

*Dear Canada*

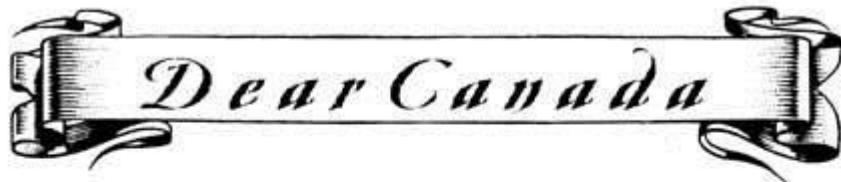
# Prisoners in the Promised Land



The Ukrainian Internment Diary  
of Anya Soloniuk

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Spirit Lake, Quebec, 1914



# Prisoners in the Promised Land



The Ukrainian Internment Diary  
of Anya Soloniuk

BY MARSHA FORCHUK SKRYPUCH

Scholastic Canada Ltd.

This diary belongs to Anya Soloniuk,  
Village of Horoshova,  
Borschiv County,  
Crownland of Galicia,  
Austria-Hungary

April 13, 1914

**February 1914**

261-3 Grand Trunk Street, Montreal, Canada

*February 10, 1914*

*Dear Anya –*

*I am sorry that I cannot be with you on your namesday. It is hard to believe that my little girl is now twelve. I am sending you this diary so that you can write down all that you experience as you leave our beloved village and travel across the ocean to be with me.*

*Your loving tato*

**April 1914**



***Monday, April 13, 1914, early***

***at home in my beautiful Horoshova***

Dear Diary, your soft cover is dancing-boot red and your pages are the colour of freshly churned butter. When I hold you to my cheek you smell clean and fresh like Tato when he's just shaved.

I like having a diary, but I'd rather have my father come home. He wants us to come to Canada instead. Mama showed me a drawing of the house Tato has found for us. It is so huge compared to our little home. The Canadian house is made of little rectangular bricks instead of plaster like all of the houses in Horoshova. It is as tall as three regular houses stacked on top of each other! Each level has its own set of windows and a door, and there

is a long metal staircase on the outside that goes all the way to the top! There must be a room on every level in this huge Canadian house – maybe even two rooms on each level! It will be fun to run up and down those stairs!

I wonder if I will have a room of my own – not like here, where we all sleep in one room. I would love to have a room at the very top of the house. I would be on top of the world!

The Canadian house has a flat road in front of it. It doesn't look like the dirt roads we have here. I wonder what the road is made of? Halyna says they're made of gold, but Tato would have told Mama about that if it was true. Along the road is a row of tall lanterns. Tato wrote that these are called street lamps and they stay on all night so people can see where they walk after bedtime.

Tato's sketch shows the front door opening up right onto the street. There is no courtyard and no stone fence. Where do you plant the flowers? Do they have flowers in Canada?

The houses in Canada are so close that I think they might actually touch. It will be strange to have neighbours that close. I hope they're friendly. How do you get to the backyard? Tato has sketched in clumps of snow. He says there is more snow in Canada than we have, but it doesn't look like very much.

Will our Canadian house be robin's egg blue like home?

Our new house is on a street called "Grand Trunk." Mama says "grand" means big in English, and "trunk" is a carrying box. I think they named the street Grand Trunk because all the houses look like big boxes.

Speaking of big boxes, that's what I was doing today. I helped Mama pack for Canada. We can take one wooden chest each, and even Mykola can have his own. We put all of the dried *babka* in one box. I was surprised when Mama used her hope chest as her box and lined it with her embroidered wedding skirt and veil, but she told me that she wanted to bring them and there wasn't room in the other boxes, and dried bread wouldn't hurt them anyway.

Mama put a jug of vodka into my box, and two jugs of water and a jar of honey. That didn't leave me much room but Tato warned us to bring mostly food and water and not to try to bring mementos. I wanted to bring Volodymyr's *tsymbaly* but Mama said it wouldn't fit. I know that it is too long to fit in one of our chests, but it breaks my heart to think of leaving it here. I have only just begun learning how to play it, and every time I pluck out a tune, it

reminds me of poor Volodymyr. I told Mama that we could wrap it in a down comforter and I even offered to carry it, but she said no.

Mama got me to pack Dido's wooden pipe in between my clothing and the silver spoon that has been in the family for as long as anyone can remember. I also packed a small jar filled with my precious colourful glass beads. They don't take up much room and I don't know whether they make *gerdany* in Canada. Oy . I don't want to leave Horoshova. We put in one goose-down pillow too. Mama said that would stop the jugs from bumping into each other.

