

This is the first letter we received.

Today's letter:

Update from #Kyiv:

Lots to say, hopefully it'll be clear. Going on no sleep.

Sunday morning and Kyiv is under curfew through, tentatively, Monday morning.

A geography / civics lesson. Kyiv, like most large cities, is divided by water - here, that's the Dnieper River. Vikings sailed the Baltic east (to what would become St. Petersburg 700 years later), turned right, found the Dnieper and headed south toward Constantinople. Along the way, they encountered Slavic tribes living along a stretch where the river widened out. Next thing you know, Kyiv appears.

Right about now the historians, political junkies and internet police are screaming "That's not right!" Cut me some slack. Moscow has been sucking all the oxygen out of any story about this part of the world for centuries and Kyiv's history is far more complex than we have space for here, and besides, I have a different goal in mind. Not disinformation, not propaganda. I want you to know this: Kyiv is an ancient city in an ancient land inhabited by an ancient people with a culture so rich and diverse it'd make your head spin.

Kyiv is 400 years older - the entire history of Europeans in North America - than Moscow. Kyiv was building architecturally mindbending churches (that still stand) when Moscow was a swamp populated exclusively by rodents and bullfrogs (not that that's changed much). Kyiv was sending Princess Anna to wed the King of France to teach that barbarian how to wash, hold a fork, and write a sentence a decade or so before the Normans turned their gaze toward England.

My point? Kyiv's been around. Like the Dude, Kyiv Abides.

So when Vladimir Putin, all 5 foot 5 of him (we call him Vova Nedomirok, ask a Ukrainian friend what it means) starts barking from his tiny Moscow throne about Ukraine as "historic Russian land", and sends 200K troops alongside tanks and rocket launchers to prove the point, well, like Shrek once said: "looks like somebody's trying to compensate for something." Plus, he's lying. It's his one true skill. Ukrainians have no more respect for him than they would for a rabid dog.

If I seem angry to you, then give yourself a pat on the back for paying attention.

My boys are terrified. Bombs going off all night, semi-auto fire outside your home will do that. My own little Anna of Kyiv (tall enough to look Vova Nedomirok in the eye) is fighting fierce. (I'm torn between arousal and fear of her.)

The videos you see of Ukrainian villagers stopping tanks, of grandmas cussing out Russian soldiers, of what look like fashion models strapping on Kalashnikovs to go shoot the enemy - these are that different breed of cat that have welcomed me among them for this quarter century. A breed you don't mess with. A people you don't talk down to if you're smart. And, in the current situation, here's one thing that especially ticks them off: they're sick of hearing on the news that "well, Russia's concerns about Ukraine aren't being taken seriously"...as if this wasn't Ukrainian land, and that somehow Ukrainians require Russian, or American, or British, or German permission to live on it in whatever way they choose.

If nothing else, learn that about this ancient people living on, and now fighting and dying for this, their ancient land.

Here endeth the lesson. Now for the news.

The fighting went on all night all around the country. It's about 3:00 p.m. now and we've been hearing regular massive explosions constantly since about 10 last night. They come at intervals, usually in groups with a half-hour or so gap in between.

Reports of heavy fighting at Kyiv's Central railway station. Across the river from us, out near the city's main international airport, massive shelling. North of us on this side of the Dnieper, Russian airborne was repulsed. The orcs are many.

In other parts of the country, in Kherson - the heart of "Europe's Breadbasket" - Ukrainian troops have retaken the city and are making a stand that will be a movie one day. But they are in a fight--heavy Russian reinforcements coming up from Crimea, the stolen peninsula. Elsewhere, in stories typical of these events, a band of gypsies managed to stop and steal a Russian tank. I wish I were making this up.

But these heroes are running low on ammunition. The loss of life is taking its toll.

The west - US, Canada, UK, Europe (looking at you, Germany) - are finally taking steps that may give us the time needed to get the Moscow Beast to the bargaining table.

What is happening here will affect you. The US and Europe have finally come together to hit Vova Nedomirok and his pals where it hurts - in the wallet.

I plead with you to bear with us, to bear this cost as best you can when it hits you at the supermarket and the gas pump - and it will - because, in some headshaking fashion it will have helped to keep enough of us alive to send Vova back home to his swamp.

More later.

Peace from Kyiv - Slava Ukraini!