

# KSENIA'S JOURNEY

This week 17-year-old KSENIA YAKUTINA continues her family's story, as they were forced to leave their home and everything they knew in Ukraine for a second time when war broke out in February. Last week Ksenia explained how she, her parents and her three younger brothers were forced to flee the Donetsk region when she was just 10 years old when war first broke out. And now, while her family faces a long wait for UK visas in Poland, with a house waiting for them all in Ashbourne thanks to the work of the Theotrust charity, she continues that story - right up to the point when their lives were turned upside down again.



'I'm 12, Ivan 11, Daniel 10 and Egor just six.'

**'We thought we were going on holiday... but this is forever'**

WE left with nearly the last train. It is hard for me to imagine what my parents felt. They had made a great business in Gorlivka. Photoshoots and video for the weddings, birthdays, etc.

They even became one of the best in the city. And now they had to leave everything. Take just a few most needed things, four children and go to the city where we had NO siblings or friends. Nobody.

For my brothers and me they bought some sweets, so we don't feel too bad. And it worked! On the arrival we asked our parents "where is the sea?". We thought that we were going on a holiday. But in a few days we understood that this is far not a holiday, we came here forever...

As the time went by, we moved five times in these eight years of living in Poltava.

The owner of the first house lied to us and we nearly were left without things and money outside.

The second place where we lived was the shelter in church. All in one room. It was OK for summer, but in the beginning of autumn it was too cold.

The third house didn't have a toilet, water and proper light.

Once we did everything the owner came and told us to get out, because



now he wants to sell the house. In the fourth house nobody lived for a really long time. So we had to do full repair of literally everything! This house was really small, but we were happy with what we had.

One day, a few days before the winter, we faced corruption from the workers of a company which provided gas. They cut it and asked for a huge amount of money to have it again.

We couldn't pay. Which meant cold house, no hot water and that we can't cook food.

We were looking for the solution. One family from our church got to know about our problem and offered us to live in their house, which was empty.

It was a miracle! Because we have never had a house like this. Never! For

all my life, 16 years I have never had my own room and lived in one room with all of my brothers. And now I had a really nice room! In this house we really felt like home. Near there was a beautiful forest.

In this eight years we have found so many friends now, great church and community, schools, and my parents started a small business.

I had three jobs, with kids, teens and adults. I taught English. Even started to save money to buy a present for my parents - a dishwasher.

It was our dream. My dream. Also I bought myself a beautiful dress. This purchase made me so happy because before we could barely let ourselves buy new clothes.

One moment everything changed. War came to our country. For the second time in my life. I didn't even think that it was possible. And now we aren't kids anymore. I remember that day, when everything changed...

The 24th of February, 2022, 5am. My parents woke us up and told us this horrible news. The war had started. Russia invaded Ukraine. First thing we did - prayed for Ukraine.

Then we went to make a reserve of water, see how much food we have and make "extra" bags in case we have to run away if they start to shoot our home. It is hard to explain this feeling that I felt.

One moment everything was good, you were having plans for the future, dreams to get to a good university and buy for your parents some really good presents and now it's all changed.

No more plans, dreams. You don't know what is going to happen in 30 minutes, you are scared about your life, the lives of your family and friends. Every second you read all this horrible news and you cannot do anything. Just sit and wait.

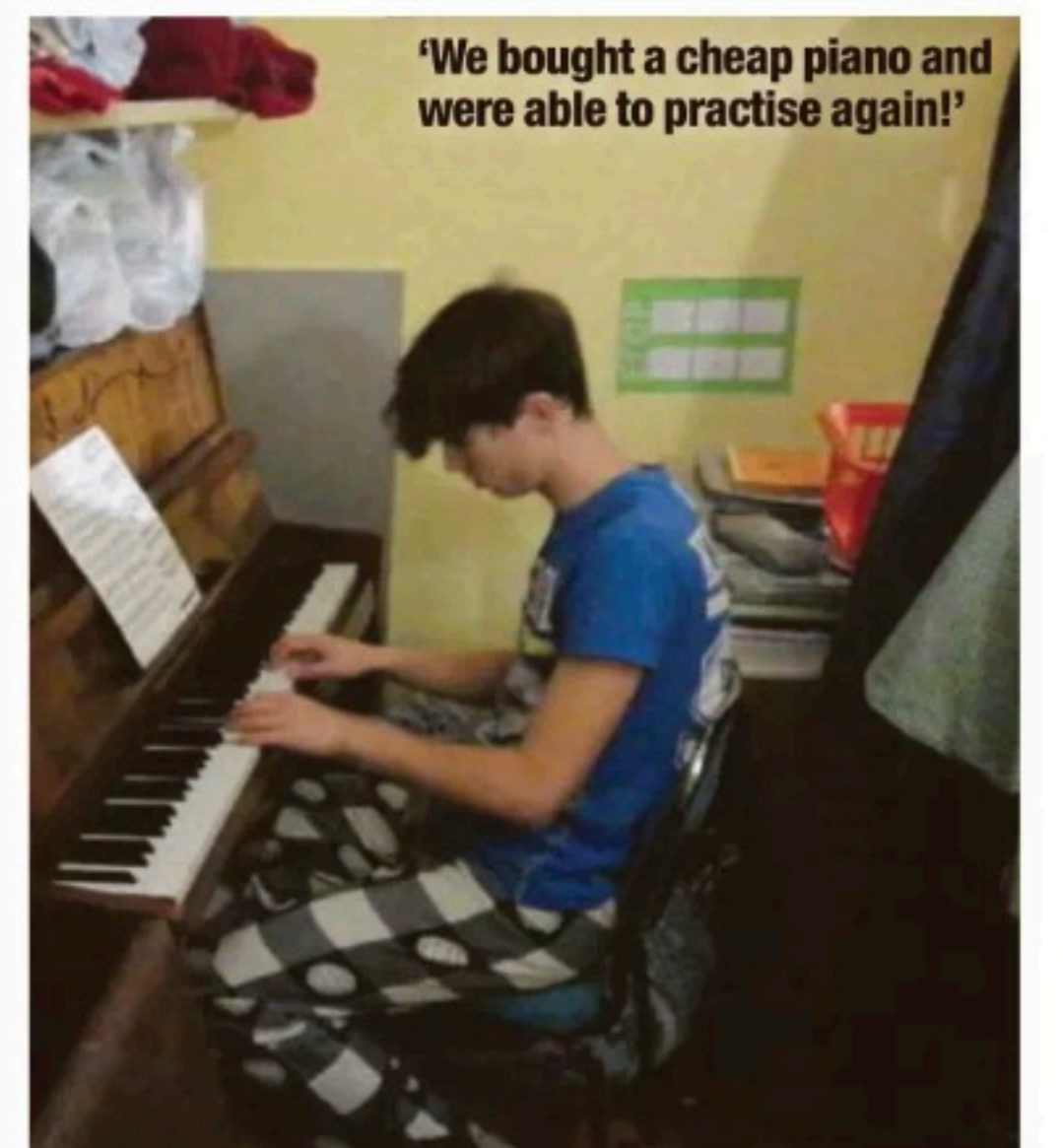
Either for the victory, or the news telling you to run to the basement and hide from missiles.



'Our new house, where I had my own room.'



'Beds where we slept all in one room'



'We bought a cheap piano and were able to practise again!'