In Baba's box, we packed dried fruit and sunflower seeds and more water. Mama lined the box with embroidered linens from her hope chest and put everyone else's second set of clothing in there. There was enough room for Mykola's coat because it is little. Baba wrapped up the Icon in that old embroidery that's as old as the spoon. She tucked it in the middle of everyone's second set of clothing so it wouldn't get bumped. She wanted to bring her dishes and her wheat grinder but Mama said that they didn't fit. She was able to fit in her *kystka* for decorating Easter eggs though. Mykola's box was filled with nothing but the three other sheepskin coats. It was packed so tight that I had to sit on the lid while Mama tied the rope.

Mama said that I could take Volodymyr's *tsymbaly* to Halyna's house. She loved him as much as we did, so I guess if I can't take it myself, giving it to Halyna is the next best.

### ***Later***

I am so sad about leaving Halyna. She is my dearest friend in the whole world. Baba gave her the dishes too. She is the closest thing to family in Horoshova now.

I won't go.

I won't.

I won't.

## ***Later***

Baba told Mama that she is too old to go. Baba always uses her age as an excuse when she doesn't want to do something, but she really isn't that old. She might have aches in her legs, but her hands are fast and her brain is sharp.

Mama says that Tato sold our land to pay for our trip to Canada. I guess Baba has to go, just like me.

***Friday, April 17, 1914***

### ***Hamburg, waiting for the ship***

It has happened. There's no turning back. The sprig of lilac is now pressed between the pages of my diary. It is all that I have to remember dear Halyna with. I am so sad that I can hardly stand it.

Things I won't miss:

- stupid Bohdan
- the priest
- the lord

Things I'm going to miss:

- my dear dear brother, Volodymyr
- Halyna
- my chickens, my sunflowers, my garden, my dear little home in Horoshova
- the Dnister River
- the beautiful cherry trees that happen to be in bloom right now

One thing I wonder: are there storks in Canada?



### ***Later***

We're staying in a rooming house in Hamburg. Our ship hasn't arrived back from its last trip, so we have to wait for it. I am not used to having so many people around me. I don't mind that Baba, Mama, me and Mykola are all crowded together in this little room and that there isn't even a table for me to write on – I am using my lap. However, the room smells like old fish and the walls are so thin that I can hear everything my neighbours are up to. Just now, someone burped!

The streets in Hamburg are paved with cobblestones and the houses are crowded together like in Canada. There are so many people in the streets from so many different places that it's enough to make my head spin. I guess they're all waiting for ships.

### ***Early Saturday morning, April 18, 1914***

#### ***still waiting for the ship!***

Here it is, Easter Saturday and we are far from home and far from Tato. Mama has never missed Sunday Mass in her life. What shall we do tomorrow? Easter isn't just any old Sunday! I wonder if Tato realized when he got our tickets that we would be travelling during Easter?

### ***Later***

In Hamburg, they deliver the milk by hitching wagons to huge dogs. It looks so funny!

### ***Later***

We have enough to eat as long as we don't have to stay in Hamburg too long. Before we left, Baba roasted our two chickens and packed them in a cloth with cheese and fresh *babka* and a jar of cider. We have to eat this before it goes bad. It is what we have been eating since we got to Hamburg. We're just about out, though, and I know that Mama doesn't want us to start on the dried bread because we'll need that for our trip.

Yesterday afternoon, I went with Mama to see if we could find an inexpensive place close by to buy fresh food in case we run out. Our *kronen* are not lasting long. We do have some Canadian money, but we can't spend it because Tato told us they only let people into the country if they can show that they have money. I hope the ship

### ***Later***

Mama came in earlier and told me to put my pencil and diary down because she needed me to help her with Mykola. He was cranky and Mama was afraid he was going to get sick again. She was up all night with him. I would love to take him out for some fresh air, but we don't want to go outside too much. You see, Dear Diary, Tato has warned us to keep out of sight while waiting for the ship. He said that since we have no men here to protect us, we could be robbed! From the window, at least, this looks like an interesting place.

Mama set out a bit of our fresh food for lunch. Mykola is now taking a nap and Mama asked me to stay with him and not be noisy. She said writing in my diary would be the perfect thing while she and Baba talked. I want to write down everything about leaving Horoshova so I don't forget.

On the day that we left, our neighbours gathered in front of the house to wish us goodbye. Halyna was there and she was holding Volodymyr's *tsymbaly*. I knew that it was the last time I would see her, and the last time I would see the *tsymbaly* and I almost started to cry. Roxolana was there too, and even Danylo came. Only Bohdan didn't come, and I hate him anyway. I can't believe I'll never see any of my friends again.

