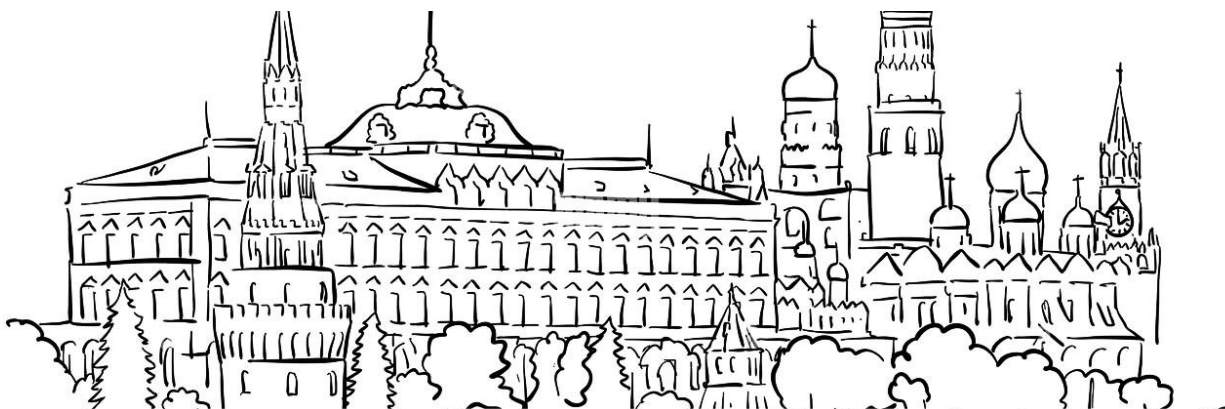




ISSUE ONE ABOUT  
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES  
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**A Travel Diary by Matias Travieso-Diaz and Francine G. Rosenfeld (deceased)**



*To adopt a child is a great work of love. When it is done, much is given,*

*but much is also received. It is a true exchange of gifts.*

Pope John Paul II

**Prologue**

(by Matias)

Early in 1998, my wife Fran, a psychotherapist, participated in a professional symposium dealing with the unpredictabilities of the adoption process, particularly as it involved older children. One of the other attendees mentioned a program organized by Cradle of Hope Adoption Center, a Maryland agency that specializes in international adoptions. Cradle had

developed a program called the “Bridge of Hope Summer Camp,” which brought older foreign children to the United States during the summer to spend several weeks living with potential adoptive parents. . The point of this summer “vacation” was to determine whether the child under consideration might be compatible with his or her potential parents. This test drive sought to remove the worst fear that people considering adopting an older child face: that the children they ultimately adopt will turn out to be unsuited for living with their new parents, with undesirable consequences for all involved.

Fran returned from that meeting energized about the possibility of sponsoring an older foreign child and determining whether she (Fran always thought in terms of adopting a girl) would be one that we could grow to love. For medical reasons, she was unable to conceive and we had been toying with the idea of adoption for some time, always being dissuaded by the risks involved in the adoption process. To complicate matters, by 1998 we were both in our fifties and were busy professionals, so it did not seem fair or practical to adopt a baby who required a lot of care and who would be reaching her teens when we already were of retirement age. Our choices narrowed to finding a unicorn - an older child who would be compatible with us and who was not adverse to the idea of becoming the adoptive daughter of elderly parents.

We contacted Cradle and went through a rigorous application process to determine whether we would be fit as potential hosts of a foreign child. We went through several personal interviews, together as well as separately, to ascertain whether we were serious and stable enough that the program could risk entrusting us with one of the precious children they were trying to secure in various countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Luckily, we passed and were selected as hosts.

That year, Cradle was taking advantage of the thaw in relations between the United States and a post-communist Russia under Boris Yeltsin, to comb through orphanages across the entire country in search of children that would be good candidates for adoption. Russia was considered a prime source of candidates because it was comparable to the United States in terms of the care its orphanages provided for children whose parents were not available. The Bridge of Hope program for the Summer of 1998 therefore focused on Russian orphans.

In the early part of August, Cradle combed through its records to see if a suitable candidate could be found for us in the few days before the summer program ended for the year and children were returned to their home countries.

