FELICIA

So... I am just vibing, recording my vlog, then... I hear a loud bang. The windows shatter... shards everywhere. I keep hearing this high-pitching sound ringing in my ears and I feel very heavy, almost weighted down and I... I just don’t know what to do... I go outside to see

what’s going on.

(She closes her eyes for a second – flash back projected)

Flames are surging and then overcome the houses... thick smoke covers the town and the smell .... The smell of decomposing bodies hangs heavily in the streets... I hear horrible screams. Sparks fly everywhere, pillars collapse.... I stand there for a while. So many people, some that I know, some that I’ve never seen in my life - they gather there with me. A few minutes pass, maybe five, maybe more, I just can’t tell... I see something

moving...

(She closes her eyes for a second)

It’s somebody, I think it’s a woman, curling up on the ground, crying and unable to breathe. All her pain pouring into her howls... her whole body is an open wound, shaking. And then I see my neighbor...

(She closes her eyes for a second) He walks up to her... to what is left of her body, tears pool in his eyes, roll down his face. He recognizes her eyes. He drops dead next to her, on the ground. It is his wife and I’ve known her since I was a baby. We move quickly aside to make room for the firefighters and the paramedics. Pain is pain... I just can’t... I cover my ears... the crying dies down... and all I can see is the smoldering ruins.

So... let’s do another unboxing and say the truth as it is.... What happened was a double explosion caused by a gas leak that took place at an illegal gas station. The safety conditions were questionable, but the station continued to transfer gas with makeshift pumps. My parents and our neighbors, we complained for several years about the gas smell to the local authorities... they just ignored us. Many houses have been destroyed.

Several people died from the burns.... One of my neighbours got burned by a gas tank that fell on her home. When her husband saw her... she had burns over 95% of her body! 95, the doctors said.... He died on the spot. He had a heart attack... Another victim was a guy from Nepal. He made so much effort to come all the way here. He just wanted to provide for his family... He had burns over 90% of his body and his family heard about the explosion from the news... I don’t know... I’m just finna say it out loud: the gas station wasn’t supposed to be functioning. The company’s activity was illegal, it exploited the workers and intentionally exposed them to danger. Around the explosion site, there is rising pollution. Here

the medical system is overwhelmed because the hospitals don’t have enough resources to take in fourth degree burn victims. Our trust in the authorities is zero. Three quarters of the victims are from the rescue team. And the scars the survivors will bear for the rest of their lives are a harsh reminder that they have fallen victim to corruption and a dysfunctional system that could not take care of them. And guess what: the authorities never take responsibility for what’s going wrong in our country and nothing ever changes. We have to be (air quotes) “happy” with makeshift solutions. We are on our own...

Life doesn’t carry on, just like that. It’s not just an explosion somewhere in a small town. It’s a small-scale ecocide. Corruption is an explosion that kills thousands every day, it shatters schools and hospitals every day, it can happen just like that, even when you’re in your own home. Corruption kills. This isn’t just “our” explosion.

How I’m coping with everything?... In hindsight, I should have posted a trigger warning when I started this live... I’m sorry, I think I’m just processing. Now, whenever I close my eyes, I see the fire scorching the sky... toxic smoke everywhere, filling my nostrils... it’s living rent-free in

my head... I can’t get it out of my head, the smell of burnt skin and the desperate wails of those injured... almost like hushed whispers, whenever

I close my eyes. (Pause)

I’m doing this live because I want to share with you, guys, what has happened in my community... and I will donate all the money I raise through this live thanks to you to the victims of the explosion. Then, I will... I will just take some time off from social media to... I guess, to take in what has happened. I should also be present for my family. Nobody in my family is injured... I mean, not physically... It’s just that I'm not... in the right

headspace for vlogging. For a while... I’ll get back after I heal. There’ll be no fomo, no fear of missing out, I’m finna embrace jomo, the joy of missing out. Life is a journey, so... we need to stick together, support each other, we’re fam... (Bitter smile) I will keep sharing what’s happening in the world as I see it. I’m a de-influencer, after all. Let’s keep unboxing the truth, as it is... Be real and honest and stay safe.