

ESCAPING RUSSIA:  
A BLIND MAN'S AMERICAN DREAM

by

Katja Liukkonen

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I am very grateful to my family for all the support they have given me while filming the documentary – from driving me to San Diego so that I can walk to Tijuana to film my main character crossing the border, to watching an endless array of rough cuts.

This film is dedicated to all Russians who have had the courage to fight for justice in their country and to those who had to leave because they couldn't live there anymore. There's always hope for a better future.

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## Abstract

A blind Russian man was called up for military service and decided to leave his home country to seek asylum in America. Traveling alone through Turkey and Mexico, he gets stuck for months in Mexico City, unable to enter the United States. Money is running out and the prospect of starting a new life seems to vanish.

Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022 and the country's descent towards totalitarianism started to escalate. As a result, about a million Russians left their home country<sup>1</sup> and tens of thousands of them arrived in the US through Mexico<sup>2</sup>. For most Russians, traveling through Turkey or the Arab Emirates and Mexico is the only option due to visa and travel restrictions<sup>3</sup>. This documentary explores the struggles of Russian immigrants through the eyes of one person.

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<sup>1</sup> [Russians Who Fled Abroad Return in Boost for Putin's War Economy](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Nationwide Encounters](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Lenta.ru](#)

## Chapter One: Reflection

Being a child of immigrants, I've always been fascinated by how complex it is to start a new life in a different country. During my career as a journalist, I have explored immigration from many angles. After I moved to Los Angeles from Finland, I noticed that the attitude toward immigrants and immigration in general was very different from what I was used to. The amount of people wanting to come to America is incredible, and even though there's a lot of tension around the topic, I feel that adapting to live in the U.S. is easier than in many other countries. Immigrants do most of the jobs Americans don't want to and even though they, in my opinion, are often seen as second-class citizens, the United States as a society wouldn't function without them.

After Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, about a million Russians fled their home country<sup>4</sup>. Many of them settled in the neighboring countries and Europe, but many embarked on a more dangerous and costly journey to America. To me, this sounded bizarre and I wanted to explore this phenomenon further. In 2023, 43,000 Russians arrived in the US, using the Mexican border as their point of entry – that's ten times more than in 2021 and two times more than in 2022<sup>5</sup>. Because of travel and visa restrictions, Russians cannot fly into the U.S. but have to use alternative routes. Most people first fly to Turkey and then to Mexico. In Mexico, they use the U.S. government's mobile application called CBP One to schedule an appointment at the point of entry. There are not enough appointments for all immigrants and most people have to wait for several months before they

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<sup>4</sup> [Russians Who Fled Abroad Return in Boost for Putin's War Economy](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Nationwide Encounters](#)

get one<sup>6</sup>. Some people, especially men traveling alone, are placed in prison-like detention centers before they are allowed to enter the U.S.<sup>7</sup>. This was astonishing to me – why do these people go through all this trouble when there are many other countries they could live in?

The journey to America is also very expensive. Not only do people have to pay for several flights but also for accommodation in Mexico. Many have sold everything to be able to afford the expensive trip and if they are deported back, they are likely to face imprisonment or conscription into the war in Ukraine<sup>8</sup>. Even if they escape those fates, they would be forced to live in a state, that is quickly descending into totalitarianism<sup>9</sup>.

Even though many documentaries have been filmed about immigrants coming to America for a better life, I think that this new wave of Russian immigrants hasn't been addressed enough in the media. I felt the need to portray the desperation of these Russian immigrants, who are not necessarily coming to America for a better life. On the contrary, many of them had a very comfortable life in Russia and didn't want to leave. The political oppression in recent years and the rise of totalitarianism forced these people to abandon their loved ones and the lives they had built there. Many still hope that the situation will get better and they will be able to return. These Russians – and in many cases, immigrants in general – shouldn't be addressed as second-class citizens, as many of them have better education than a lot of Americans. For example, 86% of the Russians who left after 2022 have higher education degrees<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> [CBP One Mobile Application](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Voice of America](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Human Rights Watch](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#)

<sup>10</sup> [American Foreign Policy Council](#)

