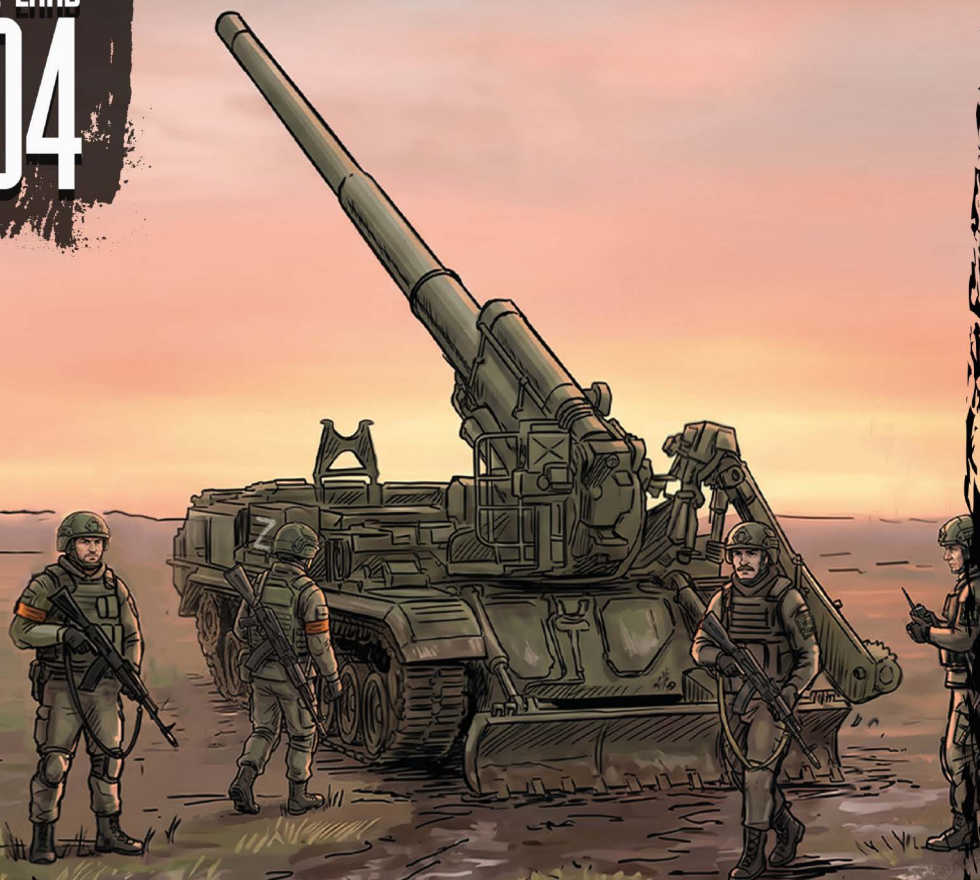


ADVENTURES
IN THE LAND
404

ISSUE №79
JUNE 2026



HALF A METER FROM DEATH

UNDER THE SIGHTS OF AN ENEMY DRONE

@RYBAR



CERTIFICATE № 79

April 2026. DPR. Somewhere near Oleksandrivka, on the territory of the DPR, in the middle of a modest tree line, a 2S7M Malka crew has already taken its position. The position is prepared and camouflaged with branches, the ammunition is already laid out, and the vehicle is braced by its spade against a prepared berm. The crew, without taking their eyes off the instruments, has precisely aligned the gun on the target. Only one thing remained — to wait for the cherished command: “Fire!”

Everything looks like a routine combat mission, until a short warning comes over the radio that a “bird” has been spotted not far from their position. There may be only minutes left before an FPV drone strike, but it is already too late to pack up. The crew commander decides to make one shot and immediately pull out. The team works without unnecessary words — everyone does their part, because in such a moment a mistake costs too much.

