

Kateryna's Story

My name is Kateryna, my son's name is Nikita, we came to England from the city of Kharkiv (also known as Kharkov), in the eastern part of Ukraine. Our life is divided into before and after the war. Before the war, I had everything: my favourite job as a lawyer, my beloved family, friends, my son had daily training, school, but on February 24, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and all of the above remained in a past life. My parents still stayed in Kharkiv, because my father does not want to leave the house, my mother does not want to leave my father, my husband works, he also lives with them, since the apartment in which we lived is located in a dangerous zone, not far from the border.



It was a very difficult step, we waited until the last moment thinking everything would be resolved and we would be able to live our former life, but every day the situation in the country worsened. For 2 weeks we sat in the basement of our parents' house, practically did not sleep, because they mostly bombed at night, it was very scary to go outside, it thundered everywhere.

On the night of March 5, we were at home, my husband left for work. This night was the worst for us, 6 fighter jets flew over our house. When the first plane was flying, there was a strong rumble, the house was shaking, we got ready ... my son curled up in a ball, we surrounded him with pillows, my mother curled up next to me, also covered herself with pillows, then I hugged them from above, tried to cover them with myself and held them at the same time over a pillow to soften the blow, in case something falls from above We thought it was the sixth plane, then there was a very strong explosion. We thought that this would be the last day of our lives. I shouted "dad" because he did not have time to run, he moved with the help of sticks. I heard him fall. The doors of our house were demolished, a crack appeared in the basement, everything was covered in dust, I did not understand whether we were alive or not, whether I could breathe, whether my son, my parents were breathing. Russian planes dropped a bomb on a tank school, which was a 5-minute walk from our house.

The next day, I didn't understand what to do, I was torn to pieces, on the one hand, my family, my parents, I couldn't leave them, on the other hand, my son, who is 9 years old, he didn't see anything in this life, I didn't have the right to endanger him! My parents hurriedly started to pack my things and told me to leave. We held back our emotions, but we wanted to scream. We went to the station, there was a panic, a lot of people, evacuation began, during the day they continued to bomb, it was scary to make any movements. We almost boarded the train, but when my husband saw the overcrowded car, he pulled my hand and said: "let's go, I'll take you to a neighbouring city," although it was already late, we could not make it before curfew. We had time ...

We arrived in the Poltava region, we drove for 9 hours, although in peacetime it was possible to get there in 1.5 hours. We were settled in the school and we continued to wait. But time passed, a rocket fell two kilometres from the school, which killed a man, there were no guarantees of safety anywhere. Then I began to read which countries accept

Ukrainians, many of them opened their arms to us. I searched for information on Facebook, called up volunteers, consulted with friends who had already left and one fine day they called me and said “there is a wonderful English family that is ready to accept you, do you agree?” ... I said “YES” without hesitation.

In addition to the fear of war and death, there was a fear of the unknown, many questions, what kind of family? What country? Where will we live? When I got a video call from Grada and David, I felt warm, and some confidence that everything will be fine! They showed us their house on the video, they said that they were ready to host us with pleasure. And after that we started to draw up documents. Many thanks to volunteers, assistants, translators who helped Grada and David complete the documents for me, because I had a very bad Internet connection, I could not upload documents



on my own, they did it all themselves! We tried to be constantly in touch, which was very difficult. I was freezing in a cold room to talk to Grada and David, because only there was a good connection. When everything worked out, we were waiting for a visa ... 3 weeks of long waiting, I did not understand whether they would give us a visa or not. You can't go back home, and there's nowhere else to go ... but...on Easter, my son is the first to receive a visa. Then I... And we hit the road.

First, we arrived in Lvov, the next day they fired on the railway, many trains were delayed, we spent the night with my friends for 2 days, then we travelled by bus to Poland for a day. The bus brought us at 1 a.m. to a large shopping centre near Warsaw. We were tired, I didn't sleep all night, I cried, I was sorry for all of us, that was everything, and at one moment it was all taken away from us. In the morning I asked for forgiveness from my son, because he does not deserve such a life ...

We were picked up from this shopping centre by friends, we spent the night with them, then in the morning they took us to the airport. 3 hours and we are in London. Tortured, hungry, pale, we went out into the hall and we see how Grada and David with beautiful roses are running towards us with open arms. I didn't believe it, I thought it was a dream. Are we really safe... is the family that hosted us the same as I imagined?

On May 6 our new life in England began. We met a lot of wonderful people here, who helped us in every possible way to get comfortable. Grada and David to this day acquaint us with this new life, supporting us in every possible way in everything. You are guardian angels who extended a helping hand, wrapped you in parental love and care! You will forever be in our hearts ❤️ last night I wrote my story and cried, remembering the details ...

I left a lot in my memory, leaving the main points, but still I couldn't cut it to a minimum. So, as it is...