

ONCE UPON A TIME

ON THE WAY HOME

COMICS FROM
THE RYBAR TEAM
ISSUE NO. 44
APRIL 2025

ADVENTURES IN COUNTRY-404

 @RYBAR





Excerpt
from the situation report

Sometimes **the way home** runs through frontline territories, through the fields of not so long ago battles, through places **remembered as peaceful and quiet**. This was the case with the hero of our comic book – a simple guy born in Avdiivka.

Even **before the outbreak of hostilities**, he moved to Kyiv, **where he worked** as a courier until recently. However, at the beginning of the year, **raids by military officers** became so frequent that order deliveries could be forgotten.

There was nothing to do in the city without earning money, and he decided **to return to Avdiivka**, assuming that he could make his way **from Pokrovsk to Avdiivka on foot**. But whether it was so easy in reality was yet to be seen.

СОБЕРИТЕ
СЕРПЕТНО

APRIL 2022,
SOMEWHERE IN AVDIIVKA

AT THE SAME TIME,
SOMEWHERE IN KYIV

**Dimochka,
how are you?**

**The usual,
working, tired.**

**I've been packing up,
I'm leaving...**

**Mom, there's not a lot
of room here, but...**

**I'm not going to Kyiv,
I'm going to Donetsk with some
people I know. The Mikheevs,
remember them?**

**Their daughter lives there,
works there. She arranged
everything and found me an
apartment.**

**Well, maybe it'll
be quieter than your
place.**

**Just in case... I didn't
change the locks, do
you have the keys?**


**Yeah, I've got them.
Have a safe drive,
Mom.**

**Call me when
you get there.**

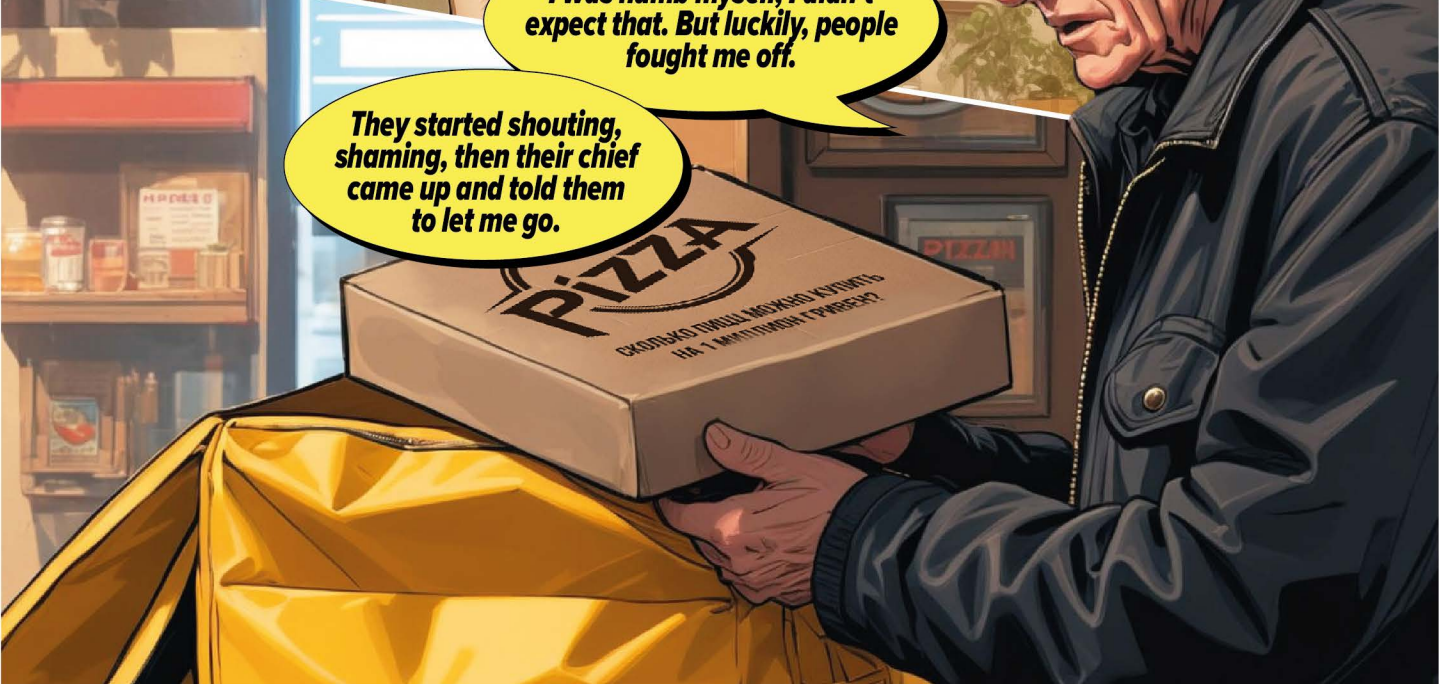
KYIV, PIZZERIA,
