column set up by volunteers. She was lucky - that column was fired on, but she was able to get out of the siege without being hurt. Her neighbor with two daughters died, when a grenade from a Russian tank hit their car right in front of her eyes. The neighbour died because she wanted to save her beloved ones. They died because they wanted to live!

I Switzerland my friend met a woman from Mariupol, who had carried her wounded 18-year-old daughter for 20 days through fields and forests. It had been their one and only opportunity to escape from the city, which was under blockade. Her daughter's back had terrible cuts from shrapnel, and her hands had been paralysed because of damaged nerve endings. After escaping they went to Switzerland because they knew that it was possible to treat nerve endings surgically there. The Swiss doctors helped her to recover.. This could be a great escape story and a film adaptation. But between the lines, there is just a 18-year-old girl, whose body, and most importantly, whose soul, is forever scarred by the war. Like the souls of all Ukrainians.

The war that has now entered our homes will surely end with our victory. We are not ready for compromises and empty negotiations, because we have lost too much. Any Ukrainian will tell you the same. Through the last year we lived in constant fear of attack because of the non-stop military training on

our borders. Russia is a big country. It has a larger army and more guns.. But their willpower shall never surpass ours. We are no longer afraid of bombing or artillery strikes. We are only afraid of the price we shall have to pay for the victory, because every day people die in Ukraine. Not only soldiers - old people, women, children. Those kids who were supposed to play on playgrounds, not in bomb shelters. Go to a summer camp, not go through the humiliation in the filtration. Wait for their dads to come home from work, not from the front.

Each of us, wherever we are - in Britain, Poland, Finland, Spain, in any other country in Europe or far away in Canada and America, at least once during this war woke up in the rubble of the Mariupol Drama Theater with the screams of the dying around them and watched death straight into the eye. Found themselves suddenly at the metro station, which had become their home, shuddered as they heard the first, piercing cry of a child born right onto the dirty floor of the subway, and felt how life conquers death. Sat in the basements of Bucha, desperate for an escape, and confronted the enemy in the catacombs of Azovstal, not intending to give up, no matter what. Fought a Russian warship together with the border guard from Zmeinyi island. Been a captive. Tortured. Lain in the trenches, deaf from explosions. Lost friends and relatives. Those who died and those who turned their backs, believing the Russian propaganda. were suffocated by the injustice. Wanted to rush to the main square of the city and scream their helplessness, having heard about the atrocities in Irpen, Gostomel, Bucha. But stayed silent for a long time, afraid even to imagine what would come to knowledge after the liberation of Mariupol, Popasna and other cities. Collected their scattered belongings among the dead bodies of women and children at the Kramatorsk railway station and forgot about an opportunity for an evacuation. Prayed under a blazing fire in the dome of the Svyatogorsk Lavra. Mourned with parents who had lost their and children who had lost their parentis. Returned to a destroyed house. Looked in the mirror and seen themselves maimed by the war. Been one of those who were used as human shields in Chernigov and

Sumy, and been the one who cannot look at the destroyed native Kharkov without tears dancing on their cheeks like a graduation waltz in the ruins of the school. Risen to the sky as the Ghost of Kyiv and groaned in pain at the wind humming in the turbines of a broken Mriya. Translated from Ukrainian, “Mriya” means “a dream”. And we are sure that we can recreate it, because the Ukrainian dream does not die! We have admired our military. Sent money, sometimes our last coins, to the Ukrainian army. Hit a valuable target with a Javelin, and targeted by a Bayraktar. With a sweet smile on our face, with a grandma from a small village near Kharkov, treated russian killers with a poisoned pie. Sang along with the Kalush group on the Eurovision stage and scored goals with our football players at the World Cup. Together with our President, every Ukrainian repeatedly thanks those world leaders, actors, musicians, sportsmen and ordinary people who lend a helping hand and open their homes and hearts.

Every Ukrainian is here now. Next to me.

And also in Mariupol, Kherson, Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk. In every corner of our country, wherever he really is.

Between the lines of this war there is unity and unbroken spirit! And there are also those people whom we, unfortunately, will never be able to resurrect, but whom we shall not forget. The most important things always remain between the lines, and we, as authors, know that already.