One of the Bridge of Hope girls was being hosted by a family in the outskirts of New York City. The mother already had two boys, but wanted to raise a girl. The father had a teenage daughter from another marriage. At the end, the father became concerned that bringing another girl into the family might be detrimental to his daughter, so he ended up vetoing the adoption of their summer guest. With great regret, the mother informed Cradle that the family had decided they could not adopt her.

We were told of the situation that had arisen in New York and were given a rare opportunity: if we were willing and able to travel to New York that weekend, we could meet the girl and decide whether she could be a potential adoptee. We jumped at the offer and drove six hours on Saturday morning to see the girl before she was to return to Russia.

We arrived at the suburban home of the girl's host and were introduced to her by the mother of the family, who sang the girl's praises and made it clear that it was not her choice to let her go. The family was nice enough to invite us over for dinner so we could get to spend time with the child. And then we met her.

Her name was Anastasia, but everyone, including herself, called her Nastya. She had long golden hair, was slim, athletic, friendly, good natured, well-behaved, and apparently quite a foil for the boys in the household. We immediately fell in love with Nastya and decided, in a leap of faith, to let Cradle know first thing on Monday that we had found the girl we wanted to adopt.

Months of mind-numbing paperwork followed as the bureaucratic processes slowly ran their courses on both sides of the Atlantic. Finally, four months later, we were told to be ready to fly to Moscow, and from there, to Tomsk, a mid-size city (population about 500,000) in the middle of Siberia.

### **Friday, February 19, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

This should be one of the most joyful days of my life, and it would be so if I could find a way to drive to Tomsk. I am a flying phobic and even though I am on my way to adopt a lovely daughter I am too anxious about the plane ride to fully enjoy the moment.

Nastya is awaiting us in Boarding School # 6, an orphanage in Tomsk. We can't wait to see her. We arrived at the Dulles airport at 6 PM for a 7 PM flight that didn't take off until 10 PM.

### **Saturday, February 20, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

We spent the night on the plane and arrived in Moscow Saturday at 3 PM. At the airport we were met by our local translator, Eugene, a Russian employee of Cradle. He came along with Alexander, the driver, and they took us to our hotel.

We are staying at the Marriott Grand Hotel on 26 Tverskaya Street, about two miles from the Kremlin. We will stay at the Marriott one night and fly to Tomsk tomorrow.

The Marriott Grand is a lovely hotel. Our room is spacious and modern. We had dinner at the hotel's Russian Restaurant. I had blinis (Russian pancakes) topped with caviar and pelmeni (dumplings), Mat had pheasant. We retired early, tired but excited.

### **Sunday, February 21, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

We had a restful night and went sightseeing with Eugene. He took us to a promenade along the banks of the Moscow River, where we could watch the amateur artists painting. Today was Mat's birthday and we bought a watercolor of the river views as a souvenir. We then went to the Red Square area but could not enter the square because there was a communist demonstration in progress.

We had a nice lunch with Eugene and Alexander at a local Russian restaurant and returned to the hotel to pack. Tonight, we fly to Tomsk on Siberian Airlines.

### **Monday, February 22, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

I was doubly anxious about flying across Russia on an unreliable local airline. I needed not have worried. The flight to Tomsk was uneventful. When we arrived in Tomsk, just before dawn, we were met by Tatiana, who would be our translator and main companion while in Tomsk, and Valery, our designated driver. Tatiana is a charming, very stylish woman, who wore a beautiful green fur coat and made us feel at home immediately. We were taken to Valery's apartment, where we were to stay during our visit to Tomsk, and met Valery's wife Luba, a stereotypical Russian matron, large and motherly. We were immediately served a delicious breakfast of homemade blinis and tea.

We rested until 2 PM, when we were taken to see Valentina, a government lawyer (*advokat*) who had been appointed Nastya's *guardian ad litem* during the pendency of the adoption proceedings, and Marina, the person who would file the papers for us with the Court. The ladies told us that they had spoken with Sergei, Nastya's half-brother, who is eighteen and is going into the army. Sergei and Nastya have different fathers; Sergei lives with his father and stepmother and is supportive of Nastya's adoption.

