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The Only Way To Survive

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I had already forgotten all that had happened and all that lay ahead, I live only for the moment.

It is the only way to survive when bombs are falling and we are hiding in the basement of this forgotten old factory. The thought of our past life, our lovely home and good friends will make me go mad. I will not see it blackened out and hollow. I must survive, I want us all to survive for whatever comes next.

Vlad is on my lap, only three, for him this is a new type of holiday. How can he know this is not how life should be? Tanja can't even speak yet but already she has become accustomed to the noises and vibrations the bombs make. She sleeps through the whistles and crashes while we grown-ups jump and gasp. Vlad giggles. I am glad they are not older.

With all this madness nature still calls and at this moment I must to go to the toilet. It has been days and I know I will be ill if I do not empty myself. I take the shovel, "Briget look after the little ones." I open the hatch, climb out and listen. All is quiet, is that a good sign? I don't know, I am not versed in the sounds of war. Silence feels scary too. Will it be light or dark outside? So long in the bunker I have no idea where in the day we are. Up the stairs I push open the heavy door. It is dusk, good. I step beyond the overhang hiding the doorway. Light rain is falling, it feels good on my face. I smear the dirt away and catch drops on my tongue, I feel my thirst.

It is the first time I see the surrounds in the light since this "war" started. The craters are deep it will be impossible for cars to use the road. This is what those noises were doing.

Behind me the factory is still standing with gaping holes for windows that look like giant bullet wounds sprayed in a regular pattern. It is a strong concrete construction, its basement will keep us safe.

I am already desperate to get back to it but my bowels are moving. Under the trees and bushes sticks have been planted at regular intervals. These show which piece of soil is already full. Old Dimitri, the only believer amongst us is finding a use for his bible stories. Who did God tell to identify your shit with a stick? I don't need to know but maybe he is right. I don't want to sit in anyone else's shit.

I finish my business and look for a stick. The light is fading. At the next tree I try to snap a branch but it only bends. I scan the floor and see beyond the tree a trousered leg poking out. Something about the way it lays there covered in leaves I can tell it is not attached to a live person. The bright red laces on the trainer look familiar, I know it. It is Briget's man Joe. He left four days ago.

I stumble back to the bunker, the rumblings in the distance have started again. I don't want to see if it is Joe. What good will it do? Petar told me not to leave the bunker, he will come for us, he promised.

As I open the door Vlad jumps on me and licks the rain drops from my face. "Yum," he says.

"Rainwater is the best," I say.

Briget searches my face, What have you seen?"

"Nothing," I say.