I got onto the wagon and then helped Baba up. Halyna reached up to me and gave me a sprig of lilac. I held it to my nose and breathed in the beautiful scent. Every time I touch it, I remember Halyna, and my brother, and home.

When the wagon pulled out of our yard, the church bells began to ring. All of our neighbours were crying. I kept my eyes straight ahead and thought of lilacs.

Manuschak the blacksmith took us to the train station in Chernivtsi and I watched the countryside roll by. I wanted to remember every detail:

- the rolling hills and our dear Dnister River
- the cherry trees in sweet full bloom
- an old kerchiefed *baba* walking her cow on a rope
- a stork's nest in a tree in the middle of the road
- the forest in all shades of green and a blanket of wildflowers on the ground
- the church and the churchyard, where my *dido* and Volodymyr are buried

Horoshova is such a beautiful place. Why are we leaving?

But –

There's the lord, and the army, and the priest, and our debt. Mama said that the lord had us so far in debt that my great-great-great-grandson would have still been in debt if we hadn't sold everything to pay it off.

Tato says that everyone is equal in Canada. Don't they have lords?

When we waved goodbye to Manuschak at the train station, Baba started wailing. As the cart pulled away, she even took a step as if to follow him, but Mama wrapped her arms around Baba's shoulders and said, "It will be fine, Mama. Everything will be fine."

It's hard to think of Baba as being my own Mama's mother because sometimes she acts more childish than I do. Dear Diary, I feel like crying too, and if I thought I could go home again, I would have followed Manuschak's cart to the end of the earth.

As the train pulled away from the station, I watched my dear homeland fly past me. Chernivtsi is such a beautiful city with modern buildings and many people, and maybe if we were there for a visit I would have enjoyed seeing it, but all I could think of was how sad I was to be leaving home. The train kept on going for two days. We passed huge

mountains capped with snow, and villages that reminded me of Horoshova. We saw towns with tile-roofed houses, paved roads, and even big cities with fancy buildings that looked like something out of a book! When we crossed the border, I wouldn't even have known that we were in Germany if it hadn't been for the official who came onto the train to check our papers.

### ***Easter Sunday, April 19, 1914***

#### ***still in Hamburg***

Mama said we had to find a church. This is a problem, because Tato told us not to leave the rooming house unless we had to.

Fortunately, we found a church close to the rooming house. It was a grey stone building that was so tall and pointy that it looked like it could pierce a cloud. Mama shooed us in. People were sitting on long benches. I have never seen people sitting in a church. It seems sinful. I wanted to leave right away, but Mama made us stand at the back, even though the priest was speaking in another language. Suddenly, everyone stood up, and then there was a booming sound above us. Baba screamed and ran out the door. Mama followed her. I stood there, too afraid to move. Mykola held onto my hand and he didn't move either. I realized that the booming sound was actually nice to listen to. It was some sort of musical instrument. The people in front of us all began to sing.

I wonder what the people did special for Easter? No one in the church had Easter baskets and I didn't see a single *pysanka*. How can there be Easter without written eggs?

When we walked back to the rooming house, Baba said that that church was the place of the devil. They didn't seem to know about Easter at all, and only human voices are supposed to sing to God. As for the devil, how does Baba know? And as for Easter, maybe they celebrate it by playing musical instruments in church. I thought the music was nice. Besides, in our church at home Lysiak's wife sings so out of tune I bet God covers his ears when he hears her.

It makes me sad not to be in Horoshova for Easter. I wonder which girl brought the nicest basket? I hope it was Halyna.

When we got back from church, Baba set out the last of our food and she also had a surprise for us. She gave Mykola and me each a *krashanka*! I wonder when she boiled and dyed these? She must have made them before we left. My egg was red and Mykola's

was yellow. In case you don't know, Dear Diary, making *krashanky* is not very hard. It is just dyeing a boiled egg to make it pretty. A *pysanka* is a different matter. They are hard to make and my *baba* makes the most beautiful *pysanky* in all of Horoshova. *Pysanky* are raw and not meant to be eaten – they are given to friends and family for good luck. They have all sorts of colours and fancy designs on them. This is the first year that Baba hasn't made any. When I am older Baba says she will teach me how.

The chicken is all gone and our bread is stale, so Baba opened the jar of honey and spread each piece of stale bread with a spoonful. As we were eating, a bee flew in from the open window. It buzzed around and then landed on my bread. I am not afraid of bees. No one in my family is afraid of bees because my grandfather was a beekeeper.