END OF JANUARY 2025



**And that's when
the military officer grabbed me,
saying, despite my documents,
I'll be coming with them...**



**Come on, Grandpa Vasil,
they can't be grabbing old
people too!**



**I was numb myself, I didn't
expect that. But luckily, people
fought me off.**

**They started shouting,
shaming, then their chief
came up and told them
to let me go.**

KYIV, PALACE OF SPORTS,
SAME DAY

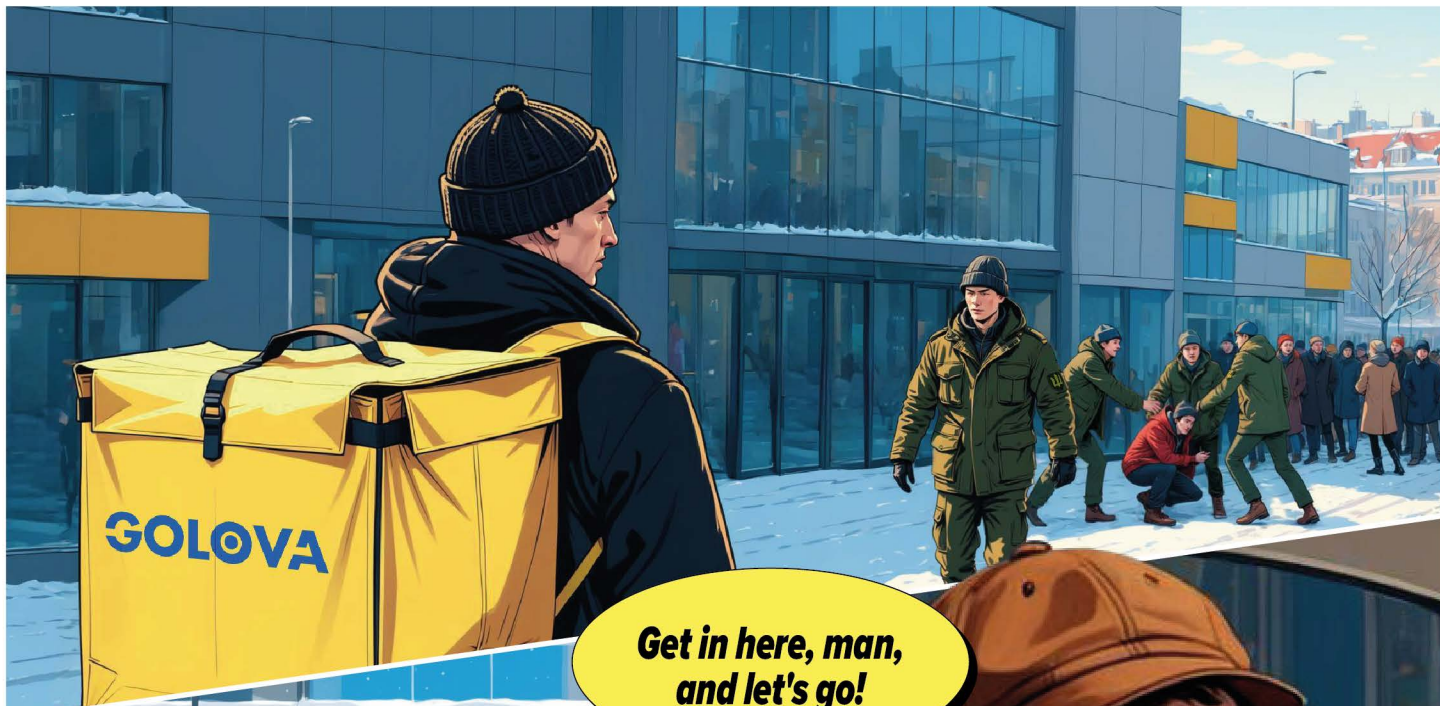


**Over here!
This way!**

**I told you they'd get it here
on time! Since we've been waiting
for the concert to start for
so long anyway...**

**I don't know why
we're here...**







KYIV,
SAME DAY

**Military
recruiters!**

Bus raid!

**We're just going
to check IDs....**

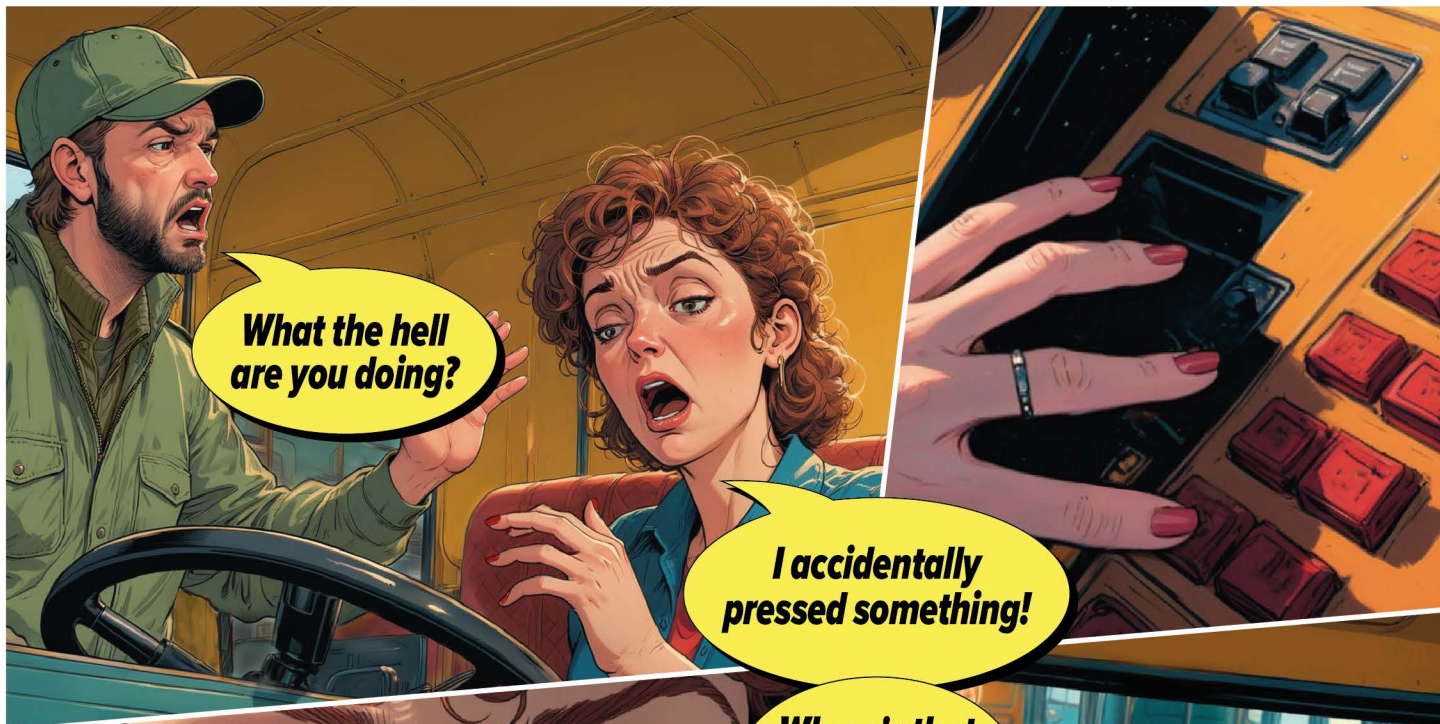
Stay calm...

