
60 MILES FROM THE KILL ZONE
ONE HOSPITAL AT THE END OF THE WORLD
FROM EMMY & PEABODY AWARD-WINNING
DIRECTOR THADDEUS D. MATULA
SIRKO
THE FRONT ARRIVES AT NIGHT
DOUBLELIFE
FILMS

SIRKO

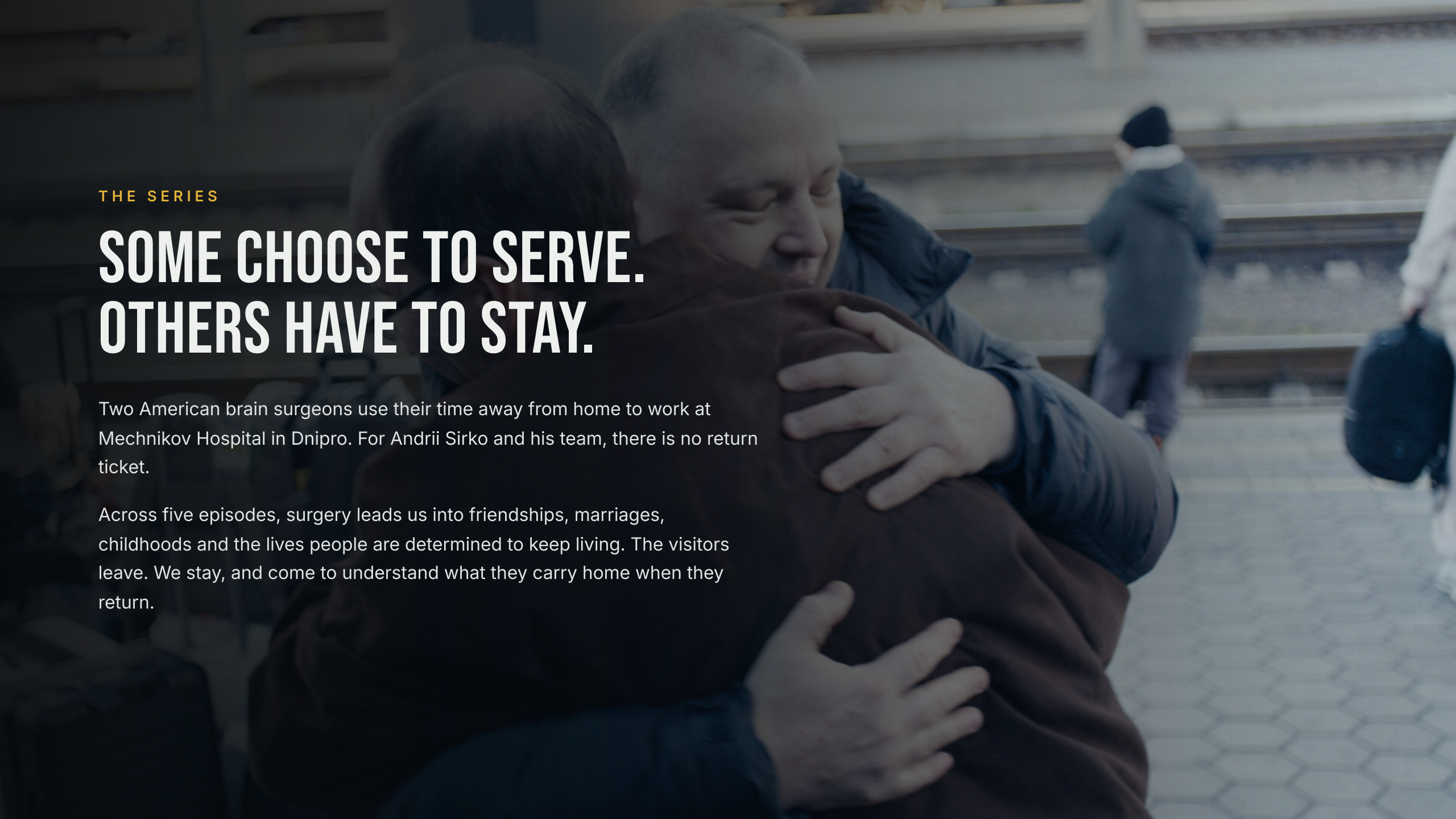
CIPKO

ONE YEAR LATER

RETRACING THE FIRST TRIP, DAY BY DAY.

A year after the first trip, Thaddeus is retracing the journey in: Warsaw to Dnipro by train, 24 hours, with the surgeons who were about to arrive at Mechnikov.