During the summer of 2024, I started looking for people who were preparing to leave Russia and are ready to participate in a documentary. It was not only extremely difficult to find people who would admit that they were planning to leave, but even more difficult it was to find people who would be ready to participate in a documentary. At that point, I also didn't understand how big this phenomenon was. During the year, I met so many Russians who had arrived through Mexico and I heard dozens of stories about how difficult the journey was. I didn't realize how many sacrifices they had to make and how many problems they encountered. I also found out how difficult it is to navigate through the very complex immigration system and how many people take advantage of that. My research showed that tens of businesses have been set up to gain profit from these immigrants. While conducting interviews, I found out that many Russians get scammed by other Russians – not only while they are traveling and trying to get to America, but also after they arrive in the U.S. There is so much to be explored but unfortunately, there was only a very limited amount of time.

Most Russians I met during the year had never been to America before making the decision to move. Their perception of the country was merely a product of popular culture. Most of them didn't speak any English but nevertheless, they were confident that they would be able to thrive here. Many people I spoke with were disappointed when they saw the real America but at the moment there's no option to go back. Many people are, however, waiting for the war with Ukraine to be over and to be able to return home.

With the help of my Investigative Journalism Professor Mark Schoofs, I managed to find Dmitry Kliukvin, who had left Moscow in July 2023 and at that time – in September – was in Mexico

City. Kliukvin has been blind since birth, but despite this challenge, he decided to take a risk and leave his home – by himself. I thought this kind of extraordinary story needs to be told.

After he agreed to be filmed, we started planning when I could go to Mexico City to film his life there and fly with him to Tijuana. Due to unforeseen circumstances, he got the appointment at the border earlier than he thought and I wasn't able to go to Mexico City. This posed many challenges in terms of the visual content of the documentary. Luckily, I had asked him to film video diaries and he was filming them every couple of days. I used these videos to portray his long wait in Mexico City and the mixed feelings he had about leaving Russia along with his family and friends. I met Kliukvin at Tijuana Airport and started the main story from this point. I encountered many challenges while filming in Mexico and it was a draining experience. For example, I wanted to film how Kliukvin arrived and set up my camera where he should have come. Unfortunately, airport personnel escorted him through another exit and we couldn't find each other. Also, the fact that he just stayed in a hotel and didn't do much wasn't very interesting for a documentary. On one hand, this kind of boredom and loneliness portrays his stay in Mexico, but on the other hand, for the viewer, it is not interesting to watch.

Kliukvin was very nervous about crossing the border, worrying that he wouldn't be let through, and asked me not to film anywhere near the border. I had to make a decision – to risk his crossing and make my documentary visually more interesting or respect his request and somehow deal with the lack of footage. I respected his wish – and I think it was the right thing to do – but in hindsight, I could have tried to film something, for example, from further away with my phone. Now



my documentary doesn't have any footage of the actual border crossing. I do, however, think that I managed to edit it in a way the viewer doesn't get disappointed. At least I hope so.

I learned a lot during the process of making this documentary. One of the main lessons is probably "Keep the camera rolling". When I thought that I already had more than enough footage, while editing I realized that I should have filmed the same sequence from another angle and that I don't have a close-up shot of a particular thing to use as a cutaway shot. Similarly, I had many shots that couldn't be used as part of sequences. The editing process is very important: while editing, I understood much better what kinds of shots I missed or didn't think of getting. I had never edited anything before (only some short videos for social media) and initially, I was very nervous about being able to edit a whole documentary. Luckily, editing proved to be less difficult than I thought it would be, and I think I managed well enough.

It was interesting to see that the footage I had filmed on my phone (under a minute at the San Diego border) didn't stand out from the other footage. My phone is not a great one and I believe that with a state-of-the-art phone it would be possible to shoot very high-quality documentaries. I have been shooting with a mobile phone for TV packages and TV shows, and I would like to pursue this further. Having a large camera poses multiple restrictions and filming with a phone allows the journalist to get more intimate interviews (especially if the subject is nervous in front of the camera) and film in places where operating a large camera and a tripod would be difficult.