Next, we went to the orphanage for the first time. We were met by the orphanage staff and then met Nastya, who was dressed in a turquoise and black velvet dress. At first, she appeared shy, tentative, and anxious. She also seemed smaller than I remembered her, and prettier. We hugged and were ushered into the Director's office.

The Director was a very gracious and formal woman who had recently lost her husband and seemed quite attached to Nastya. She said that they planned to have a party for Nastya after a successful Court hearing and we were invited to attend. The Director cried a bit as she said she would miss Nastya.

Next, we were all taken to a large meeting room with murals of children characters on the walls so we could talk in private. Nastya cried a bit, and I acknowledged that she should be both happy and sad to leave the orphanage. During the conversation, we got the idea of buying a desktop computer for the orphanage, which lacked one. When we suggested later to the Director that we would be willing to acquire and donate such a gift, she replied that receiving it would be like a dream come true.

Next, we went to see Nastya's room. It was small and held five little beds with adjoining night stands. A picture of Truffle, our dog, was prominently displayed on Nastya's nightstand. (We had corresponded with Nastya while the adoption application was in process and had sent several pictures, including one of Truffle, which she apparently took pride in showing her friends.) I gave Nastya several Barbie dolls that I had brought to be given to her roommates, including her closest friend, Irina, age 10.

The little girls in the room all gathered around Nastya's bed and began playing with the dolls and caressing their hair. They seemed entranced with the dolls in a way I have never seen American children do. The girls were pretty and appealing, and I began having fantasies of getting a house full of children. My heart was both joyful and heavy; there was something about these children that made me feel as if I should talk to all my friends back home and ask each one to bring a Russian orphan home to America.

**Tuesday, February 23, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

We did not arrive at the orphanage until noon. Nastya was waiting to greet us. She ran up to us and hugged me. She was to take part in a children recital and was wearing a grey dress and had a pink bow on her hair. She tried some clothing I had bought for her and everything fit. She turned down a long skirt, stating that she only wore short ones.

She was soon called to participate in the recital and we were invited to watch. It was charming; the children were well trained and sang hymns, folk songs, and other musical numbers. We could not stay for as long as we would have liked because we had to attend a pre-hearing meeting in court.

The meeting was held in chambers, in a courthouse in the old part of Tomsk, a part of town full of ancient wooden homes with beautifully carved, lacy gables, high spires and turrets, many dating to the 17th Century. The judge was a formal middle-aged man. Present at the hearing were Valentina (Nastya's *guardian ad litem*), the Assistant Director of the orphanage Marina, Tatiana (our interpreter), Nastya, and us. All the women present spoke in favor of granting the adoption.

The judge asked us several questions, particularly: Why a Russian child? Why did we wait so long to adopt? We answered those the best we could (the questions will be asked again tomorrow at the formal hearing). I said that we were aware of Nastya's personal history and genetics and the difficulties she would encounter in giving up her culture and lifetime connections, and were prepared to address these problems. The judge did not seem inclined to waive the ten-day waiting period required by law before adoptions become effective.

After the meeting we took a brief tour of the city and went to a small department store, where we bought five additional Barbie dolls for Nastya's friends. We will bring these to the orphanage tomorrow morning, before the court hearing.

We have been quite impressed with the orphanage that has held Nastya for three years. Although very modest by American standards, it is a clean and well-run facility. Based on our visits, we have become convinced that the children at this orphanage are given loving attention; the only limitations to the care they receive are the severe financial constraints under which orphanages operate these days.

We also liked the people of Tomsk. They are friendly and fiercely proud of their city. The women who attended the hearing were stylish and wore the most beautiful matching fur coats and hats that I have ever seen.

Luba and Valery, our hosts, bend over backwards to make us comfortable and accommodate our every need. The food that Luba prepares is consistently delicious, and we wash it down with a bit of the local vodka, which is tastier than the commercial liquor that we get in the States. At tonight's dinner we met Vicka, the local Cradle coordinator in Tomsk; she is the

daughter of Luba and Valery.

My love for Nastya grows and grows. She is a darling child, liked by all at the orphanage. She said that she took ballet lessons when she was little and would like to do so again. We will take care of that, I promised.