I remember Dido's strong arms wrapped around my waist when I was Mykola's age. He smelled of smoke and honey. Dido would let the bees crawl all over him, but the only time he ever got stung was when they got caught in the hair on his arms. It makes me sad to think of going across the ocean and leaving Dido buried in Horoshova. At least Volodymyr is not alone. Mama says that their spirits will follow us to Canada. I hope she is right.

### ***Monday, April 20, 1914***

Finally, our ship is here!

I'm scared. I don't want to go. All of the passengers are lining up with their baggage. The sailors load luggage and about six people at a time into a little boat and that takes us to the big boat. I have never been on any boat before. Oy!

### ***Thursday, April 23, 1914***

I haven't written for a while because the contents of my stomach have been spewing all over the place. I'm feeling a little bit better today. Tato warned us it would take a few days to get our "sea legs."

Right now, I am sitting inside a wooden compartment that is so small that I bump my head if I stand up. This is where Mykola, Mama, Baba and I sleep! There are two top shelves and two bottom shelves. I sleep on one of the top shelves, and Mykola wants to sleep on the other one, but Mama won't let him. Baba is afraid to sleep on the other top one, so it

stays empty. Mykola sleeps with Mama on a bottom shelf, and Baba sleeps on the one below mine.

Our ship looks glorious from the outside, but it is awful inside. It smells like an outhouse. We are at the very bottom of the ship. Someone told me that on the last trip, they had cows down here, and I believe it.

These wooden compartments are stacked on top of each other, so all night I have to listen to the groaning and snoring and gas passing of the people above me.

On the first night, I stuck my head out of my compartment for a bit of fresh air. Just at that moment, someone above me was sick to his stomach. The you-know-what landed right in my hair. It was horrible. Thank goodness Mama got up in the dark and got some sea water and helped me get clean. Sea water is not exactly nice smelling but compared to you-know-what, it is heavenly!

Tato had written Mama a letter explaining how bad the ship would be, and that's why we brought the dried bread and water with us. We have been sipping our own water because the water on the ship is cloudy. Tato told us that when we run out of our own water, we are to boil the ship's water before drinking it, and if we can't do that, Mama is to put a little bit of the vodka into the water to make it fresher. He also told us not to eat the ship's food. We are not tempted to eat it because it smells awful.

Everyone in steerage was given a metal plate and a knife and fork. A couple of times a day they announce that food is ready and people line up and get stuff slopped onto their plates. There is no table, so people have to take their plates back to their beds and balance them on their laps. When they're done, they're supposed to wash their own plates, but all there is to wash the plates is sea water. We aren't hungry because the sea is so rocky. Also, it smells bad down here and that puts you off your food. I find that a bit of dry *babka* dipped in water can sometimes stay down on a sick stomach. A small spoonful of honey is nice too.

**May 1914**

**Friday, May 1, 1914**

***our 11th day on the ship***

We are doing better than most of the people in steerage. There is a mother and a baby and a girl my age in the compartment beside ours. They speak our language, but it sounds a bit different from ours. Mama says they are probably from Bukovyna, which is the crownland right beside Galicia. The baby has been sick since the first day. Part of the problem is that they've been drinking the water from the ship. We have so little of our own water left that we have been saving it for Mykola, but Mama brings cups of boiled ship water to the family when she can get it. It is so crowded in the steerage kitchen that it is not always possible.

The girl's name is Irena, and her baby sister's name is Olya.

Irena reminds me of Halyna. She has green eyes that sparkle when she smiles and her hair is the same light brown. Oy , I wish Halyna could be with me. The lilac she gave me is pressed and drying inside of my diary, and I look at it and sniff it when I feel sad. I am going to be so lonely in Canada. I thought maybe Irena would be coming to Montreal like us, but they're going to a different part of Canada. Her father has a farm far far away from Montreal. I told her that my father has something even better – he has an important job in a modern factory and we have a grand house on Grand Trunk Street. I didn't tell her the reason Tato could only go as far as Montreal in the first place is because his money was stolen as soon as he got off the ship!

***Later***

Irena brought beads also, and she has some fancy ones. We have decided to make each other a necklace. I am going to use black and red beads. Here is the pattern I am making for her:



**Saturday, May 2, 1914**

***our 12th day on the ship***

Irena and I explored. We took little Olya with us so Irena's mother could sleep. Sometimes we take Mykola, but Mama says we can take either Olya or Mykola, but not both of them at the same time.

On the steerage deck, I can look out onto the ocean and breathe in cold salty air. People sit on the floor of the deck and lean against the wall or they stand at the railing and look down into the water. I don't like to lean over the side because I am afraid of falling into the waves.

The two of us take turns carrying Olya and we walk up and down the deck. The breeze is fresh, and it is also good to stretch our legs.

