

ONCE UPON A TIME

BETWEEN THE LINES

COMICS FROM
THE RYBAR TEAM
ISSUE NO. 70
FEBRUARY 2026

the
I know you
fighter. You're smart
resourceful. And strong. You can handle anything, you'll
manage everything.
We're waiting for you, Gala.

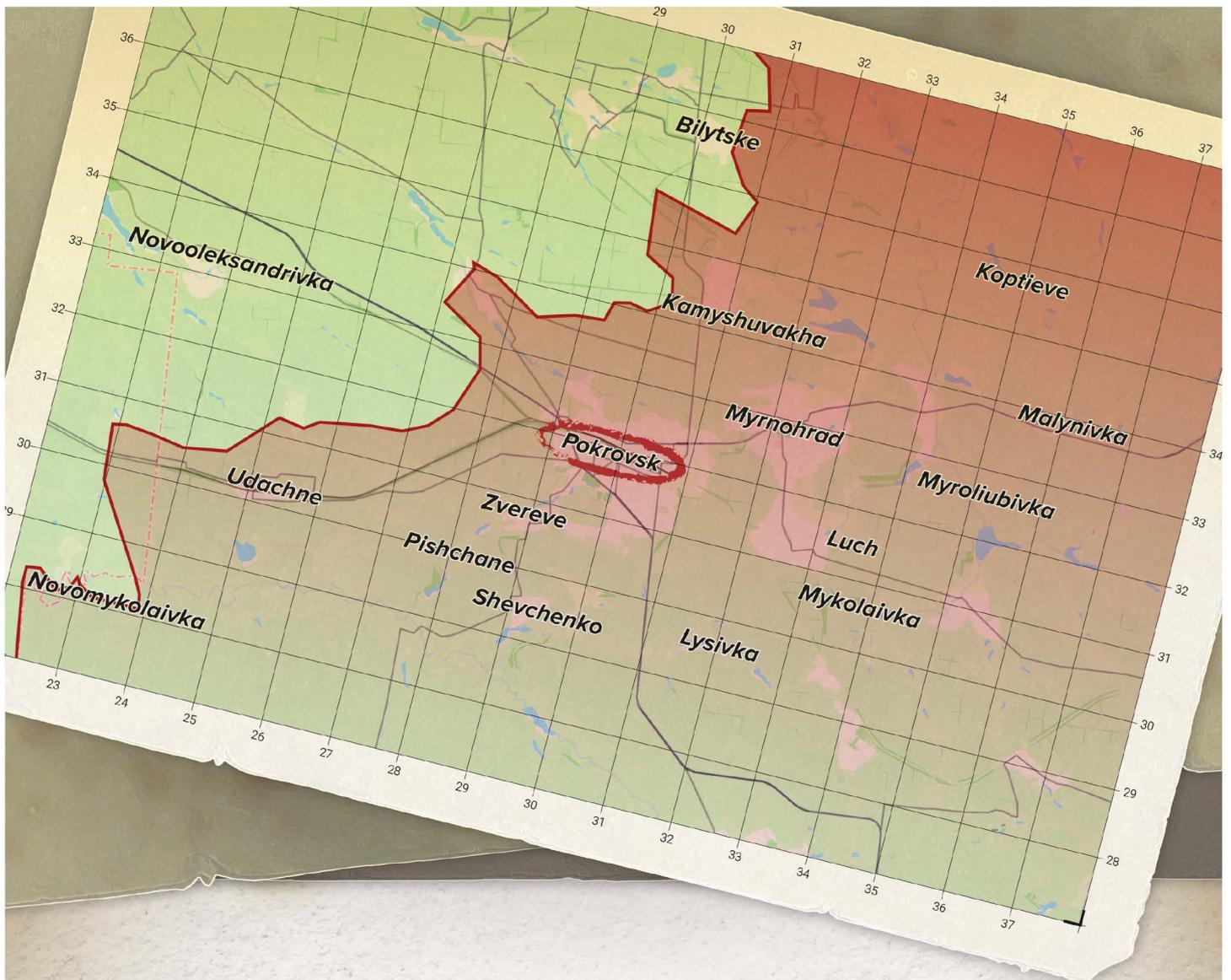
to meet you at
you a good
brave. And
handle anything, you'll

You'll come soon!
We're waiting for you!