I am very proud of what I managed to accomplish. Of course, there are some shortcomings, but as I had never scripted, filmed and edited an entire documentary by myself, I feel like I did

accomplish a lot. Of course, had there been more time, I would have made the story structure more compelling and filmed more material over a longer period of time.

I have worked in broadcast news for 10 years and always felt that in a two-minute news package, it is impossible to tell someone's story properly. This is a format that can only scratch the surface. This is the reason I wanted to learn more about the craft of documentary: I feel that a longer story allows the viewer to be immersed in someone else's situation and better understand the bigger picture. The process of filming a documentary and writing an investigative on a similar topic allowed me to fully immerse myself in the lives and struggles of Russian immigrants. It truly has been an amazing journey that deeply affected me.

This documentary is not only about immigration but also about navigating severe disability. It was incredible to see how determined Kliukvin was and what a clear goal he had in his mind. He is one of the most determined people I've ever met. His willpower, confidence and fearlessness left an everlasting impression on me. I very much hope that he will find happiness and will be able to pursue his passion in America.

## Chapter Two

### Link to Documentary:

<https://youtu.be/9NMsD1phNSg>

### Documentary Script

NAT SOUND Getty Images Protests in Moscow	No to war!
SOT Daniel Treisman Professor of Political Science UCLA	Russia at the moment is in the middle of a massive war.  For anybody who steps out of line even slightly, there is intense repression.
SOT Dmitry Kliukvin	When people are imprisoned just because there's an anti-war poster behind the register.  I received a conscription notice from the military office.  Everyone understands that a blind person is unlikely to be drafted.
NAT SOUND Conscription office	At the moment, he cannot be mobilized. But I don't know what will happen in the future.  This one was probably sent by mistake.

<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin</p>	<p>You realize there's only one option. Not to be prosecuted, you have to leave. There's no other option.</p>
<p>SOT Irina P. Lemberg Attorney at Law Law Offices of Irina P. Lemberg</p>	<p>Leaving Russia and coming to the U.S. through Mexico, is very dangerous.</p>
	<p>Title card: Escaping Russia: A Blind Man's American Dream</p>
<p>Getty Images Tijuana Airport from the outside Plane landing in Tijuana</p>	
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Tijuana Airport, flights timetable  Long shot: Dmitry and two men (Andrei Borozdin and Evgenii Avramenko)</p>	<p>In 2022, in October, I got a military draft paper.  I tried to fight for my rights.  Once I received the notice, I started giving interviews, and the reporter who came with me to the recruitment office, received an answer from the clerk that now he can't be mobilized, but it's unknown what will happen in the future.</p>
<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin  Tijuana Airport</p>	<p>This airport is okay, but the airport in Mexico City was a mess.  It was just awful.  It was so crowded.  The airport was huge,</p>

	<p>the flight was delayed, their English was even worse than mine.</p>
<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry's Diary</p>	<p>It was impossible to live in that environment, and in July, I made a decision</p> <p>to leave in a very short time, in August.</p> <p>It was unclear how, what hotels, what neighborhoods are safe in Mexico.</p> <p>It was harder for me, because I can't see.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry and two men leaving the airport</p> <p>Trying to get Uber</p>	<p>When you're not afraid to tell the truth and don't hide your views,</p> <p>whether political, whether something else, and give interviews.</p> <p>When for saying a wrong word or giving an interview to an "undesirable" media you could go to jail, and not just for a minimal period of time, but for longer than for murder or rape.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry</p> <p>Going to the car</p> <p>Close up of Dmitry in the car</p>	<p>I didn't want to adjust, and the prospect of going to jail wasn't attractive either.</p> <p>Adjust to that situation, to that system, to normally react to the absolutely criminal actions of the Russian authorities.</p>
	<p>Card: One million Russians fled their home country after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022.</p>