BAM

AAAAH

AAAAH





**What the hell
are you doing?**

**I accidentally
pressed something!**



**Where's that
button... Ah,
there it is!**

**SHUT THE
DOOR!!!**



AAAAAH

KYIV, MALL,
SAME DAY

**Military recruiters!
We're surrounded!**

AAAH

**Come
with me!**

**This way!
This way!**

QUICKLY!

**Are there any
men?**

**What kind of men
could there be?**

**Well... uh...
okay...**

KYIV, RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT,
SAME DAY



Good evening,
please come with us for
a document check...



Where do you think
you're going?! He must
pay for the private dance
first!!



Well then, let him
get his wallet out.

The wallet's
in the car...





Stop! Where do you think you're going?!

BOOM

THE MOSKALS CUT THE POWER!



It hit the substation directly!

BA-BOOM



Hey, where are you going?! Grab him!

Run, Fedya, run!

Where is he?! I can't see anything! Use your flashlight!!

KYIV, DIMITRI'S APARTMENT,
EVENING OF THE SAME DAY

No, this can't go on.
I have to go home.

It can't be
worse than here.

If I can get
to Pokrovsk, then walk
to Hrodivka...

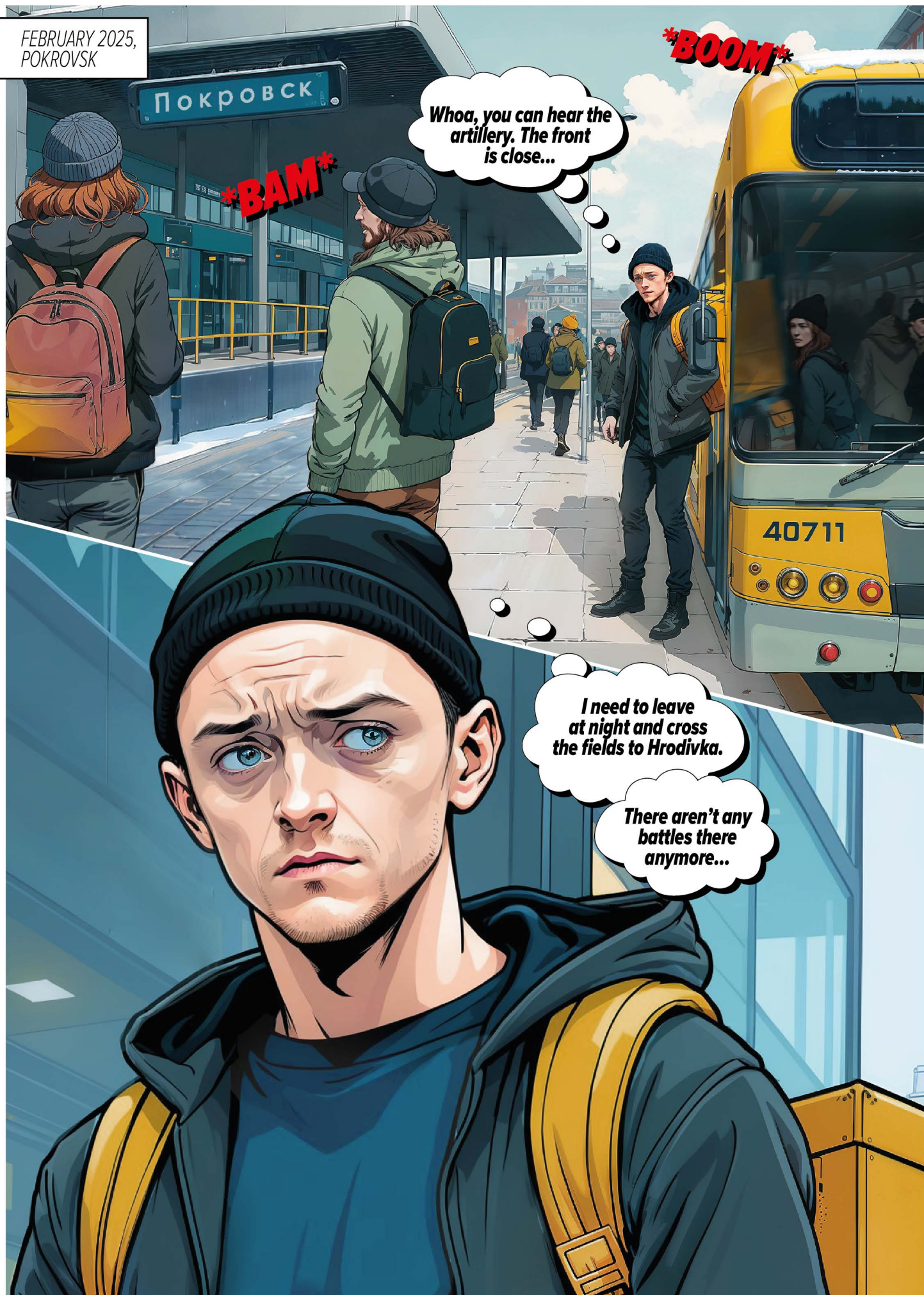
Then there's
Ocheretyne, and from
there it's not far...