One of the men from Bukovyna took out a reed pipe and started playing. The first song was a sad one, all about leaving Bukovyna behind, and I almost cried. One woman wailed and the man looked really upset, so he changed and started playing the bars of a *kolomyika*.

The woman stopped crying and the man sitting beside her got up. He clapped to the music, and then looked at his wife. "Let's dance," he said, but she stayed sitting. He looked around to see if anyone else would come up.

Irena passed Olya to me and then stepped forward.

With the grace of an angel, she swirled through a series of fancy dance movements. I wish I could dance like that!

After Irena finished, someone else stepped forward, and then another and another. It was all so much fun that even Olya's baby hands were clapping in time to the music. Of all the days on the ship, this was the best!

**Sunday, May 3, 1914**

***our 13th day on the ship***

Mama says that it is sinful that we have gone two Sundays without going to Mass. One of the men from Bukovyna tells her that there are no churches in Canada because no one would pay for God's passage. When he said that, some of the people laughed, but I think it's a rude thing to say. Besides, God is everywhere, isn't he?

Mama made us all kneel down in our compartment like we did last Sunday and we said a prayer.

***Later***

Irena gave me the most beautiful necklace of white and yellow beads. I shall wear it always.

Here is what it looks like:



What I especially love is the one large pearly white Venetian bead that has a flower etched inside it!

***Monday, May 4, 1914, Day 14***

My hands are blue with cold and it is hard to hold this pencil. If I squint hard, I can see land! I am so excited. I will see Tato soon. And our new house!

Mama needs me to help her pack, so I must go.

## **Tuesday, May 5, 1914, Day 15**

Our ship passed land but didn't stop. Irena and I stood on the steerage deck and tried to see as much as we could, but everyone had the same idea. Mama held Mykola's hand but he kept on trying to squirm away.

I stood on my tiptoes and watched as the ship glided past high grey rocks and vast stretches of land. We must have been going through a gigantic river because there was land on both sides. It is cold and bare and empty. Is this Canada?

One of the men said that the ship will stop when it reaches the Port of Montreal.

### ***Later***

After hours and hours there were finally people and houses and docks on the land instead of just rocks. It is still cold though and has been raining.

Everyone was crowding at the side of the ship, trying to see the shore. I couldn't see, even standing on my tiptoes. Finally, I got down on my hands and knees and crawled through people's legs to get to the front. I could see the shore through two ladies' skirts. Irena was right beside me.

The ship slowly came to a stop and we all cheered. I had a lump in my throat. I am so excited about seeing Tato and our new home, but I am sad and scared too. What will my life be like in Canada?

I miss Horoshova so much.

### ***Later***

The ship has landed, and there is a crowd of people at the dock. We don't see Tato.

### ***Later***

Everyone on the ship lined up according to the language that they spoke and then a doctor checked us over. There was a man with the doctor who could speak our language. I could see that Mama was fearful when the doctor checked Mykola. He has been sick so many times in his short life, but thankfully the doctor passed him. He didn't take too long with

Baba or Mama either. It didn't occur to me that I would have any problems getting through, but he took longer with me than anyone else. He thought that I might have an eye infection but I told the translator that my eyes were red from crying. The translator patted me on the shoulder and the doctor passed me.

After our health inspection we had to go through an interview with a Canadian government official. Mama showed him Tato's letter and some forms that we had brought. Tato had said that we would have to show him our money, but the official didn't ask us about this. He filled out a paper for each of us and stamped them with an official-looking crest. It didn't take very long but it was scary. I have always been afraid of people in uniforms.

Tato still isn't here. Mama and Baba and Mykola and I are sitting on the dock on our boxes. I am scared. What if he doesn't come for us?

It is no longer raining and the clouds have cleared. The sun is shining, although it is hard to tell because of the smoke in the air. Now that I am warming up I can smell my stinky clothing. I can hardly wait until Tato comes to get us so that I can have a proper bath.

The people who come to the dock are not dressed like us. The women don't have scarves on their heads. Instead, they wear odd hats like this:



And they don't braid their hair. It is somehow puffed or curled and it looks ugly.

When we got off the ship, most people ignored us, but one couple held their noses and made faces. It's not our fault that we stink. How would they like it if they had just been in the bottom of a ship for two weeks?

That couple has left, and still we sit on the dock, praying that Tato will come. If this is Montreal, I don't like it. The houses and buildings are all black with soot. There are big

ships here, not just ours. There are trains and there are factories. There is smoke in the air and the ground is strewn with paper and garbage. Everything is black or grey or brown.