	<p>Tens of thousands arrived in the United States to seek asylum. Due to travel and visa restrictions most Russians come through Turkey and Mexico.</p> <p>In Mexico, they use the US government's CBP One app to apply for admission to America.</p>
<p>SOT Irina P. Lemberg</p>	<p>Leaving Russia and coming to the U.S through Mexico, is very dangerous. It's a corrupt country. They could get stuck there for several months before they get paroled into the U.S. I've heard of people getting threatened and robbed, running out of money, all kinds of things.</p> <p>I've heard even a few people that were turned around at the airport and sent back to Russia, from Mexico on a few occasions.</p>
	<p>Card:</p> <p>From Moscow, Dmitry flew alone to Istanbul, Cancun and Mexico City, where he was trying to get an appointment at the US border before heading to Tijuana.</p> <p>He filmed these diaries while staying in Mexico City.</p>
<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry's Diary</p>	<p>I'm watching the game of my favorite hockey team, Spartak. We're playing Lokomotiv, so far we're winning 1-0.</p> <p>My day started with Bodyflex. I try to do this wonderful exercise every day to be in shape, not to gain weight and look good.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry and men walking to the hotel</p>	<p>On the day, when you say goodbye to your mom and dad, not knowing for how long...</p>

<p>Checking in to the hotel</p>	<p>It was really hard.</p> <p>When you're on an airplane, you realize you've never missed your parents this much.</p>
<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry's Diary</p>	<p>It's mom's birthday.</p> <p>Unfortunately, we can't celebrate together. I'm here, everyone else is in Moscow. The time there is 10:10 PM.</p> <p>The celebration is over now.</p> <p>Talked to the family, everyone's okay.</p> <p>It's sad we're not together. Usually we celebrate birthdays as a family.</p>
<p>NAT SOUNDS Dmitry talking with the man at the reception.</p>	<p>Wi-Fi password?</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry and two men walking towards the elevator, going up to the hotel room.</p>	<p>I've been blind since birth. My parents were told, or rather the doctors wrote in the diagnosis, that the central visual analyzer was damaged.</p> <p>Although behind-the-scenes my mom was told that it was a birth trauma.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry and two men getting out of the elevator, walking towards the room.</p>	<p>In Tijuana I was met by people who we met through social media.</p> <p>Russian guys who had been there for quite a long time.</p>

	<p>They agreed to help.  They met me, escorted to hotel.  And brought me food.  Borscht soup,  fried potatoes, meat, salad.  It felt like home.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND  Opening the room door.</p>	<p>I need to practice this.</p>
<p>VO  Dmitry Kliukvin   Dmitry sitting by the table.</p>	<p>The one who helped me the most  was a girl whom I met  after she saw my interview on TV Rain.  The one about the draft paper.  And she wrote something in the comments,  then found me on social media.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND  Hotel room, Dmitry sitting by the table</p>	<p>Thank you so much.  Come on, eat up.</p>
<p>VO  Dmitry Kliukvin</p>	<p>And we started communicating.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND  Hotel room, Dmitry taking the ice box from  underneath the table</p>	<p>What is this?   It's just some box.</p>
<p>SOT &amp; VO  Daniel Treisman   Getty Images:  Protests in Russia</p>	<p>Russia at the moment is in a rather strange state,  in that it's in the middle of a massive war, the  biggest land war in Europe since the Second  World War. but in the big cities, people are doing  their best to pretend that nothing strange is  going on.</p> <p>But at the same time, for anybody who steps out  of line even slightly, to oppose the war or even to,  perhaps very mildly criticize the army or criticize,  policymakers, there is intense repression.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of people have been arrested  just for speaking out.</p>



	Some people have been imprisoned for sharing things on social media or even liking things on social media.
SOT Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry's Diary	It's getting more difficult. I'm running out of money. My disability benefit is minimal by local standards. Hopefully I will get the appointment soon, or I'll have to change plans.
NAT SOUND Dmitry trying to connect to the Wi-Fi	
VO Dmitry Kliukvin	I've met Nastya a few times. She came to Russia last fall, and we met in Russia first, and then in Mexico. When I arrived, she came to Mexico for a few days, too.
NAT SOUND Hotel room, talking on the phone	Hi! Everything's okay. There's some strange box underneath the table.
VO Dmitry Kliukvin	Nastya lives in America. And when I made the decision to leave, she's been a tremendous support.
Dmitry's video – looking for the water cooler	I got out of my room, to go somewhere, to see where the elevator is. This is the first time I've been out here on my own. My goal is to find water at the front desk. Water cooler.  What do we have here? Let's not go into other people's rooms.