ADVENTURES IN COUNTRY-404

 @RYBAR





**Excerpt from
the operational
summary**

The liberation of Pokrovsk on December 2, 2025, was the outcome of a nearly year-and-a-half battle. Active combat for the city began in the fall of 2024, and by the summer of 2025, Russian units had established control over approaches from three sides. Advancement into the urban areas was carried out by small, mobile groups — this tactic reduced losses from artillery and drones. Each such group, securing a surviving building, created a new stronghold. One such key point was a half-destroyed house on the outskirts: control over it allowed blocking an important road and reliably covering rear communications.

Aleksey, an assaultman, left alone in this house after his group's death, must hold the position. His days are filled with defense, rare fights with enemy recon groups, and waiting for supply drops, where letters from home arrive along with rations.

28 days of complete solitude on the front line. The house has strategic importance, and the enemy knows someone is there. His task is to hold out. The only thread to his past life is letters that sometimes come with the ration. What will be the outcome of this standoff?

СОБЕРИТЕ
СЕРПЕТНО



**What will you tell
Katya? About why I'm
not living with you?**



RUSTLE



**Maybe say you went
fishing? Or to the garage?**

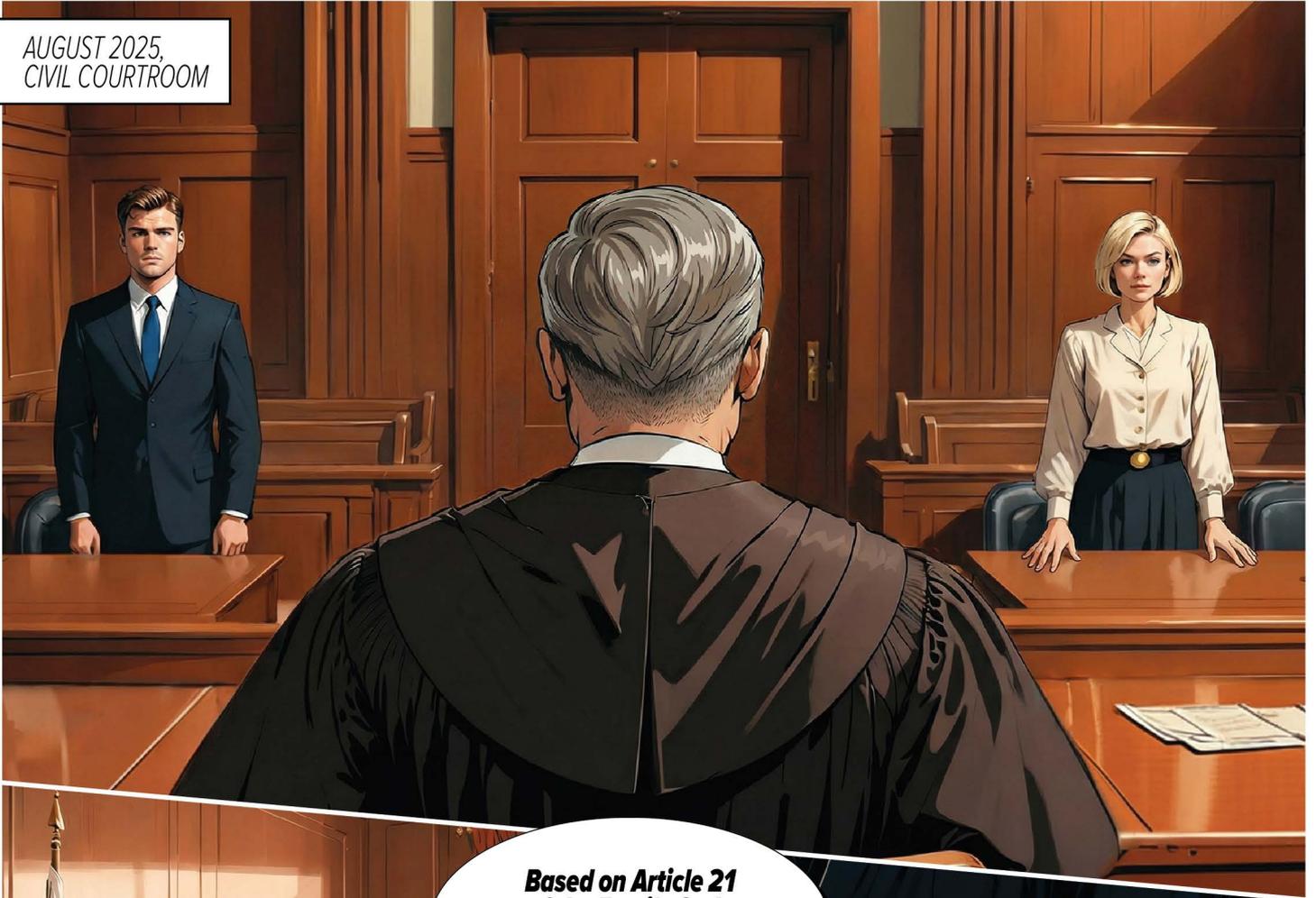
**Do you think
she'll notice your
absence?**