Malka fires. The recoil hurled the earth up behind the vehicle, an ear-splitting roar rolled across the whole position. And the crew was already quickly scattering along the tree line, looking for cover. But the drone had not gone anywhere. Its annoying buzzing now sounded much closer, clearer and with a kind of ominous persistence. In the sky the FPV made a wide circle, spotted the empty machine, sharply turned and went for the target. Will the crew manage to get out from under the strike? And what will be left of the Malka when the drone reaches it from the sky?

NEAR OLEKSANDRIVKA, DPR,
APRIL 2026



**The target is locked.
Holding it. Now... taking
just a bit to the left.**



**No rush, Kevin.
Malka doesn't like haste.
Do it clean.**



**Keep it steady. This
isn't a sack of potatoes
like you're used to, this
is serious stuff.**

**All right,
steady. It's set.**



**It's gone...
clean shot.
No quirks.**



Aimed. Holding the target. Waiting for the command.

Charge in place.



Yemelya, you've got a "bird" in your sector. I repeat: UAV over the tree line, FPV at work.

About five minutes to contact.

Copy. We fire one round and then pull out.

SHHH

Well then, girl... we work fast and go home. Fire!

BANG

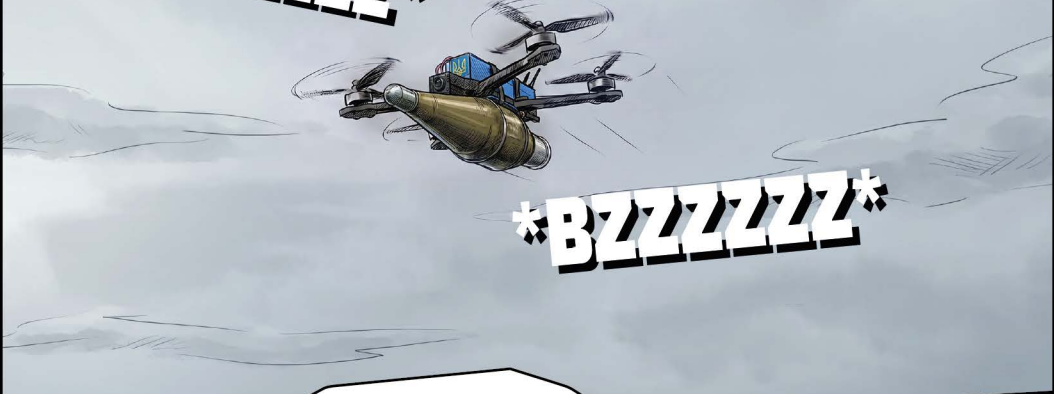


**That's it, fall back.
Away from the vehicle,
fast!**

**There...
whoa...**

**Kevin, don't sprint.
You'll get there faster
alive.**

BZZZZ



BZZZZZZ



**And here's our guest.
Hear how politely it's
buzzing?**

**It's drawing circles.
Means it's not lost,
the bastard.**

**I hear it, it's looking
for us... It's circling,
keeping the area.**

Spotted.



**All right, into cover.
Spread out!**

**Yeah, got it,
got it!**

**Don't bunch up!
Spread out! We're not
drawing a crowd
for it!**



**Second circle in.
Admiring the view,
the bastard!**

MGS	458
TWS	364
STP	197
LTD	657

N 12°36'45"
S 47°98'32"

REC TELEMETRY ON

I see the position, the vehicle's there... people moving away. Four of them.

They're heading into the trees... Do I go after them? Or... hit the vehicle?

You're asking me where to fly? Seriously?

I just... they're still in the open. I could try to catch them.

He says "try". You're not at a shooting gallery, kid. See the gun?

I see it.

See the ammo laid out nearby?

I see... yeah. It's laid out. But if I drop too low, I might not make it in time.

