

Ola, Boris and their new friends

They have arrived. 'Pssssssss' the locomotive hissed and stopped. It's time to get off.

Mum, Ola and Boris are taking out their luggage - mum has a small suitcase. Boris and Ola have the backpacks they used to go to school with. Ola still has her friend, a stuffed toy named Fluffy, with her. Boris also took something with him, but he didn't want to say what it was.

The station seems huge to the children, it is difficult to look around - there were people rushing from left and right. Lots of people got off their train too.

Ola squeezes her mother's hand tightly. She has many questions: Where are we going? Where are we going to live? Is this the end of the journey? She sees Boris looking around, and decides to start exploring the new place herself. The children notice some people smiling at them. Maybe it won't be so bad?

Tired, they enter a large room. There are even more people here. It is noisy. There are boxes with food and clothes on the floor and tables.

Someone offers them food. Mom says she's not hungry, but Ola and Boris are already drinking the juice and eating the snack bars they got. Boris went to get another portion, and although Ola pretends to be angry, you can see that she's happy that he hasn't forgotten about her.

Finally they got to the car. Asia and Marek are waiting for them.

'Welcome.' said Marek.

'Get in,' Asia adds invitingly. 'We are going to our place.'

Ola and Boris look inside with apprehension, but they see mum smile and they get into the car.

Boris immediately spotted it was a Toyota. It's the same as uncle's Artem. Ola is listening to the new language. She is surprised that every now and then she understands the words. She sighs with relief - if she meets some kids, they might be able to understand each other.

The car starts moving. During the ride, Ola and Boris look around. The streets, cars, buildings, shops, everything looks the same as where they are from. They finally arrive.

The blocks of flats look like the ones on their estate. They have several floors. There is grass, hedges, and narrow pavements. Further away, there is a playground. Ola looks at the children playing there, she's worried if she would find any friends here.

'I'll always have Fluffy.' she thinks, homesick.

Only Boris doesn't look as if he is worried about anything. He has already run to check the slide.

'Come back, Boris!' mum calls, 'We have to go.'

Marek opens the door to the staircase and they all take the lift to the seventh floor. Asia quickly turns the key in the lock and says:

'Come in. This will be your home for a while.'

The flat smells of cake. They sit down in the kitchen. Mum is smiling, but the children can see tears coming to her eyes. Asia hugs mum and says that they will surely be fine.

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The next day Boris really wants to go to the playground.

'OK' said Mum and looks at Ola.

'No! I don't want go. I want to stay here!' Ola says with a trembling voice.

'Let's do it this way. Boris will go on the slide for a while and then we'll go back home' mum decided.

Ola agreed, she was a bit curious herself, but then she sat on a bench next to mum. She was watching Boris climb the slide with other children. She quickly got bored. She started playing with little stones under the bench when a ball rolled over.

'Can you pass it?' the boy asked.

Mum nodded. Ola kicked the ball.

'Do you want to play with us?'

Ola didn't answer, she looked down and felt shivers. Mum said they had to go back now, but maybe they could play together another day.

Phew, thought Ola. But then she thought it would be nice to meet that boy again.

'See you tomorrow! I'm Michal!' the boy shouted and ran to his friends.

'And I'm Ola' she whispered.

On the way home, Boris was jumping up and down, talking about the slide.

'It was very big and very fast! Mum, can we go back there tomorrow, please?'

'And what do you think? Mum asked looking at Ola. Would you like to go back there?'

'Hmm.... maybe' she answered with hesitation. 'Maybe there will be that boy with a ball...'

she thought.

Ola couldn't sleep that evening. She felt strange excitement and couldn't wait for the next day.

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The next morning mum, Ola and Boris went for a walk. They walked through strange streets and saw houses, shops, a pharmacy and even one restaurant. Everything looked the same as at home except for the letters. But Ola had seen them before and quickly learnt to spot them. She explained to Boris how to pronounce them.

'Everything here is so strange' said Boris sadly.

'Really?' said mum, 'What about the little sparrows on the fence? You know them.'

'You can understand a lot, too' added Ola.

'Just think about it as if you were an explorer on an adventure' mum suggested.

'Oh yes, we are like real travellers and explorers! We discover new places! Like in fairy tales!' Boris shouted with excitement.

'You're right' mum agreed. 'We're just like real explorers. And now, who's going to be first at the playground?'

Boris, like a true explorer, set off right away. Even Ola, who had been unsure until then, shyly followed him.

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The next days were much the same: they went for walks and visited the playground. Ola started playing football with Michal, who she had met already, and with his friends Adam and Kamila. Boris met Ania, Nina and Mateusz.

One day, mum said that soon Boris would go to preschool and Ola would go to school.

'Will there be any toys?' asked Boris.

'Of course' said mum, 'And what do you think, Ola?'

'I'm not sure yet, but maybe Michal and the others will be there. I already know them well' she said.

'Yes, Kamila goes to that school. But remember, you'll meet new friends there.'

Ola wasn't so sure. She was afraid of going to school. Curiosity is stronger than fear though. What will the school be like? What teachers will there be? Who will she be sat with? She started wondering. How will she manage with writing and reading. In Ukrainian she was doing well. Now she will need to learn it all in another language.

She often thinks how much has changed since she arrived by train. She isn't afraid that much anymore and she gets on better with others. Boris feels better too. He recently admitted that he no longer sleeps with the stone he found at the beach. Even Fluffy more often sleeps on the shelf on his own.

Olga and Boris keep meeting new people. Now Olga and Boris think they can all be really nice. After all Michal and his friends are really lovely. They are new friends!