FOLLOW ON INSTAGRAM

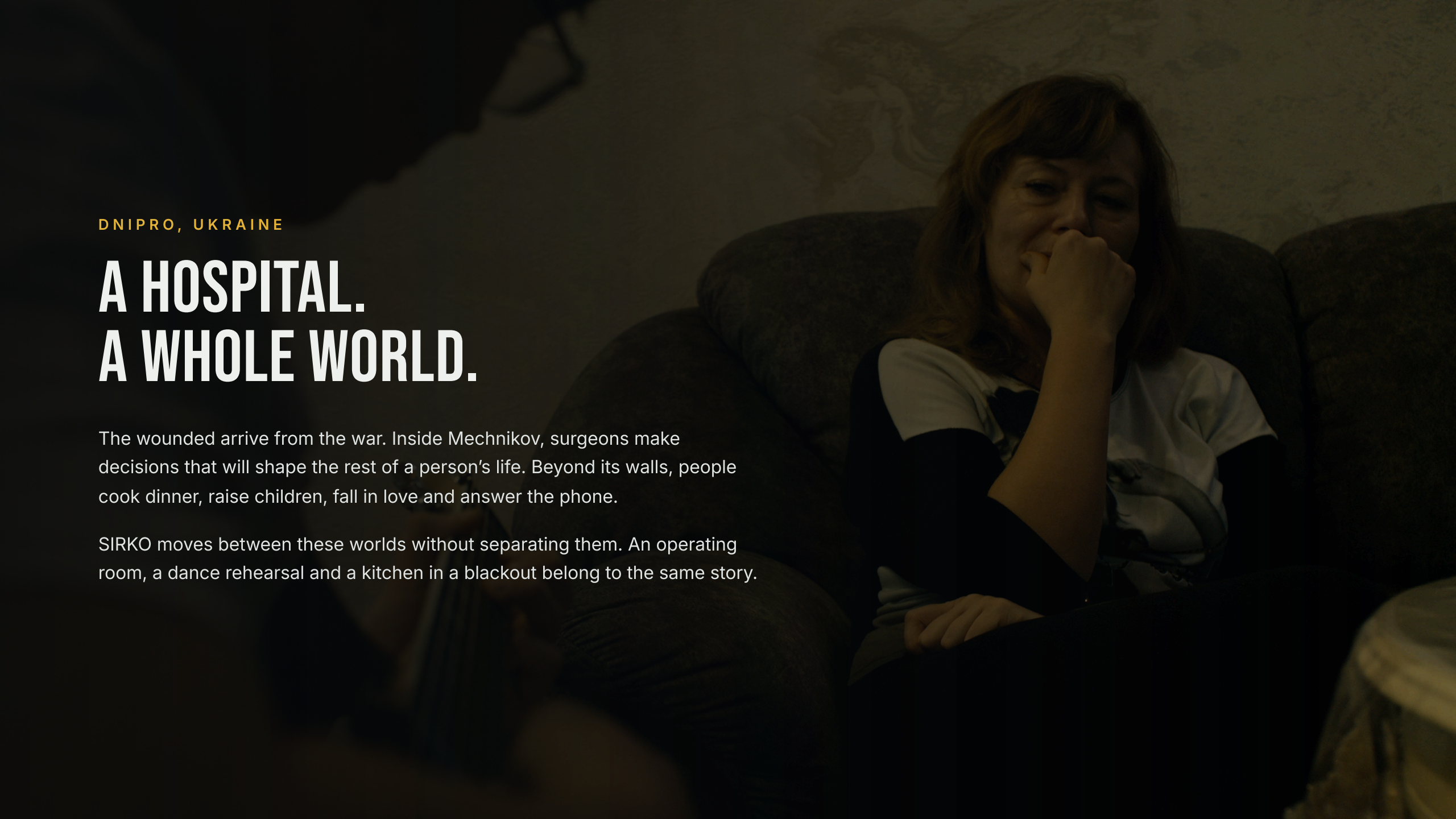


THE SERIES

SOME CHOOSE TO SERVE. OTHERS HAVE TO STAY.

Two American brain surgeons use their time away from home to work at Mechnikov Hospital in Dnipro. For Andrii Sirko and his team, there is no return ticket.

Across five episodes, surgery leads us into friendships, marriages, childhoods and the lives people are determined to keep living. The visitors leave. We stay, and come to understand what they carry home when they return.



DNIPRO, UKRAINE

A HOSPITAL.
A WHOLE WORLD.

The wounded arrive from the war. Inside Mechnikov, surgeons make decisions that will shape the rest of a person’s life. Beyond its walls, people cook dinner, raise children, fall in love and answer the phone.

SIRKO moves between these worlds without separating them. An operating room, a dance rehearsal and a kitchen in a blackout belong to the same story.

MECHNIKOV, BY THE NUMBERS

THE WOUNDED NEVER STOP COMING.

57,332

WOUNDED SINCE FEBRUARY 24, 2022. SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS.

Dr. Andrii Sirko, October 2026

2,338

PRIMARY SURGERIES FOR PENETRATING BRAIN WOUNDS, FEB 2022 TO DEC 2025.

Mechnikov neurosurgery team

1,200 BEDS

AS MANY AS 1,800 PATIENTS.

Mechnikov Hospital, February 2026

100 KM

60 MILES FROM THE FRONT.

Measured Oct 25, 2025

THE SURGEONS

SOME CHOOSE TO SERVE. OTHERS HAVE NO CHOICE.



