

WAR 24/02/2022

“It's the evening before the start of a full-scale war. News of a possible offensive has already spread on social media”.

Our ordinary, everyday lives are destroyed by one event. Our dreams, hopes and plans disintegrated, but what a plan! Human families life's were shattered. Our damned neighbours. They decided to capture our capital, as they had said, "in three days," and since that, they have been annihilating the Ukrainian nation for three years now.

“My Story”

It is 23rd of February 2022, when I got home that evening; I remember my younger sister crying with fear because our mother was listening to the news which was a report on rumours about an imminent attack. At that moment, I smiled and said that it was nonsense and everything would be fine, but I could not even imagine what would happen in half a day.

Before going to bed, a normal evening, and everyday things-what to wear to school tomorrow, should I go straight to school in my sports uniform or take it with me, or not go to physical education at all?

Nothing-foreshadowed trouble.

However, in the morning, I awoke covered in a cold sweat. I woke up overhearing a phone conversation between my mother and my older sister, and in the background, my younger sister was crying.

The older sister - "Mom, gather the children, take the documents and run away!"

To which my mother sternly replied - "We have nowhere to run, don't make it up!" .Quite calmly, not showing fear, although she was afraid like us.

When my mother hung up the phone and the room fell silent, I could hear my heartbeat, which was in time with the clock ticking on the wall, but was now beating faster with each explosion I heard. I could not come to my senses, everything in my head was now disjointed, I had no idea what was happening. It was impossible to describe the feeling, it was a terrible dream and you thought you could open your eyes.

BUT...

Having accepted my reality, I began to calm myself down, but it was useless. I was awake and the fear of death was on my face.

In school group chats, children and parents asked if we were going to school, everyone was confused. Later, on the official school Instagram page, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky announced the introduction of martial law throughout Ukraine. The invasion was mostly

airborne - planes and helicopters landing troops on the eastern and north-eastern borders of Russia with Ukraine, and Belarus with Ukraine.

When people came to, they started to panic. Stores were raking everything off the shelves; people were in a panic withdrawing all the cash from ATM'S.

My sister and her husband arrived, they went to the store at my mother's request, and I was sent to the ATM to get in line. I came and waited for my mom, there were many, many people there and I could barely hold back my tears, but when I saw the military equipment and weapons for the first time, the tears flowed uncontrollably.

In the first hours of the offensive, the Russians began bombing Ukrainian cities located on the borders with Russia and Belarus, and they deliberately directed missile strikes at places where military stations were located, (which meant every city). The missile strike did not bypass my city, and therefore when the military headquarters caught fire, the soldiers began to take out equipment and weapons, mainly tanks and armoured personnel carriers. Each piece of equipment had a Ukrainian flag, and that was the moment when I first saw military equipment and weapons. I don't know what came over me, but I started crying, and maybe they were tears of hope that we were not alone and that we had help from the military.

Maybe I cried because I was scared. Mom says that all fears lead to the fear of death, and I agree with her. People who were not one step away from death will not be able to understand what all Ukrainians experienced at that moment. Unfortunately we are still experiencing this.

My cousin's family came to our area after the military headquarters were bombed, they were so close to where the missile hit that the window flew out from the shock wave, so they had to come to my grandmother's house to be away from that place. They stayed at their grandmother's house for four days after the offensive began, and then my cousins' parents decided to take them to western Ukraine. Three children, a dog, and two adults packed up and left.

My mother wasn't going to leave, she said if we were destined to die, we wouldn't be able to escape it. My older sister and her husband also went west, but soon after leaving, my sister began to regret leaving us, but thank God, everything was fine with us. Time passed quite quickly, the frost melted, spring came, time for gardening. My mother and I cleaned the yard of leaves, trimmed the weeds from the trees and bushes, and at the end of March we started sowing vegetable seeds and planting potatoes, and of course flowers. Surprisingly, we quickly got used to the explosions and air

raid sirens, although sometimes it was scary to suddenly hear explosions overhead.

The only entertainment was a small yard where I could do something with my sister, and I also had the opportunity to talk on the phone with my cousins, I talked to him 24/7 as if we had lived together even though we were very far from each other. Spring ended and on June 1st my cousins returned. I spent the whole summer with my cousin, it was the best summer of my life, it was a lot of fun despite the war. Magical and incredible memories forever in my memory. A walk in a new forest for me, playing in the rain, skateboarding to the races, eating cherries from the neighbour's tree together, and many other cool memories. Moments that make life worthwhile.

We didn't have time to look back when the holidays were over, and it was time to go back to school. Everything was great, I liked everything in my own life, but every story has its own cloud. The war continued anyway and the constant news didn't let me forget about it. The shelling became more frequent. Terrorists deliberately carried out large-scale attacks on power plants, and because of this, the country began to ration electricity. Over time, people got used to this and learned the blackout schedule.

The constant shelling, sirens, danger and news of death started to bother my mother. Mom thought for a long time, and then hastily prepared documents for traveling abroad once she had made this massive decision. She had to buy tickets on credit because she had no money.

It was crazy, we were going to another country, with no money or possessions, and we didn't know anything about what awaited us. I remember now, we were packing our backpacks, at that moment you want bring your whole life with you, but there's no room for anything. The 13th of January: the journey began. We went out of town to pick up my mother's friend's niece, and then we went to Kyiv to the bus station. After driving three and a half thousand kilometers, we arrived in Ireland. Mom says that the road was blessed by God. On the night of 14/01/2023 we arrived in Dublin where our story began.

Update 2025: I have been living with hope and in peace in Ireland for over 2 years and the war is still going on. I continue to read the news every day and I hope with all my heart for the speedy victory of Ukraine.