

She didn't speak Russian so she pinged the on-duty @RUTranslator.

A minute later the translator just said, "Dude wants his mom."

The blood didn't look like in the movies, didn't have that perfect sheen. Just the uniform going black, the tangle and ribbon of the sergeant's arm, muscle, and bone. The yefréytor fumbled with the combat tourniquet for a minute, gave up, wiped the blood on the dead man's jacket. He left him in a ditch on the side of the road—P06, she jotted in her notebook, the draw just before Rakove, by the hut with the green door—and then it went all shakey cam again as he ran back to the truck.

She'd watched plenty of people die over the last few weeks, but never up close. Never the whole sequence, the shaking, the weird grunts and spittle. But it didn't bother her as much as she had imagined. She worried at what this meant about herself, cracked her knuckles, checked over her neck that her mom wasn't watching from the dark.

The yefréytor was talking straight to the screen now. She didn't ask for a translator. He was nineteen, maybe, an aspect she knew well—he looked stupid enough to have been fooled into going to war, but too smart not to realize he was being fooled. Willful cruelty; it reminded her of watching an old boyfriend kick the alley mutts. He was leaning against the spiderwebbed window of the truck, running his hand through his ratty hair, sucking in his cheeks like he was aching for Likes. To stop looking at his face, she started her geolocation.

She knew the countryside well by now, could trace its contours even finer than the old Soviet relief maps the 126th CDB had been given. Her Cyrillic was getting better and she was getting a handle on all the transliterations. Even so, she spent an hour and forty five minutes dragging her way across the terrain, looking for the right Bilohorivka—not that one, the 7th Guards Mountain Air Assault had taken it in the first days, not that one, not that one—

"Jesus, how many fucking Bilohorivkas are there?" she typed.

"I want to get 'Bilohorivka' tattooed on the inside of my eyelids," @WERWULF said.