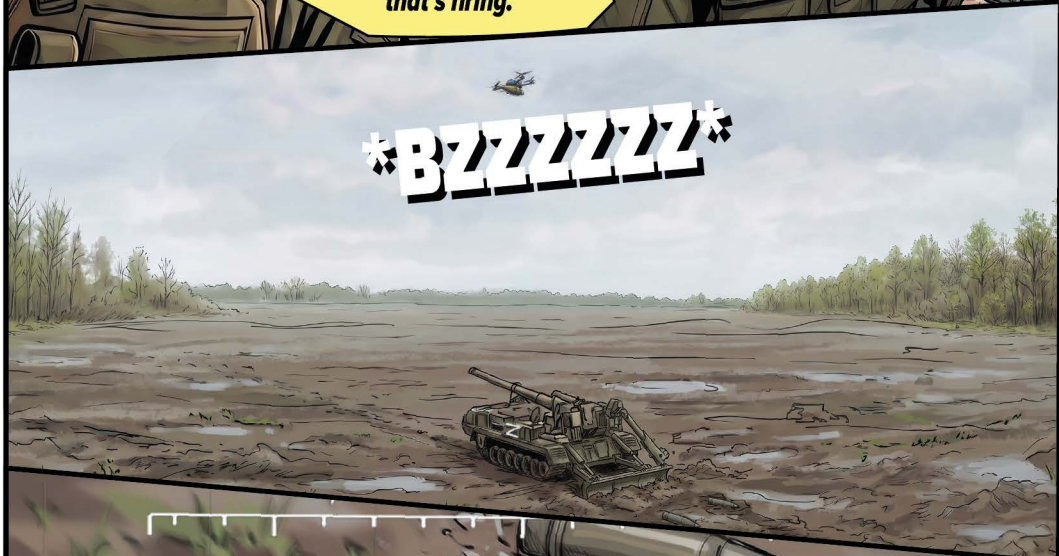


You might not make it, you might miss, you might also start sobbing into the mic.

Guide it where you're told.

Copy... turning in.

That's it, don't go chasing legs. Work the thing that's firing.



BZZZZZZ



BZZZZZZ

MGS 458
TWS 364
STP 197
LTD 657





**Is... that it?
Why is it so quiet?**



**Don't celebrate too
soon. Silence here has
a temper of its own.**

SOMETIMES EVERYTHING LOOKS SO OBVIOUS THAT THE OUTCOME SEEMS CLEAR EVEN BEFORE EVENTS UNFOLD. HERE FLIES AN FPV DRONE, LINED UP ON THE POSITION, AND DOWN BELOW THE AMMUNITION LIES OPEN, SHELLS ALREADY PREPPED, FUSES SCREWED IN — UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS THE RESULT IS USUALLY PREDICTABLE. HOWEVER, REALITY, AS SO OFTEN HAPPENS, HAD ITS OWN PLANS. THIS TIME THE DRONE DID NOT REACH THE TARGET. 50–70 CENTIMETRES SEPARATED THEM FROM THE EXPLOSION. A DISTANCE THAT USUALLY ISN'T EVEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

THE DAILY ROUTINE OF FRONTLINE SOLDIERS CONSISTS NOT ONLY OF A CHAIN OF PROPER PRECISE PROFESSIONAL ACTIONS ON OUR SIDE, BUT ALSO, PARADOXICALLY, OF THE ENEMY'S MISCALCULATIONS AND MISTAKES. YOU CAN'T RELY ON THEM, BUT NOTICING SUCH A MISTAKE IN TIME AND TURNING IT TO YOUR ADVANTAGE IS SIMPLY VITAL. BECAUSE EVERY ENEMY MISS IS, IN ESSENCE, A NEW CHANCE, AND SUCH A CHANCE SIMPLY CANNOT BE MISSED.



Didn't reach it...

He... missed? Did he really miss?

Even death has bad landings sometimes.



It put down behind our girl. Missed by half a metre... maybe less.

All right, we're not writing him thank-you notes, we get to work earlier. To the vehicle. Move it.



Start her up?

Fire her up, what kind of question is that. We're pulling Malka out of here.



Do we take the ammo?



We grab what's closest. Whatever we don't have time for, we leave.



We can replace metal, people we can't.



I don't like this sky. A second one might come to see what the first one did.



That's why we're moving. What, we're supposed to sit here and wait for it?



We got lucky this time, girl... Now you get to drive us out of here.