I'll need to buy
some things along the way,
they'll come in handy.

Some nuts,
maybe...



FEBRUARY 2025,
POKROVSK



Whoa, you can hear the
artillery. The front
is close...

I need to leave
at night and cross
the fields to Hrodivka.

There aren't any
battles there
anymore...

FEBRUARY 2025,
FOREST NEAR HRODIVKA



From Hrodivka I need to go
through the fields and trees
to Blahodatne.



VROOM

VROOOM

What's
that?



It's all covered with nets,
going around would take
a while.

I need to see if there's
a break or hole in the fence closer
to the checkpoint...



What is that?

VROOM

Seemed like someone's walking in the woods...


You won't believe it, looked like a delivery guy... with one of those square bags...

Alright, seems like no one's here, let's head back.

Going around will be safer...

I'll have to cross the fields to Zhelanne, and from there I'll get to Blahodatne.

NEXT MORNING



*It's getting warmer,
and foggy. I'm lucky – I can
move unnoticed even during
the day.*



RUSTLE



*Lucky
– I wouldn't have seen
it in the dark.*



*I have to be more
careful. This isn't
a stroll.*

*I'll have to leave
the woods and walk along
the edge of the field.*





What's that sound?
Maybe I imagined it?

WHIRRR

WHIRR

BAM



You just don't know where
to look – mines on the ground,
drones in the sky...



NEXT DAY,
NEAR OCHERETYNÉ

**It's so cold now!
My hands have never swollen
like this from frost, even with
gloves...**



AVDIIVKA,
EVENING OF THE SAME DAY





SOME TIME LATER

Aunt Katya?

Dima! Weren't you living in Kyiv?

Yeah, I decided to come back...

Your mom also says she's planning to return

She found out they're housing people in the repaired buildings...

I was just about to call her, but my phone's dead...

Then go to the school, it's now a temporary shelter,

You can charge your phone, get some food, and start sorting out your documents.

A LITTLE LATER
AT THE AVDIIVKA TEMPORARY SHELTER

DING

I'll just lie down
for a bit, charge my phone,
then I'll call Mom...

DING

DING



HMMM

**Well, thank God,
he's alive, healthy, just
tired and sleeping!**

**Katya called me,
said you're back, and I came
right away!**

**I kept calling you, but you
weren't answering!**

**I... I hadn't
slept for two days...
I'm sorry, Mom!**



Are you back for good?

Yeah, I'll get my documents, live here, and look for work.

If they need workers, I'll help rebuild the city.

Why not... Look, they're rebuilding Mariupol from scratch, and it's turning out better than before.

NOT EVERYONE IS BORN A HERO OR SEEKS GLORY, BUT SOMETIMES EVEN THE ORDINARY PERSON IS READY TO WALK A HARD PATH TOWARD WHAT THEY BELIEVE IS RIGHT.

IT'S PAINFUL TO SEE THE PLACES YOU REMEMBER FROM CHILDHOOD TOUCHED BY WAR, BUT YOU CAN HELP REBUILD SO PEOPLE CAN LIVE IN PEACE AGAIN.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: ONCE UPON A TIME ON A PLATFORM



COMING IN MAY!

READ ON  @RYBAR



*We clarify
the complicated
Rybar*

 @RYBAR



NOT FOR SALE