**Wednesday, February 24, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

In the morning, we were picked up by Tatiana and went to purchase fruit for the orphanage, and arrived laden with oranges and Barbies. Nastya was there to greet us, took us to her room, and served us tea with cookies and sweets.

I asked Nastya if she had pictures of her family, which she did. We looked at the photos and she explained each one. I told her I was glad she had pictures, and she promised to bring them to court with her, pasted in a photo album.

We asked her if she wanted to go to the circus or the ballet when we got to Moscow. She said she would prefer to go to the ballet, because she had already been to the circus.

We left, had a quick lunch at Luba's, and went to court.

At the hearing, Mat and I were asked to tell the Court why we were making this adoption request and why should the Court grant our petition. I went first. I told the judge that as I aged I began to realize that there was an empty place in my heart where a child ought to be. I explained that we met Nastya last summer and fell in love with her and applied to adopt her the following day. As to why a Russian child, I explained that my roots were from Eastern Europe and that I had a Russian-speaking grandmother. I had great respect for the Russian culture and wanted Nastya to grow feeling the same. We wanted the Court to know that our community had a Russian Art League and Theater, and that I had already found a Russian ballet teacher for her. In addition, there was a Saturday school for Russian speaking children. I promised to provide to her every educational opportunity available, and said that she would be able to be anything she wanted to be, even a doctor or a lawyer.

I also acknowledged that I was aware that for every change in one's life there are both positives and negatives. I realized that even though Nastya wanted a family to adopt her and wanted to come to America, leaving Russia and all she knew would be a big loss, and I was prepared to help her navigate through that process. The Judge asked me if I was aware of the responsibility of caring for a child on a day-to-day basis. I replied that I was. I had taken care

of my nieces for periods of time and, because of my profession, I had worked extensively with mothers, children, and families.

The Judge asked me whose idea was it to adopt. In truth, I told him, it was my idea but, like in many other things in our life, I was the prime mover and my husband came along and agreed to my idea. The Judge laughed and said: “Just like in Russia!”

Mat said that even though the adoption was my idea, the moment he met Nastya he agreed that it was a good plan, and now that he had spent several days with Nastya he felt that it was the wisest decision he had ever made. He explained that he came from a foreign country to America and was aware of how important it was to keep one’s language and culture, and promised that he would see to it that was the case with Nastya; we were lucky to live in the Washington, D.C. area, as there were many opportunities for Nastya to preserve her identity. He said we were not rich but financially comfortable, so that we would be able to provide for Nastya’s needs and give her whatever education she chose to have.

The orphanage’s Assistant Director was then asked to give some background on Nastya. She said that Nastya was brought to the orphanage three years ago by a neighbor. She seemed to have been well taken care of, was well dressed and well behaved, but appeared very sad. She cried a lot. The orphanage personnel had noted that she was different from most of the other children, but made a good adjustment to them. She was sociable, had leadership abilities, and was loved by other children and the staff.

Her mother had died of cancer. Although her mother was married to the father of Nastya’s older brother Sergei, she had not married Nastya’s father, who left her when Nastya was too young to even remember him. His whereabouts were unknown. Sergei had left to live with his father before his mother died, and did not know where Nastya was until he saw her on a TV program about the orphanage, a year before.

Sergei, who is almost 19, has visited with Nastya several times during the intervening year, is very much in favor of her having a family of her own, and supports her adoption by Americans, and signed a statement to that effect.

Nastya was asked if the adoption was what she wanted. She started to cry. She finally answered “da” to the Judge’s questions.

There was a ten-minute break and then we went through the documents, one by one. Then we were asked if we agreed with the documents. We did.

The *guardian ad litem*, the Assistant Director of the orphanage, and even the State prosecutor who was supposed to raise any objections, all gave long and sometimes impassionate speeches recommending approval of our petition and the request that the ten-day waiting period be waived, for under the circumstances it would be an unnecessary waste of time, since it is intended to allow any relatives of the child to come forward and contest



the adoption, which can't happen in this case. I was quite touched by their support.

The Judge then left the courtroom to deliberate and write his opinion. He was gone for almost an hour. When he returned, he read his opinion, which gave approval to the adoption and waived the ten-day waiting period. It was over.