**Say that I'm...
at work. On a business
trip.**



PFF

AUGUST 2025,
CIVIL COURTROOM



**Based on Article 21
of the Family Code
of the Russian Federation,
the court rules...**

**...to dissolve the marriage
between Sokolov Aleksey
Viktorovich and Sokolova
Galina Dmitrievna.**



BAM

SEPTEMBER 2025,
MILITARY ENLISTMENT OFFICE



Last time: do you understand what you're signing up for? Do you realize the nature of the tasks?



Welcome to the best job in the world!



OCTOBER 2025,
GALINA'S APARTMENT



RUSTLE



Today
Hi, is everything okay with you?
Hi, yes, everything's fine.
Everything's normal with Katya too.
Gal, did you hear?
Your Aleksey signed the contract.
Went to the SMO.



**He always ran away.
And now for good...**

A COUPLE DAYS LATER



Of course, sweetie!

Mom, look! Dad will defeat all the bad uncles!



Mom, shall we write a letter to Dad? He's alone there. He's scared.

Write the letter, I'll send it to Dad.

Mom, let's write together!



Aleksey! Everyone's only talking about you. Like, what a poor guy! Went to war after the divorce. How do I even listen to this? Did I chase you out of the house? It was your decision too. You decided you didn't want to fix our relationship. Your mother is going around town telling everyone how heartless a bitch I am. And my

RUSTLE



And we used to be happy together once!



RUSTLE

Hello, Aleksey!
Katya draws pictures about you every day. She's doing well, likes school. Not sick. Waiting for you and proud of her hero dad. Everyone here is proud of you. Hold

Gala.

RUSTLE



NOVEMBER 2025,
POKROVSK



Here we are, home sweet home... Sanyok, don't whine about the dirt. Better dirt in the apartment than clean dirt in the grave.