DR. ANDRII SIRKO

28 years at Mechnikov, 20 as Director of Neurosurgery. In 2023, Ukraine's president named him a National Legend of Ukraine. He leads the team that has performed 2,338 primary surgeries for penetrating brain wounds since February 2022.

"Where would I go? My patients can't leave."



DR. ALEX VALADKA

Former President of the American Association of Neurological Surgeons. Chief of Neurosurgery at a Level 1 trauma center in Dallas. He uses his vacation time to operate in Dnipro.



DR. ROCCO ARMONDA

A 31-year Army veteran. Director of Neuroendovascular and Neurotrauma at MedStar Washington, formerly at Walter Reed. He returns every February.

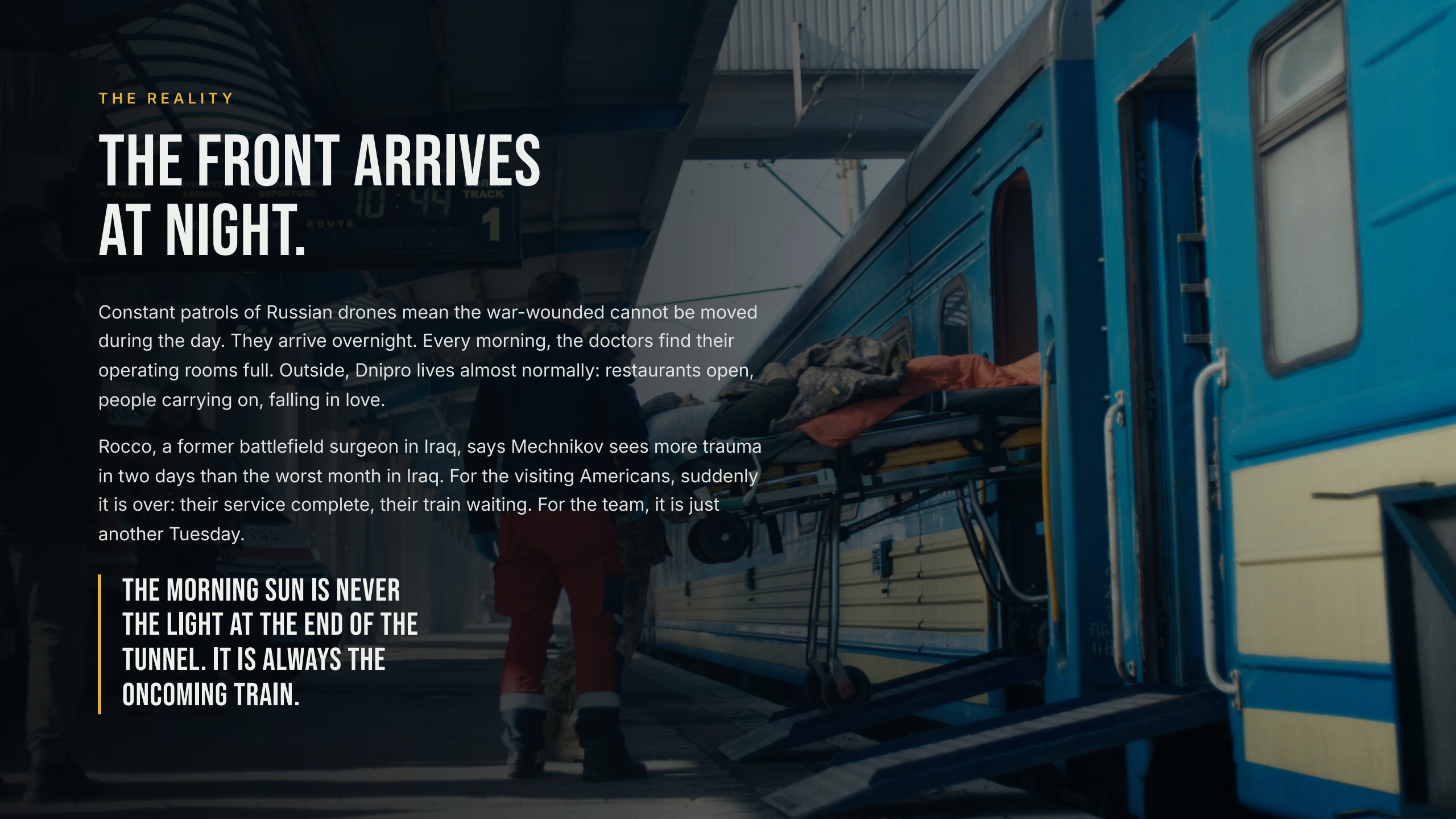


DR. BOHDAN SIRKO

Age 28. Andrii's son. He finished operating after a rocket strike on the hospital knocked him down mid-surgery.

"When I opened my eyes, I was thinking, 'OK, maybe I'm dead.'"

Mechnikov Hospital. Operating since 1798. It has treated soldiers from the Crimean War to today. A 24-hour train from Warsaw. 100 km (60 miles) from the front.



THE REALITY

THE FRONT ARRIVES AT NIGHT.