### **Thursday, February 25, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

We met Nastya at the orphanage and went to buy candy to bring to the upcoming farewell party, and then took Nastya to get passport pictures. We met Sergei for the first time at the orphanage at noon. He was a nice looking, tall, slender young man. He was neatly dressed, but I noticed that his shirt was tattered. He is a high school graduate who has not been able to find a job.

He said that Nastya had lived with their mother until she died. At the time Nastya was seven and he was fifteen. His father had taken Sergei to live with him but turned Nastya down because she was not his biological child. Sergei's father told him that he could stay at his house until he was 18 but then had to leave.

After their mom's death, an uncle took Nastya and kept her for six months. He was out of work and could not take care of the child and she experienced hunger, so the uncle (not the neighbors) brought Nastya to the orphanage.

Sergei portrayed his father as rather selfish and not very nice. He described his mother as a fun loving woman who was outgoing and enjoyed life and people. She was musically inclined and sang in a folk chorus and played the guitar, which she taught him to do.

After visiting with Sergei we came back to Luba's apartment and had lunch, and then went shopping to get Nastya a dress for the party next day. She chose a two-piece dress made in France with a white lacy top and a black skirt. We then went to pick up the passport pictures and took Nastya back to the orphanage to spend her last night there.

That evening we met with a friend of Vicka, Andrei, who sells computers. We picked out and bought the computer we were donating to the orphanage. Andrei will deliver it to the orphanage and set it up.

### **Friday, February 26, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

When we arrived at the orphanage at 10 AM, Nastya had already packed and was ready to leave. We knew we would be saying goodbye to everyone the following day, so we took off right away.

Next, we went to a bookstore and bought books for Nastya to read and books and postcards about Tomsk for her to remember her hometown, and proceeded to a large outdoor market where I bought Nastya party shoes and fourteen videos of movies in Russian.

We went to have lunch at Luba's, and afterwards we went shopping for party favors. We bought the boys little cars and stickers for the girls. We then met Vicka and Marina at the passport office, got Nastya her new Russian passport, and bought plane tickets to Moscow.

After dinner, Nastya's nails were done. She was most insistent on washing her own hair. Then she showered. I have never seen a child be so delighted by taking a shower. She kept running water from the hand-held shower head while saying how good it felt, laughing, lying down in the bathtub, having the best time.

### **Saturday, February 27, 1999**

(notes by Matias)

This was the day for goodbyes and celebrations, all the work needed to be done in Tomsk already completed. We arrived at the orphanage a bit early and had a long meeting with the Director, who mentioned Sergei's recent visits to the orphanage and commented she thought the boy was a drug addict because of his long hair and sunken cheeks. (According to him, it was not drugs that sunk his cheeks, but going hungry.)

The Director mentioned that Nastya had a bit of money left by her mother – about 7,000 rubles – and asked whether we wanted it and, when we said no, she suggested it should be given to Sergei. He was supposed to come to the party but never showed up so we left him with the Director an envelope with a goodbye card from Nastya, 10 stamped envelopes addressed to us in America, and 5,000 rubles.

At about eleven we began taking pictures (Instamatic, Polaroid, and video) of a dozen children who are available for adoption, to be given to Cradle for consideration. At about the same time, Andrei showed up and installed the computer, and immediately a dozen of the boys gathered around to play video games.

At noon the party started. There were teary-eyed speeches by the teachers and songs by various groups of kids. Cakes, ice cream and Coke were served, which the children seemed to enjoy. Nastya then distributed gifts to everyone, and received some herself. Fran made a speech in response to the thanks from the children and the staff.

It was a nice event, although some of the children and a couple of the teachers cried when saying their goodbyes to Nastya. We left the orphanage for good at 1:30 PM and returned to the apartment. There was a typical festive Russian lunch waiting for us: borscht, pelmeni, cucumber salad, shredded carrots, dark bread, and apple juice. Nastya ate like a grownup and, later in the afternoon, had two bananas and a couple of oranges. She spent most of the rest of the day watching the first of the videos we had purchased for her, “Bingo.” She and Fran also did some crafty things like making necklaces and cutting out paper dolls, and Nastya did some drawing – she seems to be quite talented that way. We spent part of the afternoon packing our suitcases.