You missed. The ammo was laid out in front of you like in a shop window, and you still managed to fly into the bushes.



There was a gust, it threw the drone sideways. I almost corrected, just...



"Almost" you can write into your report. It'll look great.


Launch the second one. Fast. Before they come to their senses.

Copy... now. I'll launch it now. Just checking the link.

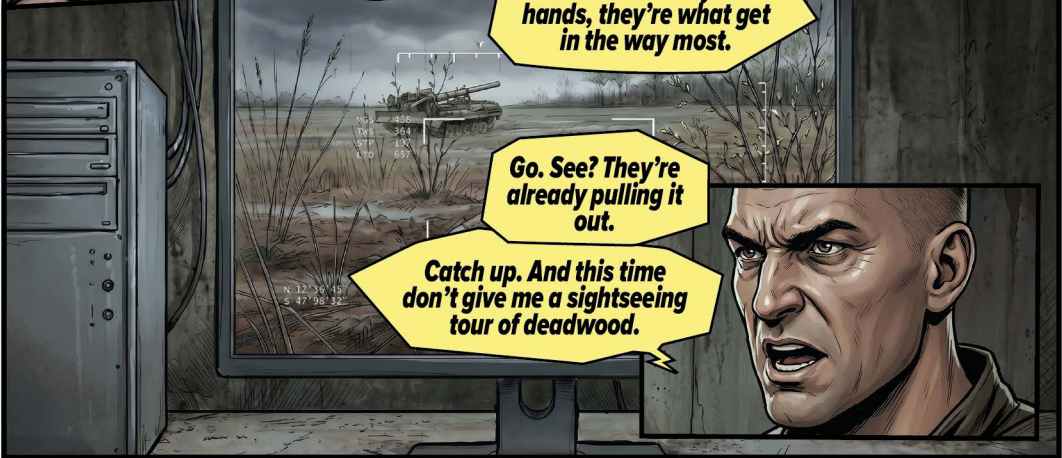
He's checking the link. Check your hands, they're what get in the way most.




Go. See? They're already pulling it out.



Catch up. And this time don't give me a sightseeing tour of deadwood.






Tiger, this is Emelya. Gun's intact. Ammo didn't detonate. Position is compromised. We're pulling out.

SHHHH

Copy, Emelya. Withdraw to the alternate. Move without stops.

There may be another strike from the air. Keep your eyes open.



Copy. Heading to the alternate, under the tree line. Got the crew together, moving the vehicle.

We'll lay low for the night, then act according to the situation.

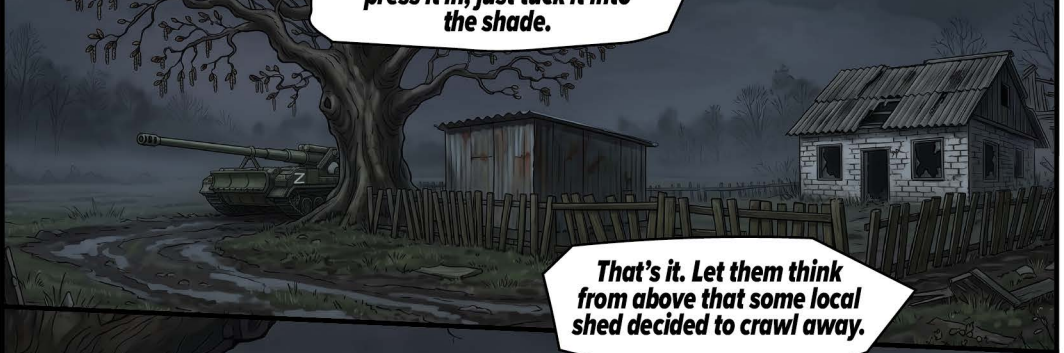


VROOM

A FEW HOURS LATER



We'll set up here. Kevin, carefully under the tree. Don't press it in, just tuck it into the shade.



That's it. Let them think from above that some local shed decided to crawl away.



Lower on that edge.

RUSTLE

Now it's starting to look livable. In the dusk they won't spot it right away.