– I miss cherry blossoms and the lilacs of Horoshova

– I miss the clean blue Dnister River

– I miss the hundreds of shades of green in the forest

Where is Tato?

Irena and her family left for one of the trains. I asked her to write me, but she said that she doesn't know how. Oy , it makes me sad to think that she never had an older brother like I did, who was willing to teach her to read and write. When Irena saw how sad I was at the thought of never hearing from her again, she took my hand and looked me in the eye. "I will learn to write," she promised. "And I will write to you." I miss her already. And Halyna too. And I miss my dear brother Volodymyr more than words can say.

I am trying hard not to cry.

### ***Much later***

TATO FINALLY CAME!!!!

***Wednesday, May 6, 1914***

***very late at night in our new home at 261-3 (front) Grand Trunk Street***

Everyone else is asleep. When I sit close to the window, enough light from the street lamp outside shines through for me to see.

Here is what happened when Tato came:

He arrived with a horse and wagon and a plant in a little clay pot for Mama. It was a sunflower. Tato said he grew it from seeds from our garden in Horoshova. Tato is so strong that when the driver wouldn't help him with our luggage, he lifted our boxes into the wagon by himself. Even though he was so strong, he looked different than I remembered him. He was wearing trousers and a shirt like a Canadian man, and he had sturdy leather boots. He has a deep line across his forehead but when he smiles his face looks almost like I remember it.

I thought we would have a long drive, but our house is just a little ways away from the Port of Montreal. Tato says our street is named Grand Trunk after the company that owns the railroad – not named after the big boxes.

But our house is a big tall box. I thought we were going to get the whole house to ourselves, but Tato laughed when I said that. Even though we don't get the whole house, we have the front of the top floor, which is wonderful!

When the wagon stopped at our house, people came out to watch. A man from the bottom level helped Tato with the boxes. His name was Ivan Pemlych and he immigrated from the village of Shuparka, which is about eighteen kilometres from Horoshova. Isn't it strange how we can cross the ocean, and one of the first people we meet is from a neighbouring village? He said that his youngest son Stefan is close to my age. He wasn't at home right then so I didn't meet him. I am glad that there is someone else here that is my age, even if it is a boy.

Pemlych from downstairs and Tato carried up the boxes first and then Mama followed with Mykola. Baba stayed sitting in the wagon with her arms crossed over her chest. "I can't climb up all those stairs," she said.

I tried to help but she just sat there looking angry. Then the man who owns the wagon said something in English and motioned with his hands for Baba to get out of the wagon. I was worried about what he was going to do, but then Baba sighed and asked me for my hand and I helped her down.

She didn't have much trouble getting up the stairs. She puffed a little bit and rested a couple of times, but that was all. I walked behind her just in case, so I was the last one to see our new house on the inside.

Here is what I like about my Canadian house:

- we walk up three *giant* flights of outside stairs to get here
- no one lives on top of us so the roof is ours
- I am with my dear *tato* again
- I have a bed that we set on its side against the wall during the day to keep it out of the way, but that is flipped down at night
- I don't have to share a bed with Baba

- we have an inside pump for water
- we have a big stove that heats with coal instead of wood
- we have our own outhouse in the backyard

Here is what I don't like:

- I have no room of my own
- I have to share a bed with Mykola
- the people who live underneath us are very loud
- what should be a backyard is filled with rows and rows of stinky outhouses for other people
- there is no front yard
- we only have one window!
- there is no place for a garden

***Thursday, May 7, 1914***

***early morning, in our new home***

Mama tsk-tsked when we got in. I could see that she was pleased with the place itself, but she was not happy with how Tato had been keeping it. The floor is grimy and there is a stale smell in the air. Tato said that he was renting out sleeping space to single men to make more money until we got here.

Mama had hardly been inside when she filled a big pot with water and warmed it on the stove so she could fill the tub with water and we could all have a bath. As it was warming, she started cleaning. We hadn't even sat down and she started cleaning. Mama is still the same in Canada as she was in Horoshova. I don't know whether that's good or bad.

***Later***

I still haven't seen this boy, Stefan, who supposedly lives on the first floor of this building. The family directly below us doesn't speak our language. I don't know what language they're speaking. It doesn't sound like English either.

Tato has already left. He works at a factory right on Grand Trunk Street! He says I will be starting school on Monday and Mama will be starting at the job he found for her. In the meantime, I am to help Mama get the house in order. We are also supposed to find Canadian clothing. I am glad about this. Canadian clothing may look funny, but at least people won't stare at us.