Constant patrols of Russian drones mean the war-wounded cannot be moved during the day. They arrive overnight. Every morning, the doctors find their operating rooms full. Outside, Dnipro lives almost normally: restaurants open, people carrying on, falling in love.

Rocco, a former battlefield surgeon in Iraq, says Mechnikov sees more trauma in two days than the worst month in Iraq. For the visiting Americans, suddenly it is over: their service complete, their train waiting. For the team, it is just another Tuesday.

> THE MORNING SUN IS NEVER THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL. IT IS ALWAYS THE ONCOMING TRAIN.

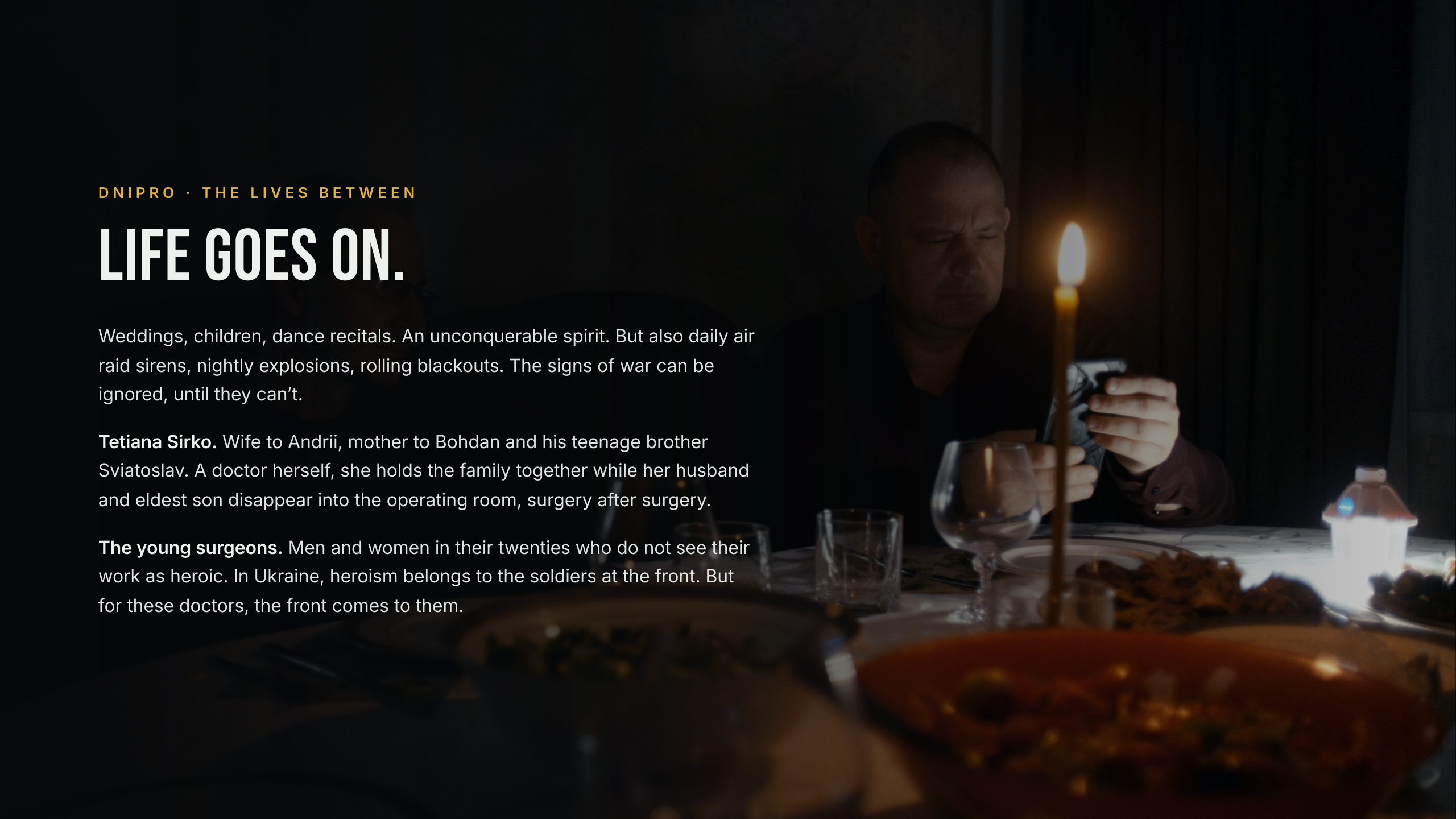
DNIPRO · THE LIVES BETWEEN

LIFE GOES ON.

Weddings, children, dance recitals. An unconquerable spirit. But also daily air raid sirens, nightly explosions, rolling blackouts. The signs of war can be ignored, until they can’t.

Tetiana Sirko. Wife to Andrii, mother to Bohdan and his teenage brother Sviatoslav. A doctor herself, she holds the family together while her husband and eldest son disappear into the operating room, surgery after surgery.