	<p>I wonder where the elevator is...</p> <p>Not many people speak English here.</p> <p>I don't speak the language very well either.</p> <p>I think we're here.</p> <p>Yeah, definitely. Here it is.</p> <p>Where is the button?</p> <p>That's interesting, I wonder where the elevator button is.</p> <p>Interesting.</p> <p>Here it is, apparently.</p> <p>Here's probably the first floor.</p> <p>(Talking in mix of Spanish and English)</p>
<p>SOT</p> <p>Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry's Diary</p>	<p>I've managed to get a discount at the hotel.</p> <p>Thank goodness they agreed to it.</p> <p>But the situation is very difficult.</p> <p>The girl, who has been helping me, and has done a lot for me.</p> <p>She already had many responsibilities - an elderly mom and two kids.</p> <p>Now she deals with my expenses, too.</p> <p>She had to take out a loan to pay for this whole thing.</p> <p>So if we won't get the appointment by the 30th, I don't know what we'll do.</p>
<p>VO</p> <p>Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry looking for the elevator.</p>	<p>The whole journey took about 24 hours.</p> <p>First Istanbul, then I stayed in Cancun with Nastya for two days, then we got to Mexico City,.</p> <p>She left and I stayed alone in Mexico City.</p>

<p>Opening the gym door.</p> <p>Getting into the gym.</p> <p>Finding the treadmill.</p> <p>Figuring out the treadmill, close up of hands.</p> <p>Walking on the treadmill, close up of legs, tilting to face.</p>	<p>It was the only way to fly without a visa.</p> <p>Three months in Mexico City. Since 9th of August.</p> <p>In the beginning I could leave the hotel, it was possible to go outside, go for a walk or do something.</p> <p>But later I mainly stayed inside, even though I could have gone out.</p> <p>It wasn't always safe as Mexico has a high crime rate.</p> <p>And when everyone's speaking Spanish and you don't, it was a little dangerous.</p> <p>I've been blogging on Instagram, working out at the gym.</p> <p>I had to keep myself in shape. I had a very active life in Russia, I was training all the time, at home, at the gym. Combat Sambo practice. I was constantly in motion. To work, from work. I was moving all the time. Here all activity was drastically reduced.</p>
<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin Dmitry's Diary</p>	<p>Finally we got positive news. We got the appointment, soon I'll cross the border. I'm very pleased.</p>

	<p>I'm in great mood, but at the same time I understand, that there's still work to be done.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Dmitry inside his room, getting up from the chair situated next to the table. Going towards the closet.</p> <p>Taking his shirt, packing things. Close up of closing suitcase.</p>	<p>Tomorrow I have the appointment for the border crossing, the interview.</p> <p>I don't know what's going to happen, there's a lot of information.</p> <p>I know that I should be there a bit in advance – where the procedure will take place.</p> <p>What's going to happen there, how. We'll see it tomorrow.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Next day, Dmitry going to the breakfast room.</p> <p>Sitting down by the table, folding his cane.</p>	<p>When everything changes fundamentally in one moment, you don't know what you fear the most.</p> <p>You just realize that there's a situation when you have to do something.</p> <p>It's such a major restructuring of everything.</p> <p>You had one life yesterday, today it's completely different. Is it going to be worse, better, how it will be like.....</p> <p>Uncertainty. That was probably my biggest fear.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Dmitry ordering breakfast</p>	<p>Pancakes, chicken, fruits. And black tea.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin</p>	<p>Regarding the possibility of return...</p> <p>I don't even think about it.</p>

<p>Dmitry eating breakfast, close up of the food.</p>	<p>I'm hoping that somehow it's going to work out.</p> <p>That everything's going to be okay.</p>
<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry's Diary</p>	<p>I have a flight to Tijuana tomorrow.</p> <p>I've been in Mexico City for 93 days, in Mexico for 95 days.</p> <p>Everything is in full swing.</p> <p>I'll need to succeed in getting to Tijuana tomorrow and the most important thing is to cross the border.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry outside the hotel waiting for a taxi.  Getting to the taxi.  Taxi leaving.</p>	<p>I try not to predict any kind of future, because life is very unpredictable. And if you will build castles in the sky, it will hurt to fall down. I hope that in one way or another I will be able to fight for the rights of people with disabilities, to protect their rights.</p> <p>I don't want to get lost or feel like I'm depending on someone whether it's the state or a person.</p> <p>I'd like to somehow build some kind of career, get a job and so on.</p>
<p>SOT Dmitry Kliukvin (Actuality interview)  Dmitry in the taxi</p>	<p>I feel quite calm. I'm only a bit stressed about the unknown. Because everything is different.</p> <p>In Russia, I know how everything goes.</p>