**To be honest...
I thought she was done
for after that bang.**

**Our girl's tougher
than she looks. Nasty
temper, but she wants
to live.**

**Luck's a nice thing.
Shame it doesn't
follow a schedule.**

**Today it
showed up.**

**Still standing...
as if it wasn't her that
almost got blown apart
today.**



**She's standing,
and that's good. And you're
all in one piece, which
is even better.**



**Tiger, this is Emelya.
At the new position.
Vehicle intact, crew
intact.**

**Camouflage is up.
No activity.**

SHHHH

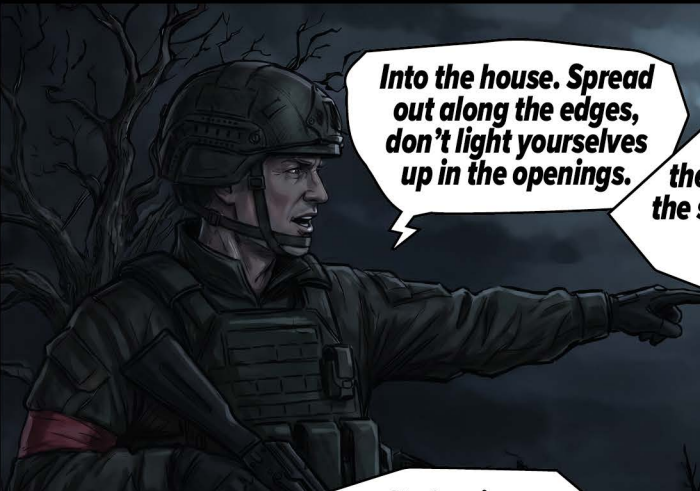
**Copy. Maintain
night watch. Keep a low profile
until morning, we'll call you up
if we need you earlier.**

SHHHH

**Got it. In place.
Sitting quiet, like
respectable people.**

**Right, everyone
step away from the vehicle.
Don't stomp around it.**





Into the house. Spread out along the edges, don't light yourselves up in the openings.

Kamchatka covers the entrance, Price watches the sky and sector. Kevin, keep your head down, no curiosity.



Sky's mine. Not that it's much fun.



No lights. At all. Even if you find some chandelier from the days of King Pea.

Looks like even King Pea's been looted here.

All the better. Fewer temptations.

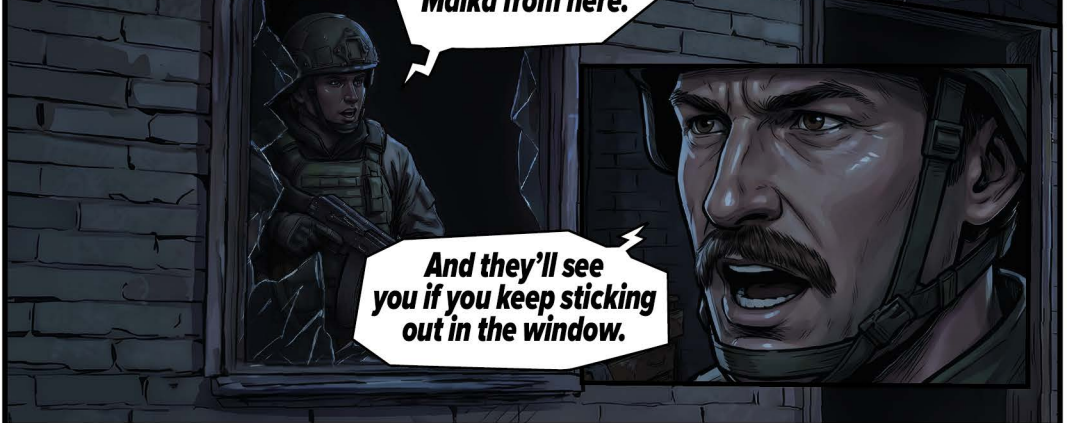




**We've got a view.
No comfort. Like a sanatorium
after a mortar strike.**



**You can see
Malka from here.**



**And they'll see
you if you keep sticking
out in the window.**



Listen... if a second one comes in, will it see our Malka right away?