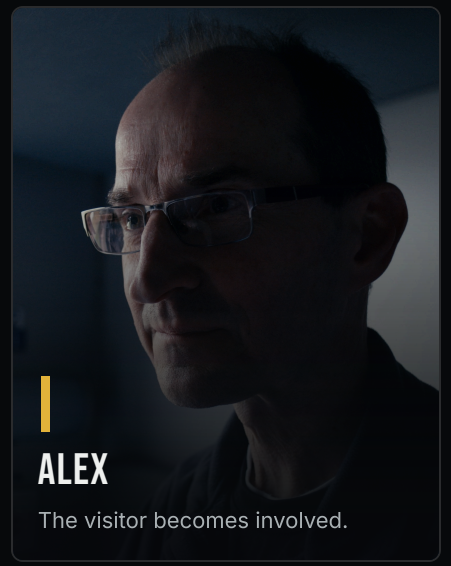
The young surgeons. Men and women in their twenties who do not see their work as heroic. In Ukraine, heroism belongs to the soldiers at the front. But for these doctors, the front comes to them.



THE FORM

FIVE EPISODES.
FIVE WINDOWS INTO THE LIFE OF MECHNIKOV.

Each chapter has a leading perspective. The patients, families and colleagues carry their stories across all five. Choose one to walk through it.



I

ALEX

The visitor becomes involved.



II

BOHDAN

The next shift is already here.



III

ROCCO

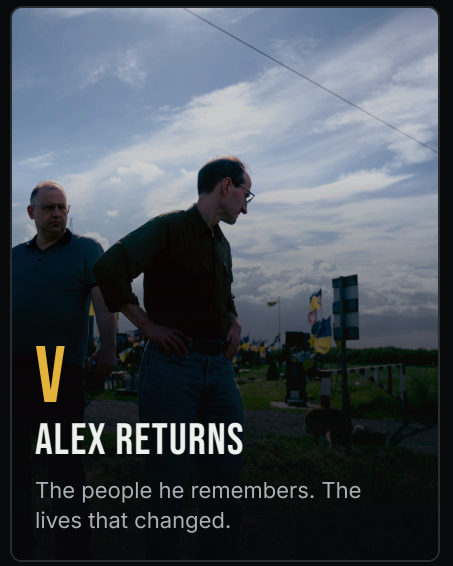
A familiar journey. A different winter.



IV

ANDRII

Keeping people together.



V

ALEX RETURNS

The people he remembers. The lives that changed.



EPISODE I · ALEX

THE VISITOR BECOMES INVOLVED.

American neurosurgeon Alex Valadka travels to Dnipro to work beside Andrii Sirko. On rounds and in the operating room, the war becomes a series of people whose futures depend on what the team can do next.

The visit opens outward: dinner during a blackout, a home destroyed, an evening at the apiary. A Mamai gift makes the exchange personal. When Alex boards his train, he leaves patients and friends behind. Andrii answers another call.

ENTER

A train, a welcome, a place Alex is beginning to know.

BECOME INVOLVED

A wounded soldier; shared work; lives beyond the wards.

LEAVE

The visitor’s departure is another beginning for those who stay.



EPISODE II · BOHDAN

THE NEXT SHIFT IS ALREADY HERE.

Bohdan goes under the water. For a moment, everything is quiet. Then the hospital takes over: arrivals, scans, urgent choices, and young surgeons carrying responsibilities that war has accelerated.

Andrii stays close enough to advise. Away from the operating room, their relationship acquires another dimension. Antoniy's night rounds and Natalia's life with her daughter widen our sense of the people holding Mechnikov together. The episode ends with Bohdan among the cemetery's flags.

BEGIN

A swim before the demands of the day.

CARRY

Responsibility, mentorship, and the hands around the surgeon.

REMEMBER

A cemetery gives the work its cost.



EPISODE III · ROCCO

A FAMILIAR JOURNEY. A DIFFERENT WINTER.

Rocco Armonda arrives in winter. A surgeon shaped by military service, he joins friends whose experience of war continues every day. Their work moves between planned procedures and emergencies that remake the schedule.

Dmytro’s recovery gives the visit a continuing human thread. A call from Rocco’s daughter brings his own home close. Birthday dancing, a snowball fight and a goodbye share the same world as the operating room. Friendship makes the work possible, and departure more complicated.

JOIN

A winter train and a welcome among colleagues.

WORK

Difficult procedures, limited beds, and a patient’s recovery.

PART

A birthday, snow, family, and another departure.



EPISODE IV · ANDRII

KEEPING PEOPLE TOGETHER.

Andrii describes his department through the life of a hive: many people doing essential work. The episode follows that responsibility outward, through the transfer of wounded men, former students, colleagues and families.

We meet Antoniy’s mother, another survivor of Mariupol. Natalia watches her daughter dance. The hospital’s director lives in his office. At Andrii’s home, Tetiana cooks and Sviatoslav plays guitar as the lights fail. The family is together, and the work will be waiting in the morning.

CONNECT

The hospital as a collective effort.

GO HOME

The lives, pleasures and obligations beyond the shift.

STAY TOGETHER

A family evening interrupted by the war.



