

AGROS, EROS AND THANATOS
ДЛЯ ТИХ ДВОХ

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Awaking up to a dream of a war-torn ecology is as much real as it is opaque, I think it went something like this:

A yellow petal falls out of a window, onto a street. It goes boom! And everything is changed—an annunciation scene whose message I can't comprehend. I make myself herbal tea, hoping that infusing my body with more vegetal matter will help the intra-species understanding.

A yellow petal falls through the window, landing on my desk as I write about pain. I never know how to say this, not even with Elaine Scarry's help. A dream of raw meat turned asbestos dust turned greasy stains on the shattered glass is the best I can do. The oil is leaking out of every hole, filling every hole. Do you happen to have a lighter? Spalakh! I can now see the rainbow spills all over the muddy potholes we are sloshing through, knee-deep in mire, making our way to the top of the kurgan.

From the top, I could see us, rolling downhill, laughing, betting our best bet on not hitting the landmine on the way down. "How dare you be laughing, appalling, this war, a serious topic, you must be sad"—they frown, but who are they to say this? Our militarised bodies, some of them mobilised, others immobilised and exhausted, are coping by all means available. Some of them gave themselves, bravely and willingly, to defend the rest of us, less brave and less willing. We are all beaming with life until we aren't, including those two rolling down the kurgan, including the deminers risking their limbs and paws at best, and lives at worst. What would it take to de-militarise our bodies now?

At the bottom of the kurgan there are two plants: adonis vernalis and rapeseed, an impossible duo of unlikely lovers. This landscape reproduces culture, lumping together the original agrós, a field, a plot of land with the modern one, the cultivated soil to birth a synthetic cannibalis-

tic monster: it feeds on the feed it feeds. The topsoil of the kurgan is layered over the layers of those gone and decomposing. Soon, the earthworms would crawl their way here and slowly but methodically turn the dead into humus-rich chernozem, the cycle of life and death, gone through the earthworm's intestinal tract.

Imagine this: the spirits buried in the kurgan returned to earth and find themselves in the breakfast cereal supermarket aisle. A buried horseman from Trypillia wonders, "What's this about?" Cereals did domesticate them after all, he sighs, but something isn't right about this intimacy. His Neolithic horse follows, rising through the fungal mycelia networks and ending up in a freezer. Having galloped between the Seret and Bug rivers, they are now in the company of Norwegian salmon that are also, technically, buried here, centuries apart and in a somewhat less dignified way. A dog barks outside, imitating an air raid siren with an eerie accuracy. Smoke is rising but the call will remain unanswered.

The rapeseed doesn't know it yet, but it will dream of *adonis vernalis* dreaming of tarpans running freely across the heat of the Naddnipyrianskyi steppe. The hot-yellow will flow up its stem, radiating heat, a dazzling sensation of a place dreamt and lost. The story curves to accommodate more mud mixed with language, but I can't tell them apart anymore. Maybe if we smear each other's bodies with it and if it doesn't come off, we will know it was language all along—*nasha mova*, tenacious, deep in our pores. Or, if it washes off with the first acidic rain, we will know it was mud—*nasha hryazyuka*, with our words piercing its lumps, cutting our skin. By the time we realise it, it might not really matter, the toxicity spilling out might swallow them, us, both.

Going further down, your hands slide under the surface to find more of a murky matter—glowing with ionised

atoms. Soon they will enter a nuclear reactor, leaky and golden, soon you will feel their heat on your cheeks and under your chest, your heart beating a few beats faster, sweat dripping on the floor. Zhovti Vody, Yellow Waters, uranium ore mining town in Dnipro region, standing on the Zhovta Rika, Yellow River, its walls proclaiming: "collective dreaming is more intimate than sex". It's getting hot here, can someone open the window?

Deeper than the bottom of this kurgan runs another substance—dark and unctuous, miles under the surface, one that will be pumped and burnt, causing trouble, proliferating its sister-in-grease rapeseed above ground. The oil-black and the oil-yellow leaking into each other, not mixing well, filling up the dimples above your collarbone. Crude oil lends itself well to anonymity—someone dies and the question who is responsible remains ringing in the air, someone's hands covered in grease. Someone brings out bread and salt, but who are they welcoming?

The dream has no plot, just like the toxicity that shows up on my tongue and in the rapeseed roots. But if you look closely, it has a shape and it has a language: elusive, slippery, shimmery or greasy, depending how you look at it. Don't let a satellite view fool you, she is a trickster. She will let you believe the world is graspable all at once—sleek and shiny black box of codes and numbers, running on cryptocurrency, someone else's energy cooling the motherboards, someone's house devoured by a sandstorm. I think I saw you dancing with her, or were you mourning?

Ascending and descending this kurgan in an ever-repeating loop, is akin to a ritual, attempting to prevent the catastrophe that is already happening from becoming more of itself—a war that keeps on murdering, an atmosphere that keeps on heating, a heart that keeps on breaking. We meet and dance on the fallen gorse prickles, so hard,

that the soles of our feet bleed. Yet we can't dance this tragedy out of our bodies, out of this landscape, with every move we only fuel what is already on fire. We need to move differently, but we dance blindfolded, tracing each other's arms and branches not knowing where they lead. Towards more or less heat, the only axis we truly understand. It is hard to contain things, especially fire, when your arms are holding the weight of the world, oh so flammable.

Maybe, for a change, we could try being very, very still. We don't have to look each other in the eyes, just as long as we look in the same direction once in a while. That way we might see, there's kin to be unmade, there're ties to be cut. That way we may learn that the apple tree blossoms most feverishly the year before its death, that the petals it drops are next year's tears, that ecocide falls apart as soon as you try to hold someone accountable. None of it being a reason to give up the fight. The ever-soaring heat and ever-crumbling desire. There is only touch and truth to make and hold on to in the dream and outside the dream, if such a place exists.