Pemlych's wife brought us a basket of buns and a jug of milk. She works for a Canadian lady just like Mama. I hope Mama gets to bring home buns from work! Mama will be working for a lady called Mrs. Haggarty. Pemlych's wife said she doesn't get to bring food home often, just when there are leftovers. The buns were delicious!

Pemlych's wife drew a map for Mama so that we could get to the Association of Ukrainians, which is at 481 Wellington Street. She said it was not a long walk. This was confusing, though, because Tato gave us a map to go to the Ukrainian Society on the corner of Centre Street and Ropery Street. Mama showed her that map but our neighbour said the Association is better if it is clothing we want.

Mama asked Pemlych's wife why both of these places had "Ukrainian" in their names and not "Galician." Pemlych's wife said that Galicia was just one area where people share our language and customs. There's also Bukovyna, the Crimea, the Carpathian Mountains and even parts of Russia and Poland!

### ***Late at night***

Things that I love:

- my new shoes and my new stockings

Things that I hate:

- this stupid dark blue jumper thing that I have to wear to school – it is so ugly!
- people who make fun of my mother
- drawers

Baba stayed with Mykola while Mama and I explored. We wanted to get to the Association of Ukrainians, but we didn't know the streets and took a wrong turn and ended up by the canal on St. Patrick Street.

A man wearing a dirty brown hat was following us. I told Mama but she told me to keep on walking. When we were about half a block away, the man yelled something at us that sounded like "Dirtybohunk."

Mama was so surprised that he was speaking to us that she turned to stare at him. She tripped on a crack, falling down hard on the sidewalk and almost pulling me down with her. As I tried to help her back to her feet, a kind shopkeeper came out of his store and helped Mama up. He didn't speak our language, but she thanked him with gestures and then she showed him our map. He turned it around and showed us what direction we needed to go in.

By the time we got to the Association of Ukrainians, it was mid-morning! An old man named Augustyn opened the door and we followed him in.

There was a man at the table who was reading a newspaper. I was shocked when I saw him because he looked just like my brother. Mama went up to him and said, "Volodymyr, is that you?"

When the man looked up, though, he stopped looking like my brother. I'll tell you later about my big brother who died. This man had a weak chin and big teeth. My brother was perfect. Mama sat down to talk to him and I looked around the rest of the room.

An old lady who was mending in the corner nodded to me in greeting. When I told her that Mama wanted school clothes for me, she looked me up and down and then started sorting through a basket of clothing at her feet. She said she'd put something together for me.

She held up a white long-sleeved shirt and showed me that it had a stain on the front. She said it would be covered up so I shouldn't worry.

When I looked down at it, I saw that it was much too short! Can you believe that it came only as far as my hips? I blushed just looking at it. There were buttons up the front, and where there should have been embroidery, there was something called a collar.

I told this lady (who I now know is Sonechko the widow) that a shirt like this was indecent! A bit of wind is all it would take to unwrap my skirt and show my privates to the world!

Widow Sonechko laughed so hard that she wiped tears from her eyes. Then she told me that this wasn't a shirt, but a blouse. Then she sorted through her basket and found a plain dark blue *thing* and pulled it over my head on top of my other clothing.

Widow Sonechko told me that this ugly *thing* is called a jumper. It doesn't wrap like my skirt, but goes over my head, so it can't get caught in the wind.

But it is so ugly! The blouse has no embroidery and the arms are tight and the collar feels like it will choke me. Also, the collar goes up so high that it hides the beautiful necklace that Irena made for me. I weep to think of wearing this jumper instead of my beautiful embroidered wraparound skirt.

Why don't Canadians wear embroidery? Why do they laugh at my clothing? What they wear is plain. At least she couldn't find shoes and stockings that fit, so I got new ones.

She found a black skirt for Mama, but no blouse. She told us to go down the street to the dry goods store. A woman who works there speaks Ukrainian and

***Friday, May 8, 1914***

***very early in the morning, sitting on the edge of my new bed***

Sorry, Diary. Mama made me turn the lights out.

I miss Irena and I miss Halyna and I miss my dear little house in Horoshova. At least the sun shines brightly through our window here.

It is hard to keep track of Canadian money. They have pennies and dollars instead of *kronen*. They have other coins too, with names like "nickel" and "dime," but I cannot keep them straight. Thankfully, each coin has a number on it that tells how many pennies it's worth.

We spent 5 dollars and 90 pennies at the dry goods store yesterday. That is more than half a week's pay for Tato. It is lucky that Mykola and Baba don't need Canadian clothing just yet.

Here's what happened:

A lady named Lydia helped us. I never would have guessed that she was from the old country because she wears a long black skirt and a high-necked white blouse.