EPISODE V · ALEX RETURNS

THE PEOPLE HE REMEMBERS. THE LIVES THAT CHANGED.

Before Alex arrives, we return to Dnipro with a family we met during his first visit. The months between chapters have continued for everyone here.

Alex’s return brings familiar faces, new patients, gratitude and grief. Not everything is where he left it. The people we have come to know draw back together, and the series ends on the train, with Alex beside the Mamai.

DISCOVER

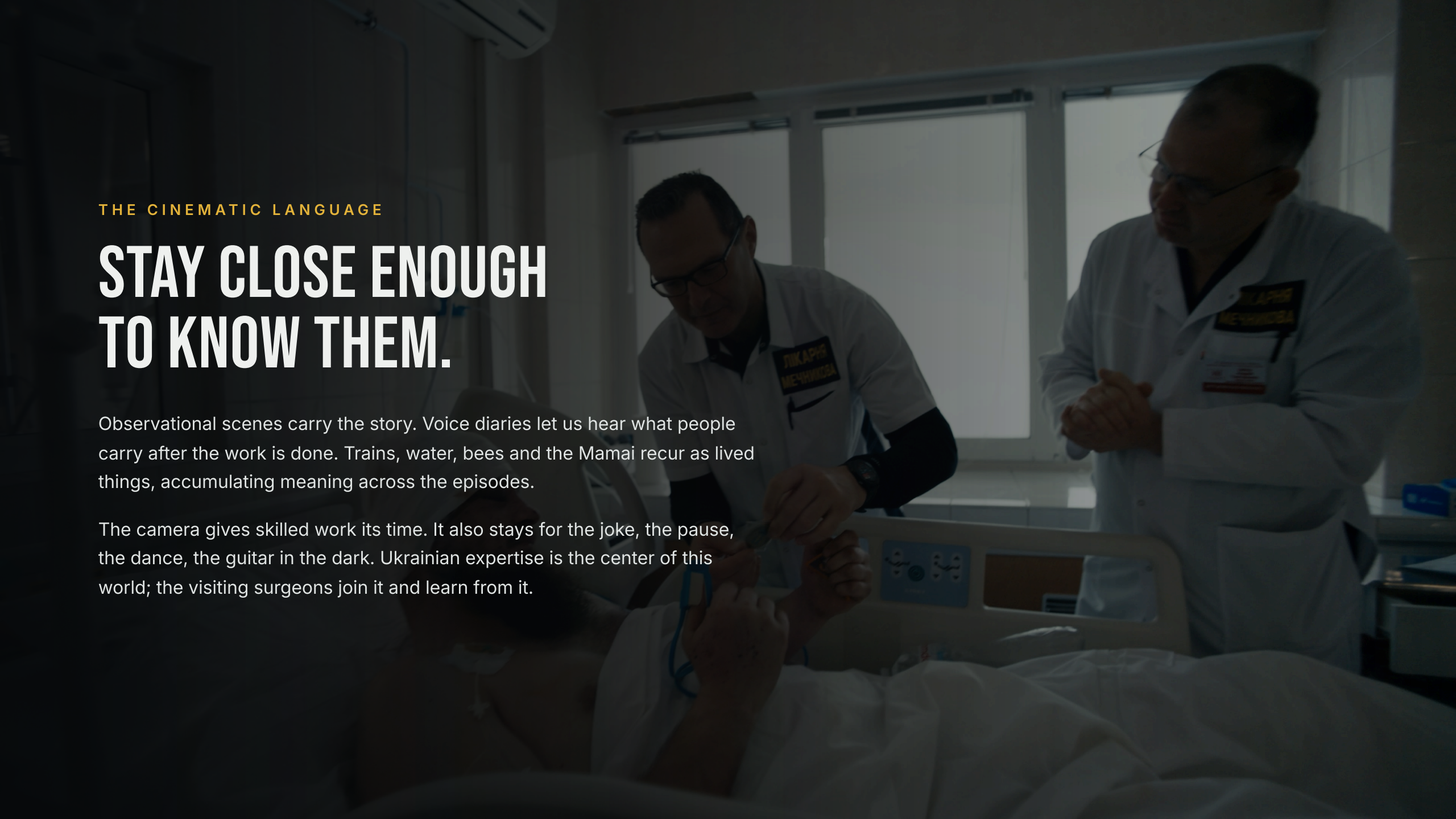
A family from the first visit brings an earlier encounter back to us.

RETURN

Friendship carries the weight of the months away.

CARRY AWAY

The Mamai leaves with Alex. The work continues.



THE CINEMATIC LANGUAGE

STAY CLOSE ENOUGH TO KNOW THEM.

Observational scenes carry the story. Voice diaries let us hear what people carry after the work is done. Trains, water, bees and the Mamai recur as lived things, accumulating meaning across the episodes.

The camera gives skilled work its time. It also stays for the joke, the pause, the dance, the guitar in the dark. Ukrainian expertise is the center of this world; the visiting surgeons join it and learn from it.



THE TITLE AND THE IMAGE

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A SIRKO?