We went to bed early (Fran and I; we never knew when Nastya turned in, since she we left her watching TV, and she never owned up to how long she remained watching it.)

### **Sunday, February 28, 1999**

(notes by Francine)

We left for the Tomsk airport at 7 AM, accompanied by Valery and Tatiana. Nastya (like me) does not like to fly. When we arrived in Moscow, we were met by Eugene with a driver with a mini-van. Nastya was wide-eyed as we arrived at the Marriott and checked in. As we were taken to our room, she danced through the halls and said she liked being there; she examined every inch of the room and could not get over having three telephones, specially the one in the bathroom.

We were all tired because of the four-hour time difference, so we hung around the room unpacking and getting organized. We were exhausted and went to bed at 9 PM (1 AM Tomsk time).

### **Monday, March 1, 1999**

(notes by Matias)

I took over writing travel notes from Fran, as she is increasingly busy attending to Nastya's needs. It was our first full day in Moscow, and we spent it well. By 9:30 we were met by a middle-aged Russian lady named Helen who was to be our interpreter and escort while in Moscow. Helen took us first to a photo shop where they took four passport pictures of Nastya "with her ear showing" for the U.S. visa.

We then went to a clinic in the U.S. Embassy area where they gave Nastya a perfunctory medical exam and pronounced her in good health. This was supposed to be the best children's clinic in Moscow and, judging by the large number of families bringing in kids of all ages, it had a great reputation. It seemed rather dingy to us but the doctors were friendly and did their exam in fifteen minutes (for a \$100 fee).

We were done with the clinic by 11:30 so Fran took Nastya to a large department store for children ("Dyevstky Mir" or "Children's World"). They went up and down two stories, looking at the dolls and other toys (mostly American), buying crayons, paint, coloring books, cut out doll books, and other materials intended to keep Nastya busy during the long plane ride back home. By the evening, however, she had already finished one of the doll cut out books and was busily painting by the numbers with tempera colors and brush on one of the coloring books. We also bought her an amber ring and a pair of white tights with golden angel wings.

By the time this shopping sortie was over, it was past 12:30 PM. We went to a "Patio Pizza" near the Kremlin for lunch. Even though an Italian restaurant, it also featured Russian food. Fran had pelmeni (not as good as Luba's). I had blini with caviar (so-so); Nastya did have pepperoni pizza and the salad bar.

From the Patio Pizza we went through a large underground shopping mall – brand new, American style, which opened last year to celebrate Moscow's 800th birthday. It sits on the side of Alexander's Park, a large and beautiful park that runs on the side of the Kremlin.

We walked to the Kremlin ticket booth and got tickets for the Armory (230 rubles each for foreigners, 30 for Russians) and entered the building through a side portal, past all sorts of counters selling souvenirs. The first floor of the Armory houses an impressive collection of imperial wedding gowns, ball dresses, and other formal clothes of the lords and ladies of the aristocracy during the 17th through 19th Centuries, set against lovely tapestries in the French rococo style.

Against the walls of the first floor there were also the cassocks and ceremonial hats and other garments and accoutrements of the Metropolitan and high priests of the Russian Orthodox Church, all studded with priceless jewels (typical: a large cross of emeralds, surrounded by diamonds, all sewn onto a cassock). We also saw the thrones of the old tsars, including a large golden throne belonging to the father of Peter the Great. Together with thrones there were crowns, orbs and scepters, and other symbols of the power of the tsars. Also on the first

floor were the gilded carriages, cabriolets, sleds, and summer carriages used by the members of the royal family between 1600 and 1917.

We left the museum shortly before closing, walked outside the Armory, crossed Alexander Park again, went through Red Square, around St. Basil's Cathedral (one of the wonders of the world), past Lenin's Tomb (only open in the mornings, so we did not go in), across the place where they used to hold public executions, and finally to our car. It was wet and slippery and we were happy to go home.

## **Tuesday, March 2, 1999**

(notes by Matias)

This was the day to go to the American Embassy to get a visa for Nastya. We arrived at the embassy on a snowy morning, to find people lined up outside trying to get in. They did let us in because we had an appointment.

