

Downfall

June 17, 2024, Cherkasy Forest, Ukraine

I was running through the forest as fast as I possibly could. It would have been a surreal experience running in the beautiful Cherkasy Forest, one of the 7 wonders of Ukraine. The grand trees surrounding me and the birds chirping happily. There was only one problem, however, as I had a group of Russian soldiers on my tail.

It happened near here, around 2 years ago. The Canadians, British, and Americans had all sent thousands of troops to Ukraine, and many neighbouring countries as the Russians and Chinese attacked, trying to prevent NATO from spreading western influence across eastern Europe.

I was sent by the Canadian government in a military sector to defend Ukraine, or what was left of it. Kharkiv and nearby cities had all been obliterated by a small nuclear bomb dropped by Russia, this is what caused other countries to get involved in the war.

Russia was more powerful than anyone thought, with hundreds of thousands of troops and heavy artillery. They have been slowly winning the war, as their military tactics are far more advanced than anyone could have predicted. They send groups, usually around one thousand troops, to attack our forces. They send five of them, all around an army fit for a bigger battle, and pick the troops off.

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The Russians had nearly caught up to me, and so I did the only thing I could, I pulled out my rifle and shot at them. I hit five of them, one left.

"Dammit!" I yell. "My rifle is jammed!"

Then, something hits me, literally, a wave of pain washes over me as a bullet hits me just above the hip. The man who shot me runs towards me, but I'm ready for it. I lunge using my good leg, pull out the small knife holstered in my pocket and stab the soldier in the neck. I saw the look of shock on his face, then it turned to pain.

"Нет!" he says in a raspy whisper, so quiet I can barely hear it. "Я не могу оставить этот мир в таком состоянии!"

Suddenly, I hear an ear-splitting noise, my ears start ringing, I turn around and see it. The worst possible thing to see after being shot and stranded in a forest. A missile had been flown into the forest.

I knew what even a small missile could do to this forest if it started a fire, and it definitely would. It might burn it to the ground. This was an even bigger problem for me than I'd hoped, however, as my bullet wound slowed me down enough that I could easily be consumed by the fire. In my moment of shock after the missile, I'd forgotten that I had a pair of medical pliers, so I sat down and began to remove the bullet from my side. It was nasty work, my shirt and skin had been stained from blood. Luckily there wasn't enough blood to indicate that any major veins or arteries had been hit, but it was still a bullet shot. I bandaged the wound and got up.

The sky had turned red, I had to get out of the forest, but to where? All of the surrounding cities and towns had been taken

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over by the Russians, but then I saw it. A helicopter! I could barely see it, but I knew what it was. I had been trying to get out of the 17,400-acre forest for 25 minutes when I got to the helicopter. I assumed that the soldiers that chased me and shot me, had landed in a helicopter, as I had heard it. That's why I had started running. The fire was spreading quickly, and I could see it in the distance, but I was at the helicopter now. It was landed in a grassy field surrounded by trees, and in the field there were around 40 kinds of flowers, all popping up in the grass. I would have taken in the beauty, but time was of the essence. I got in and powered it up, then started to ascend into the air. I knew how to fly a Russian helicopter from my training, which was lucky for me, and I flew away.

In my rush, I had failed to remember one thing, if Russians didn't see Russians in the cockpit of one of their vehicles, they would try to blow it up. I was too late, something hit the tail of the helicopter and it started to go down. I tried to stay calm, then I knew what I had to do. I ran to the doorway, opened it, and waited. When the copter was about 10 feet from the ground, I leaped out.

I hit the ground extremely hard, and before I could get into a roll, a bullet hit me in the back, right into one of my ribs. I fell to my knees, not even caring about my leg, which I concluded was probably broken. I fell onto my face, my sweat and ash-covered, bloodied face. The ground was soaked with tears as I was crying, my life flashing before my eyes.

I remembered some happy things, like when I got my first house, got my dream job, and winning my first ever hockey game. Then came sad memories, getting the news that my friend was killed in a car crash, and when I was told to start training to fight in the war by the Canadian military. I had been so horrified by the news.

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I rolled over to see the sky for one last time, my tears still flowing off my face, but I was quiet. It was peaceful around me. The burning sound of the helicopter seemed to blend into the background.

It was peaceful, and as the light faded from my eyes I took one last breath and let the world take me away.