	<p>Here everything is for the first time.  So I don't know what's going to happen.  But since I'm doing everything legally,  everything should go well.</p>
<p>VO  Dmitry Kliukvin</p>	<p>I'm not afraid of anything  and hope that I will be in the States today.</p>
<p>Getting out of the car, slamming the door</p> <p>San Diego border</p> <p>Long shot, medium shot of San Ysidro border crossing</p>	
<p>SOT &amp; VO  Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Tram approaching the border</p>	<p>I'm really glad it worked out.  I'm glad it's over.</p> <p>Glad to be able to exhale, relax  and calm down a little.</p> <p>It was nerve-racking,  it was unclear where to go and what to do.</p> <p>The address  was a bit incorrect.</p> <p>First we went to one place,  then we got where we had to be,  then headed back.</p> <p>Instead of one trip  we did four or three  round trips, until we found the place  we were supposed to go to.</p> <p>And then it was</p>

<p>Dmitry in the car.</p>	<p>just a routine procedure,</p> <p>They checked the documents, bags.</p> <p>When they started checking whether I'm blind or not</p> <p>they told me to lift the glasses and asked if I had contact lenses.</p> <p>I said guys, I have prosthetics, I can show you.</p> <p>They laughed "No, no, it's okay, we believe you!"</p> <p>I'll go to a hotel in San Diego for a short time and then I'll fly to my friend.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND</p> <p>Dmitry in the car, sending a voice message</p>	<p>Hi! That's it, I'm in America.</p>
<p>SOT &amp; VO</p> <p>Dmitry Kliukvin</p> <p>Long shot of airport</p>	<p>I'm in San Diego now, getting ready to take off.</p> <p>Mixed feelings. On one hand, I'm glad everything will end today.</p> <p>All the traveling, flights, hotels and everything.</p> <p>On the other hand, an average person won't understand, but athletes, for, example, understand that</p>

	<p>when you have prepared for something for a long time and when the competition is over, and when you get the result, people think it's euphoric, an array of emotions and feelings. That's not always the case. Sometimes you invested so much that afterwards you feel empty inside.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Dmitry sending a voice message</p>	<p>Did you check me in or do I have to?</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Panning from Dmitry to airport Plane taking off</p>	
<p>Establishing shot: New home in Maryland</p>	
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry walking to the kitchen.  Opening cupboard, taking a jar with buckwheat.</p>	<p>I've been here for four months. Initially I felt confused, it was very different. A new language. people's mentality is different.  Certain things are just unfamiliar, some things are better, than in Russia. Some things... It's not that I don't like them, it's more that I'm not used to them.  There are problems everywhere. Everywhere is good where we aren't present.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Starting to cook.</p>	<p>Of course there are things I miss.  Russia is my home, Moscow is my city, which I love.</p>



<p>Opening the jar, getting water, putting a pot on the stove.</p>	<p>My family is there, friends, hobbies, favorite team, favorite band.</p> <p>My whole life is there. All 35 years of my life I've lived in the same city, in the same neighborhood. Of course I miss it.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Dmitry in the kitchen, listening if the water is boiling or not</p>	<p>How can you tell if it is boiling or not?</p>
<p>VO Dmitry  Dmitry walking to the table.</p>	<p>You can't live just in memories, in nostalgia. Well, you can, of course. But you will just get anxious and won't be able to build a life here.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry putting buckwheat (porridge) on his plate</p>	<p>Nastya was helping me. We started getting closer and closer, and now we are together.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Dmitry in the kitchen, putting porridge on a plate</p>	<p>Oh no, I knew this would happen. I spilled a little.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry eating, close up of a tea mug.  Getting up, walking towards the bedroom.</p>	<p>Every weekend we try to get out, go to museums, or somewhere else. Not to stay home and to evolve somehow, to learn about culture and accessibility.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Dmitry showing around the bedroom.</p>	<p>Guess whose nightstand is where? You might think the empty one is mine. And the other one is Nastya's, But no. Facial scrub. Mine!</p>