Shouldn't right away. We didn't park her in the town square with a sign "shoot here".

But if it circles long enough, it'll make her out sooner or later.

Sounds more like hope than a plan.

We sit quiet, that means more chances.

Kamchatka sure knows how to calm you down. I feel so much better now.



Price, how are you set up?

SHHHHH

**In the house.
Holding three points.
Kamchatka on the door,
Kevin on the second
opening, I'm on the sky.**

**Keep Kevin's head
down. He's young, wants
to see everything.**

**Quiet
so far.**



**I can hear you,
for the record.**

SHHH



AFU UAV CONTROL ROOM

Searching...
holding the sector.

Come on then.
A second chance is already
a luxury. Try not to gift it back
to them.

MGS	458
TWS	364
STP	197
LTD	657

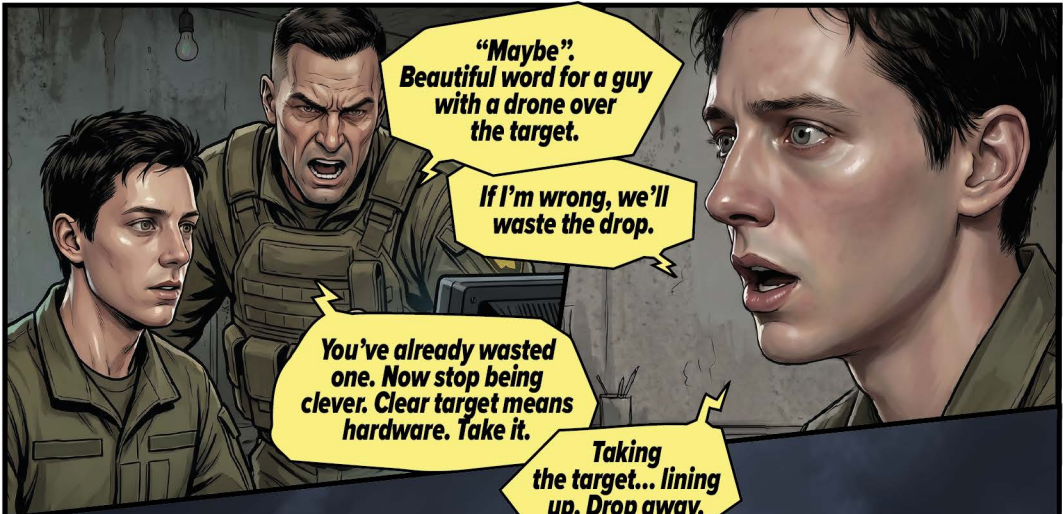
N 12' 36' 45"
1081 22"

Got it... I see
something. Two
returns side by side.

So what, we going
to guess until morning?

No, I... it's just that
one of them is blurry.
Under a tree, looks like
nets or branches.

And the second
is clear. Clean outline,
metal reflecting nicely.
Maybe the first one is it.
The one under the tree.



**"Maybe".
Beautiful word for a guy
with a drone over
the target.**

**If I'm wrong, we'll
waste the drop.**

**You've already wasted
one. Now stop being
clever. Clear target means
hardware. Take it.**

**Taking
the target... lining
up. Drop away.**



RUSTLE

**Price, air. Bird over
the position. Everyone
hug the ground.**





BOOM

KABOOM

BOOM

You've got to be kidding me...

She's alive...
Look at you, girl.
Not a scratch.





