

As I lay there, looking up at the stars and listening to the frogs, I began to relax — just a little. Maybe everything would be fine. I took deep breaths of the cool evening air and closed my eyes, but sleep wouldn't come. Marusia tossed and turned a little bit. She faced me and began to sing the lullaby I had known all my life.

*Kolyson'ko, kolyson'ko
Kolyshy nam dytynon'ku
A shchob spalo, ne plakalo
A shchob roslo, ne bolilo
Ni holovka, ni vse tilo*

I could feel the fear leave my body as I listened to the words. I was lulled by the cosiness of the mattress and the bedding and being beside the two people who so far had kept me safe.

I fell asleep feeling loved and secure.

I am surrounded by the people whom I love most, snuggled together under a down comforter in a cosy bedroom. Suddenly there is a banging at the door. I try to wake the people beside me but they have melted away. I am alone. My heart pounds. The door bursts open, but I cannot see who it is.

I woke with my arms flailing, shouting, "Leave me alone!" Strong hands pulled me to a sitting position. I opened my eyes. I was in Brantford, in my own backyard. Marusia sat beside me. I was safe. But even in the darkness I could see the worry on her brow. Ivan was there too, kneeling at my other side.

"Were you having a nightmare?" Marusia asked.

It had seemed so real, but yes, it must have been a nightmare. I nodded.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

“No.”

Marusia snuggled up close to me on the mattress and whispered the lullaby into my ear in a low sweet voice. The words soothed me a little bit and I could feel my heart settle down.

I wanted to sleep but I didn't want to dream again. Once my breathing slowed, it was easy to convince Marusia that I was all right. She and Ivan needed their sleep.

Marusia settled back on her mattress. I stayed awake, listening to the frogs and the rhythm of Ivan's snores. When I knew that Marusia was also deep in sleep, I sat back up and breathed in some cool night air to try to clear my thoughts. Why did I have that dream? Who was pounding at the door?

I clasped my arms around my knees and rocked back and forth, soothing myself like someone had once soothed me. I chanted the lullaby under my breath. The words made me feel safe and loved. I reached back into my memory, to the last time I had felt completely safe. I remembered a time before the camp. I had a bedroom all to myself then, a room with high ceilings and big windows. I had plenty to eat and good clothing to wear.

But had I felt safe? No. Who could feel safe in the middle of a war?