We were finished early and went to the Aeroflot offices to exchange our return tickets, at the cost of \$150 apiece. It took about an hour to make the change, by hand and computer. Next, we had lunch at a popular Russian restaurant and then went to the Arbat Street shopping area. Arbat Street is a cobbled pedestrian street full of shops. Fran bought amber jewelry (sold throughout Russia), several matryoshka dolls to bring as presents, and a beautiful doll for Nastya.

## **Wednesday, March 3, 1999**

(notes by Matias)

We arranged to be picked up late (2:30 PM), since we had ballet tickets in the evening. In the morning we took a walk down Tverskaya Street and went to the shops on the underground so Nastya could get some barrettes for her hair and then we went to a children's garment store where Nastya got a beautiful yellow and green backpack for her belongings.

We returned to the hotel and were picked up and taken to a late lunch at an expensive Russian restaurant. The lunch was fine and, since we were running late, we went back to Arbat Street, where Fran bought a very nice amber bracelet for Nastya, amber earrings for her sister-in-law, and a couple more matryoshka dolls. We returned to the hotel with just

enough time for Fran and Nastya to make themselves beautiful.

At 6 PM Helen and the driver arrived to take us to the Bolshoi. The theater looks worn and antiquated (it is over 150 years old), but the gilt boxes and moldings and the red velvet coverings on the walls and chairs are still majestic. The theater is small, the chairs have uncomfortable straight wooden backs, and there is not much of a grade, so that if tall people sit one or two rows ahead of you (as it happened to us) you have trouble seeing the stage.

The show made up for all the physical discomforts. We saw a performance of Swan Lake that was beautiful – great sets, nice playing by the orchestra, sublime dancing by the swan princess. The corps de ballet was also wonderful. Nastya seemed to like the first part (they ran Acts 1 and 2 together) but fell asleep and missed the rest of the ballet.

We were back at the hotel by 10:15. Nastya was so tired that, instead of jumping up and down in our bed, she threw herself directly onto hers and passed out.

### Thursday, March 4, 1999

(notes by Matias)

We got up early and breakfasted at the hotel restaurant, and then Helen picked us up to go to the Pushkin, Moscow's prime fine arts museum. The museum is nicely laid out but small by American standards. It has a very fine collection of French art, with pieces ranging from the rococo period (Boucher), through the romantics (Delacroix), the impressionists, and the modern painters including Rousseau, Gauguin, Picasso, Cezanne, and several wonderful Matisse. The whole visit to the Pushkin took just about one and half hours, but we were rushing through it because Nastya was bored.

We then went to the Moscow Puppet Theater, to see a performance of "*Tsar Tsaltan*," a puppet show for children. There were about two hundred screaming little kids in the audience (Nastya was perhaps the oldest one there). The puppets were real works of art; the founder of the museum made them himself.

At the theater, we bought Nastya a book with Russian versions of Winnie the Pooh, Alice in Wonderland, and Through the Looking Glass. After the show, we went to a bookstore where we got several additional books for Nastya, including The Wizard of Oz, and some coloring books, on which Nastya loves to draw and paint.

We ended the day by stopping at Polyakoff's, the most famous bakery in Moscow. We discovered that Russian pastries are not as good as French or American ones.

We wanted to stay up later, but by 8:30 everyone was exhausted, so Nastya took a bath, washed her hair, and turned in (as did the rest of us) by 9.

### **Friday, March 5, 1999**

(notes by Matias)

Our last day in Moscow (and in Russia) was uneventful. We were all up by 6 AM, only to discover it was raining (weather had been quite mild for mid-winter throughout the trip, it snowed only a couple of times and the temperature never dropped below 20° F). It rained steadily until noon, so we spent the morning in the hotel. We did not leave for the airport until 12:30. We arrived at 1 PM, went through customs (no problems), checked our bags at Aeroflot (no problems), and then stood in an interminable, hour-long passport control (immigration) line, where they took away our Russian visas and looked at Nastya's passport and visa. Our Aeroflot flight finally took off for Washington at 3:30 PM. Nastya could not wait to get into the plane.

But we were finally in the air, on our way to arrive in America that same day, many hours later, tired but grateful that the adventure was over!

END