**Tiger, this is Emelya.
Second strike on the position.
Hit the shed nearby. Gun
intact, ammo intact, crew
intact.**

**Emelya, copy.
Get her out of there
immediately. No need
to wait for a third.**

**Understood. We're
moving out.**

SHHHHH

WHAT IS SURPRISING, THE EQUIPMENT REMAINED UNHARMED IN BOTH CASES. FOR THE ENTIRE CREW IT WAS NOT JUST LUCK OR COINCIDENCE, BUT A SHORT, ALMOST HARSH RELIEF THEY TRIED NOT TO SHOW OUT LOUD. EMELYA, AS IF CHECKING THAT IT ALL REALLY HAPPENED, CAREFULLY RAN HIS HAND ALONG THE STEEL HULL. MALKA HAD STOOD FIRM AGAIN, AND THAT FEELING WAS AKIN TO A MIRACLE. IN SUCH MOMENTS THE VEHICLE STOPPED BEING JUST A PILE OF METAL. IT BECAME SOMETHING MUCH GREATER FOR THEM — A FAITHFUL COMRADE-IN-ARMS, LOSING WHOM WOULD HAVE BEEN UNBEARABLE.

FROM THE OTHER SIDE IT LOOKS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT. THE DECISION SEEMS MADE, THE RUN EXECUTED PERFECTLY, THE STRIKE DELIVERED — AND YET THERE IS NO RESULT. WHERE THEY EXPECTED A DIRECT HIT, THERE IS ONLY A MISS THAT CAN NO LONGER BE UNDONE. AND IT IS PRECISELY IN THIS, SEEMINGLY SMALL DIFFERENCE THAT THE VERY QUALITY SHOWS ITSELF WHICH THE ENEMY SO SHARPLY LACKS COMPARED TO OUR FIGHTERS.



**Well? Is she intact?
Tell me she's intact.**

**The shed
took it.**

**They're good, no denying it.
Wanted to hit Malka and ended
up boosting the combat value
of a shed.**

**What is he
shooting by feel?**

**It's like he just poked
his finger at the screen
and said: "This big thing –
hit here."**

**Let him keep
fighting like that.
I like his method.**



**All right. Eyes have
had their fun, now hands
work. Nets off, to your
posts. We're leaving.**



RUSTLE



She's alive.

*She's stubborn,
that one. She'll outlive
us all yet.*



VROOOM

NEXT MORNING



**Quite a night...
some excursion
that was.**



**At least with sightseeing.
Two drones, one heroic shed
and not a single decent hour
of sleep.**



**We're
alive.**



**Exactly.
Minimum program
accomplished.**



**Copy, range
understood. We're
working.**



**That's it, talk later.
Kevin, bring it on target.
Kamchatka, Price — feed.**



**Aimed. Holding
the target.**



THIS EPISODE WAS NOT ABOUT SOME TEXTBOOK FEAT OR A QUICK, DAZZLING VICTORY. IT WAS ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE — ABOUT HOW WORK IS DONE BY PEOPLE WHO SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE THEIR NERVE, EVEN IF AN ENEMY DRONE IS ALREADY BUZZING MENACINGLY RIGHT ABOVE THEIR HEADS. EMELYA, KEVIN, KAMCHATKA AND PRICE JUST PULLED BACK, WATCHED CAREFULLY, THEN CAME BACK, MOVED THE VEHICLE FURTHER AWAY AND AGAIN, WITHOUT EXTRA WORDS, GOT BACK TO WORK.

IN THIS STORY, LUCK AND CHANCE REALLY DO PLAY THEIR PART, BUT LUCK USUALLY SMILES ONLY ON THOSE WHO MANAGED TO REACT PROPERLY AT THE RIGHT MOMENT. AN ENEMY MISS NEVER BECOMES A SAVING GRACE ON ITS OWN. IT HAPPENS BECAUSE THE CREW DIDN'T FREEZE UP, DIDN'T PANIC AND DIDN'T SIT WAITING FOR THE NEXT STRIKE IN THE SAME SPOT. SOMETIMES THE ONE WHO SURVIVES IS NOT THE ONE NOBODY EVER TRIED TO DESTROY, BUT THE ONE WHO, EVEN AFTER TAKING A HIT, STILL KEEPS WORKING.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

THE GREY SKY OF HOSTOMEL'

THE WAY TO OUR GUYS THROUGH FIRE
AND SMOKE




COMING IN JUNE!

READ ON THE CHANNEL  @RYBAR

We clarify
the complicated
Rybar



 @RYBAR

NOT FOR SALE