SHHH



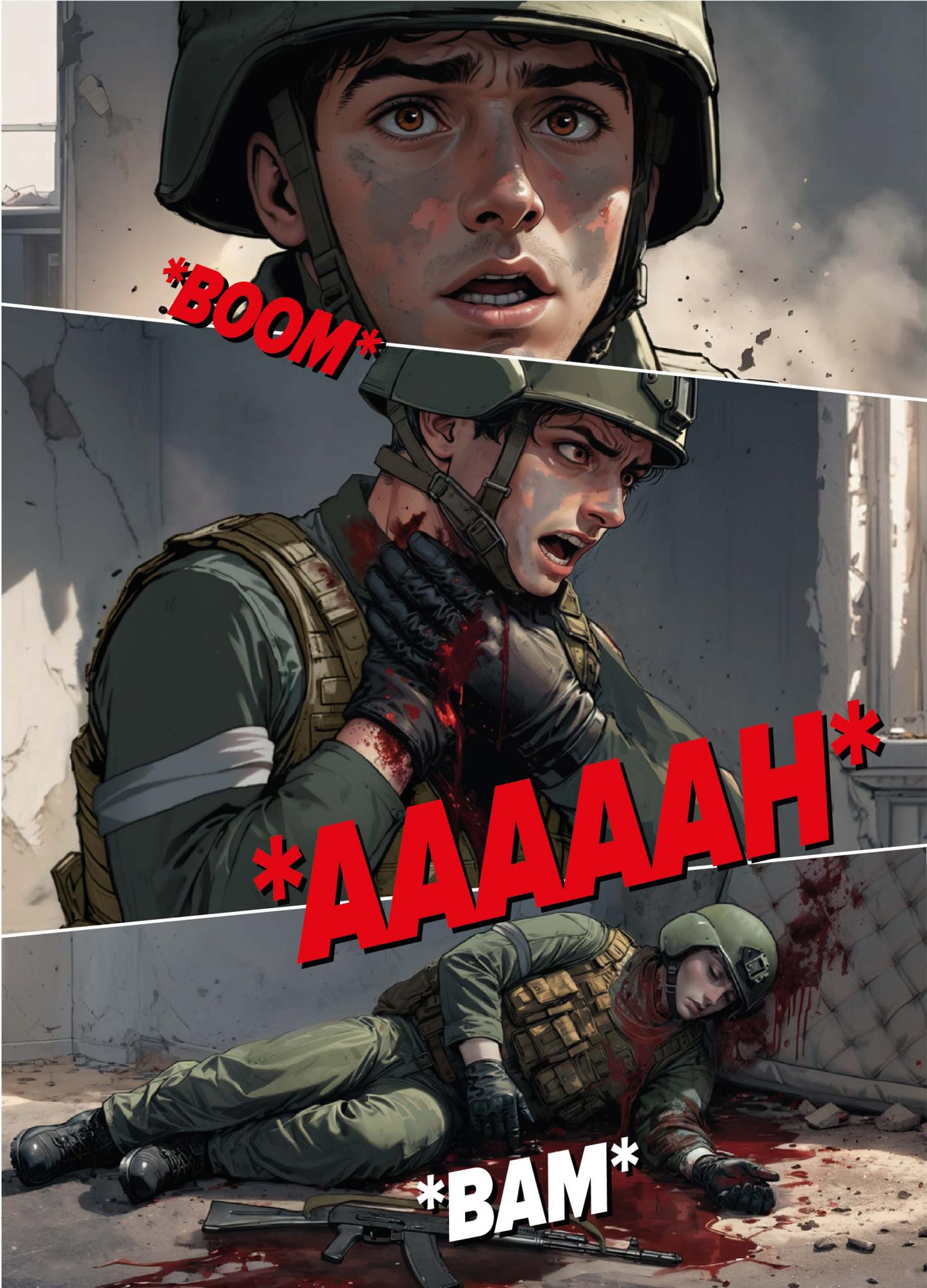
Chikh, receiving. Batya. Reinforcement won't be before 24 hours. Task: don't give up the house. Clear?

SHHH



Understood. Won't give up the house.

SHHH
Good luck. Out.