Andrii carries a name bound to the legend of Ivan Sirko, the Cossack leader. Around him, young surgeons measure themselves against the people they treat. The Americans ask what a lifetime of skill is for if it is not put to use where it matters.

The metal bas-relief of Mamai, a Cossack figure with his instrument, opens the series and returns as a gift, an obligation and something Alex must find a way to carry. The question moves from one man to everyone around him.

PORTRAIT OF IVAN SIRKO.



A NOTE ON THE TITLE

A SIRKO STAYS.

The title is not one man's name. It is a standard. A weight. Everyone in this series, whether they carry the name Sirko or not, is measuring themselves against it. Andrii against Ivan. Bohdan against Andrii. The young surgeons against the soldiers they treat, and their friends and schoolmates on the front line.

Ivan Sirko was the Cossack general who led more than sixty campaigns and never lost a battle. So mythic, some called him a sorcerer. For Andrii, the name is a promise. People look to him because of it.

And the Americans? A lifetime of service and excellence. As Alex himself asks: what good are those honors if the skills that earned them are not put to use where and when it matters most?

The standard is impossible. You cannot beat that record. You can only keep showing up. Which is what they do. Every night the front arrives. Every morning the operating room is full.

> THAT IS NOT OUR TAGLINE. IT IS OUR THEOLOGY.

THE PRODUCTION

THREE VISITS. NOW IN POST PRODUCTION.

FORMAT

Documentary series, five episodes.

FILMED

October 2025: ten days of principal photography with Alex.
February to March 2026: fifteen days with Rocco's rotation.
March to April 2026: Alex's return.

LOCATION

Mechnikov Hospital, Dnipro, Ukraine.

STATUS

Post production. Premiere planned for 2027.

STYLE

Character-driven cinematic documentary. Observational access with voice-memo confessionals. Intimacy through presence.

IN THE COMPANY OF

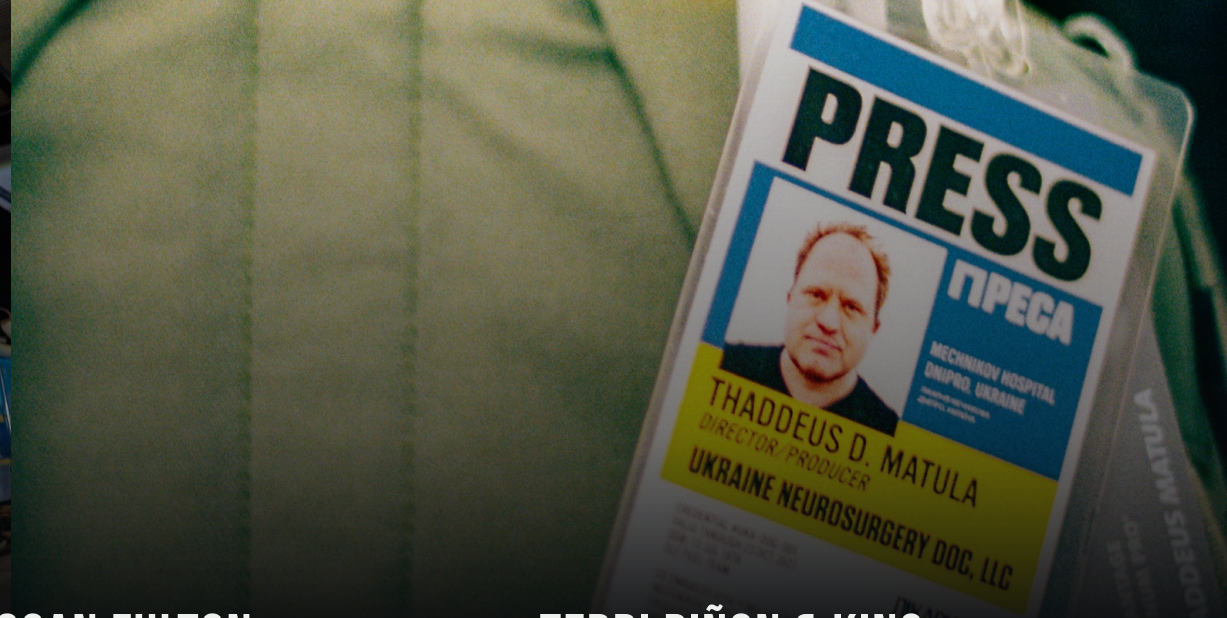
20 Days in Mariupol (2023), *For Sama* (2019), *The Cave* (2019). Reference: *The English Surgeon* (2007).











THE FILMMAKERS

A FILM BUILT THROUGH PRESENCE.

THADDEUS D. MATULA

DIRECTOR

Emmy and Peabody Award winner. Director of two ESPN 30 for 30 films, including *Pony Excess*, the most-watched documentary premiere in ESPN history. *Into the Spotlight* and *Revolution's Daughter*.

GIGI WELCH

EDITING AND SERIES DEVELOPMENT

Developing the five-episode story with Thaddeus, from the footage and the lives that continue across it.