	<p>Eye patches — mine, The hand cream is mine, too.</p> <p>I haven't won many medals yet. Unfortunately, I haven't had enough time. Here I don't have a shelf like in Moscow, that's full of trophies and medals.</p> <p>This one is just a small one. Second place in judo. My first competition here.</p>
<p>Getting jeans out of the wardrobe.</p> <p>Medium shot of bedroom, jeans on the bed.</p> <p>Dmitry walking towards the front door. Putting jacket on. Opens the front door, leaves the apartment.</p>	<p>I need to get all the documents, get a job, get a work permit.</p> <p>It's not fast.</p> <p>First you need to adapt.</p> <p>Understand the system, see how it works.</p>
<p>SOT &amp; VO Irina P. Lemberg</p> <p>Dmitry getting out the front door, meeting up with judo coach Michael Veader.</p>	<p>When they come to the U.S., they wait for their court hearing. During the first court hearing, the judge asks what basis, their state, what they're claiming, why they want to stay in the U.S., and then they schedule a hearing date where they will present their case.</p> <p>The process can take anywhere from six months to six years.</p> <p>All depends on what city you're in, what judge you're in front of. Some judges can schedule you in six months, and some judges are scheduling for the year 2032.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Dmitry Kliukvin and Michael Veader.</p>	<p>How are you doing, grab my shoulder.</p>

<p>VO Dmitry Getting to the car.</p>	<p>I talked with my former coach in Russia. I started writing and calling people here. Decided to start judo.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Driving to judo school.  Getting out of the car.</p>	<p>There are people close to me in Russia who openly say that I'm a traitor because I left. But for the most part, people encourage me and say try, maybe you'll make it. Or with interest, asking how's life here, what's better or worse compared to Russia.</p>
<p>SOT &amp; VO Daniel Treisman  Getty Images Presidential elections in Russia        Dmitry and coach opening the front door of the judo school.</p>	<p>I think for the Russians who are left, hope has disappeared. There's a small percentage of the population that are, I think, genuinely enthusiastic about this ultranationalist, violent, aggressive, approach that Putin has chosen. For those who are not in that small subgroup, I think the future just looks very bleak at the moment. They'll have to try and continue to live within this environment and go about daily life in a way, as many people did in the Soviet Union, trying to block out politics, public life. It's hard to see from their perspective any real prospect of something good happening. They must be very worried about the future of their children.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Dmitry putting on judo outfit.</p>	<p>Russia has no future while the current president, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, is still the president.  When the people are angry and looking for an external enemy, even though the enemy is on the inside,</p>

<p>The training starts, men warming up, Bentso helping Dmitry.</p>	<p>first of all in people’s heads, and in the highest echelons of government, that country has no future. It will only have a future when, for whatever reason, the regime will fall and fade into oblivion. The sooner the better.</p>
<p>NAT SOUNDS Judo training under the coach Eric Murphet.  Dmitry practicing throws with Bence Murphet.</p>	
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Wrestling with Bence Murphet and Camron Nieves.</p>	<p>I’d like to establish myself here. I hope that everything will be okay here. Not to be a burden, to find my place here. Who knows how it will play out. Anything can happen in life. A year ago I didn’t think I’d end up here.</p>
<p>VO Dmitry Kliukvin  Training is ending, men shaking hands.</p>	<p>If you choose to follow a certain path, You have to follow it until the end, try to fight and cling to it, hoping for the best.</p>
<p>NAT SOUND Dmitry saying goodbye to his judo friends.</p>	
	<p>Card: Dmitry will have his first court hearing in December 2024. There he will be assigned a second hearing that determines whether or not he will be allowed to stay. Meanwhile, he is trying to build a new life in America.</p>

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