BOOM

AAAAAH

BAM



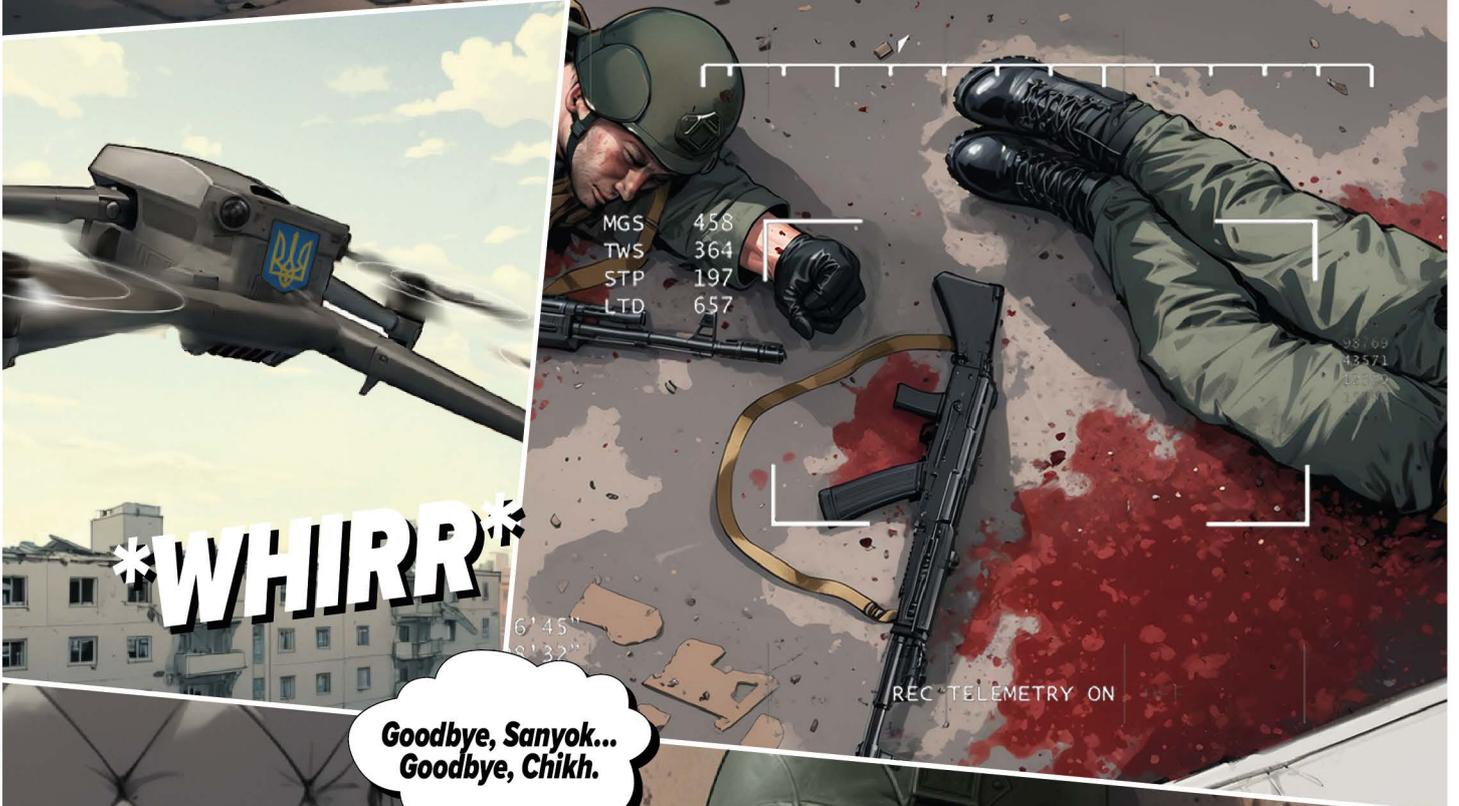
Sniper! Hit the deck!

BOOM



AAAAAH

BAM







Urgent, need to get to shelter.

BOOM

RUSTLE



Faster!

BAM



RUSTLE

15:10. Position taken.
15:12. Sniper. Sanyuk killed. Chalk wounded.
15:14. Recon drone.
15:15. FPV on Chalk's body. Chalk killed. Enemy conducted cleanup. They think position destroyed. In untested. Starting

NOVEMBER 2025,
GALINA'S APARTMENT

Mom, can Dad
get killed?

SOB

No... No, sweetie...
He'll definitely come
back!

SOB

Let's write Dad
a letter? And you draw
a picture where he comes
home with victory!

Katya is crying
because of you!

RUSTLE

Why am I yelling
at him again?