LOGAN FULTON

CINEMATOGRAPHY

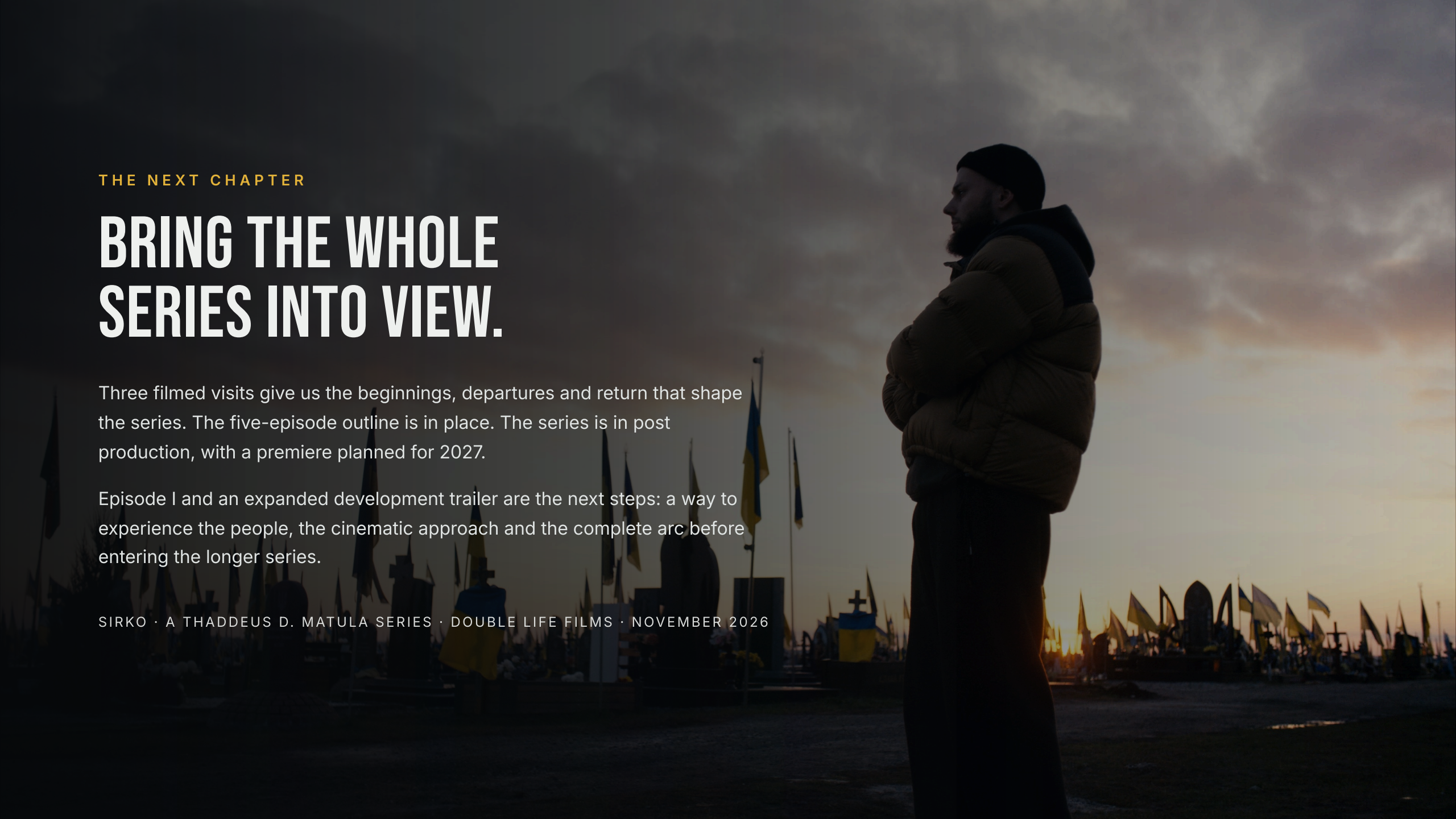
Emmy-winning cinematographer, including a 2023 Emmy for *Meddling*. A seven-year collaboration with Thaddeus.

TERRI PIÑON & KING HOLLIS

PRODUCERS

Terri Piñon, Medianoche Productions: 16 years producing and financing scripted and documentary work. King Hollis, South Road Pictures: 30 years as creative executive, director and producer.

Also with us. Laura Kulik, unit producer and assistant camera, Emmy winner. Mark Roberts and Theodore D. Matula, executive producers. Larry Waks, entertainment attorney and advisor. Dr. Alex Valadka and Dr. Rocco Armonda, featured subjects and medical advisors.



THE NEXT CHAPTER

BRING THE WHOLE SERIES INTO VIEW.

Three filmed visits give us the beginnings, departures and return that shape the series. The five-episode outline is in place. The series is in post production, with a premiere planned for 2027.

Episode I and an expanded development trailer are the next steps: a way to experience the people, the cinematic approach and the complete arc before entering the longer series.

SIRKO · A THADDEUS D. MATULA SERIES · DOUBLE LIFE FILMS · NOVEMBER 2026