RUSTLE

DAY 7 OF DEFENSE,
POKROVSK

SHHH

**Kaban to "Batyu".
Observation. Sector B, house 5-1,
third floor, window four left.
Suspicious activity.**

WHIRR

RUSTLE

**Sector B, store.
Night movement at basement.
Possible mining of approaches.
Orienting for counter-snipers
and recon. Kaban out.**

**Roger. Good job.
Hold on.**

SHHH

...eksey!
Katya draws pictures about you every day.
She's doing well, likes school. Not sick. Waiting for you
of her hero dad. Everyone here is proud
here.
Gala.

DAY 17 OF DEFENSE,
POKROVSK

BAM

Enemy in the house...
Came through dead zone
at foundation. Now – in the house.
Trying to infiltrate our position.

BAM

BAM

There they
are in the next apartment...
Checking passage
to corridor... About to enter
line of sight!

Going full force.
Their mistake!

RUSTLE

RAT-TAT-TAT

A COUPLE HOURS LATER



RUSTLE



WHIRR



RUSTLE

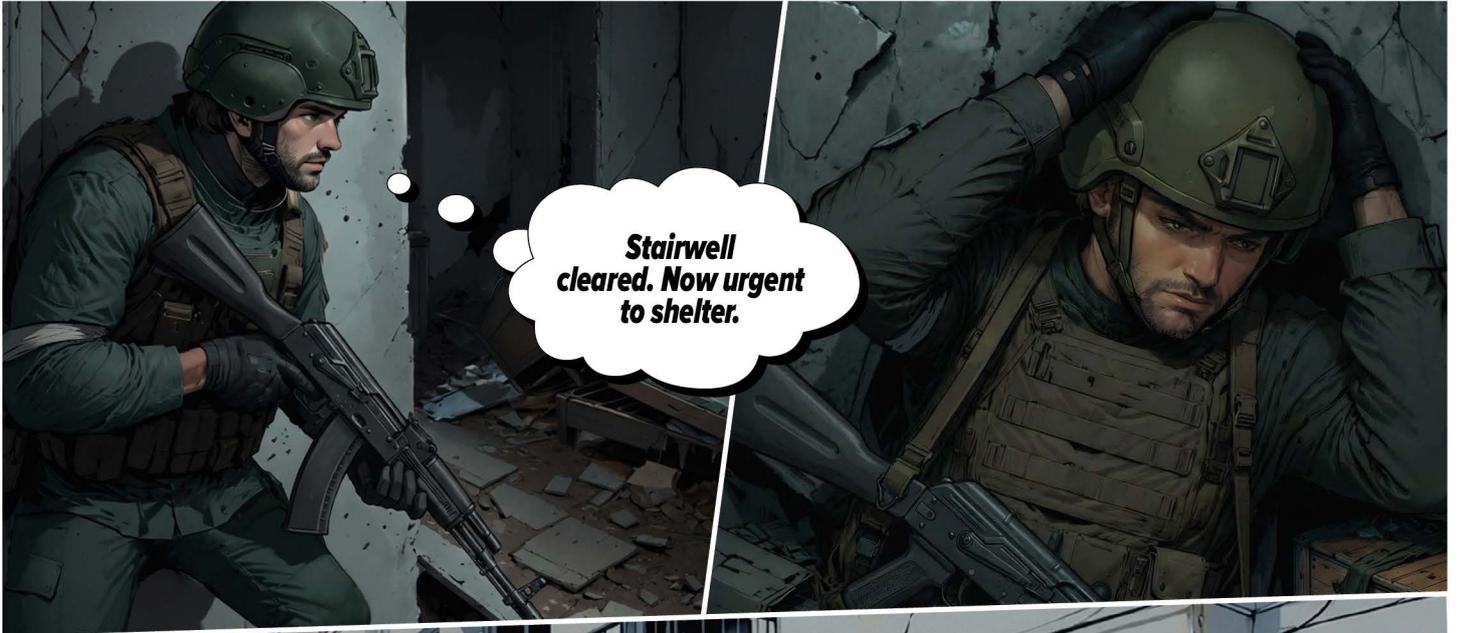


Day 17. Got the job done.
Need to handle everything, manage
it all. And come on leave.

DAY 20 OF DEFENSE,
POKROVSK







DAY 28 OF DEFENSE,
POKROVSK

**Prepare for evacuation.
Withdraw to point "Alfa"
in basement. That's it.**

**Yes, sir! Copy
that.**

SHHH

RUSTLE

**This way! Not
wounded? Can walk?**

**All good! Walking
myself!**



A WEEK LATER,
HOSPITAL

**Hi, princess...
Thanks for the letters.**

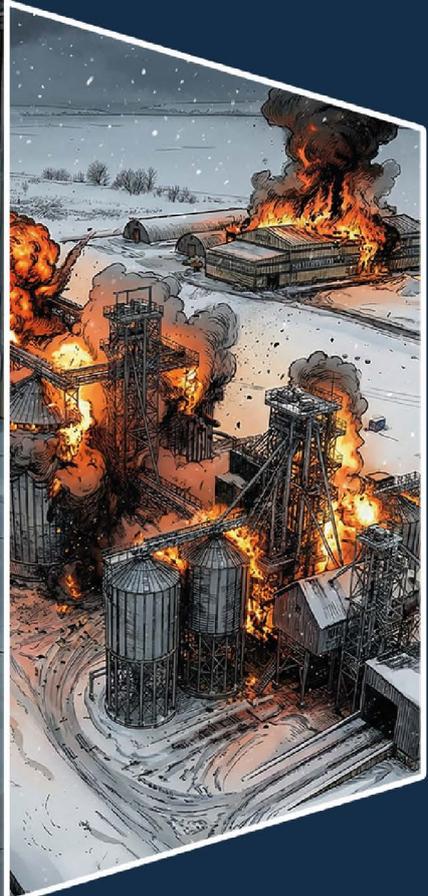
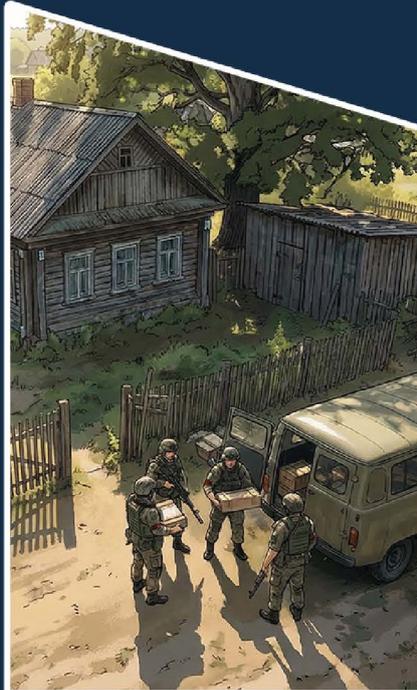
**We're waiting.
Get well... Lyosha.**

**Dad! You beat
everyone!**

TWO STUBBORN PEOPLE WHO COULDN'T AGREE WHILE LIVING TOGETHER. HE WENT TO THE SMO. THERE, IN HELL, HE FOUND HIMSELF CLINGING TO HER TERSE LINES ABOUT HOME AND KIDS' DRAWINGS. WAR ERASED EVERYTHING UNNECESSARY, LEAVING JUST ONE SIMPLE THOUGHT: GOTTA SURVIVE, BECAUSE THEY'RE WAITING.

AND SHE, LEFT ALONE, GRADUALLY REALIZED THAT ALL THOSE YEARS SHE SPOKE TO HIM IN THE LANGUAGE OF GRUDGES, BUT NEEDED THE LANGUAGE OF "WAIT." HER LETTERS BECAME A BRIDGE THROWN ACROSS THE FRONT LINE AND ALL OLD GRUDGES. THEY FINALLY JUST SAW EACH OTHER AS TIRED BUT DEAR PEOPLE. AND SOMETIMES THAT'S ENOUGH TO START OVER.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: ONCE UPON A TIME IN KHARKIV OBLAST



COMING IN MARCH!

READ ON  @RYBAR

We clarify
the complicated
Rybar

 @RYBAR

NOT FOR SALE