She helped us pick out stockings and shoes and a blouse for Mama. Then she told us that Canadians wear drawers. They look like men's trousers with the bottom part of the leg cut off. I don't know why we have to buy these drawers, especially when money is so

precious. But Mama says that we're Canadian now and have to do things the Canadian way.

These drawers will make it complicated in the outhouse!

We had two bags of items to bring home, but what I really love are my new shoes. They are made of smooth black leather. They lace up the front and they go past my ankles, so I guess they're really boots. They have a little heel and they make me look tall. I just love them!

### ***Later***

On our way home, we saw a most unusual sight. There were two ladies dressed in white and they were ladling out milk to children. When we got home, Mama asked Pemlych's wife to explain. It seems that both Mykola and I can each get a pitcher of milk every day. Isn't that wonderful? She said that there was a milk scandal in Montreal. The milk being sold was dirty and babies were dying. Since then, the city set up milk depots so that children could have clean milk. I am very happy about this because it means that we can save our money!

### ***Bedtime***

Baba has scrubbed the house fresh and she has put out our embroidery and pillows. She hung up the Icon, but Tato says that we should leave all that behind us now that we are in Canada.

Mama was in the middle of rolling out *pyrohy* dough, and when he said this, she frowned. The two of them went into the bedroom, so I pressed my ear against the door to listen. Baba and Mykola were right beside me.

We could hear them having the same old argument about religion. Tato said that religion should be left in the old country but Mama said, "If you don't want to go to church, that is your decision, but God is welcome in our house."

Usually Mama lets Tato think that everything is his idea. The only thing I have ever heard them argue about is religion. Tato didn't say anything for a long time. I could hear him pacing in the room. Then the door handle turned. We almost didn't get out of the way before he opened it.

He turned to Baba and said, "You can leave that icon up."

Almost forgot! Mama has given me her hope chest! It is beautiful dark carved wood and it smells so nice. Dido made it for her when she was my age. She says that she wants me to start my embroidery so that I can have a traditional wedding even if I am in a new country. I will need cloth and embroidery thread. I am anxious to start.

So much is happening and there is so much to write about. I am glad that Tato gave me a diary with lots of pages!

### **Saturday, May 9, 1914**

Stefan is the meanest, ugliest boy I have ever met. I'm going to get back at him if it is the last thing I do. Here is what happened:

Tato only works half a day on Saturday, so this morning after he left for the factory, Mama took Baba with her to the open market and I was supposed to stay with Mykola. There is no place to play inside our house, so I took Mykola outside to play tag on the steps. It was nice to see him giggling and having a good time, and I love being outside with just my brother and no mother or grandmother to tell me what to do, but then Stefan arrived. He was carrying a large empty cloth bag, but I don't know why.

– pimply Stefan

– mean Stefan

– know-it-all Stefan

He made fun of me for wearing my embroidered skirt and even laughed at the lovely beads that Irena made for me. He said I looked like a "dirtybohunk." I asked him what that means and he said that's what Canadians call Ukrainians because they don't wash.

He knows we wash!! I said, "Maybe in your village it was dirty, but not in mine."

He said, "Even after you wash, you stink like garlic."

It seems that Canadians don't like garlic. I told him if I was a dirtybohunk then he was too, but he said that he is now a Canadian because he speaks French and English. He still eats garlic though and he makes me angry.

I yelled at him and he went away.

### ***At night***

I am snuggled in my end of the bed and I have just enough light to write with because the light from the street lamp is shining through my window. Stefan came to our door after lunch. He was carrying a ball and two wooden sticks. He apologized for being mean and asked if I wanted to play street hockey. Mama said Mykola had to take a nap but I could go if I wanted to.

I should have said no, but I wanted to find out what street hockey was. There isn't anyplace on our street to play. I am amazed at all the wagons loaded with barrels and bolts and metal things that go through our street. I think it's because there are a lot of factories on our street and the ships are close by too.

Anyway, Stefan took me about two blocks away from our house to this tall building that had a big dirt yard to play in. He told me that this is where he goes to school. It is called Sarsfield School.

We played this street hockey for a little bit. You shoot the ball back and forth with the stick. Stefan says that we weren't playing real street hockey, just a warm-up, but I liked it until he started shooting the ball at me so hard that I couldn't catch it with my stick. He said that I play hockey like a dirtybohunk girl.

Then a group of boys came along and said something to Stefan in English. He took my stick and left me standing there all by myself! It was a mean thing to do, especially because I don't know the area very well.

Why have I not met any girls? I wonder if I'll be going to Sarsfield School. I shall ask Tato.

### ***Sunday, May 10, 1914***

#### ***after everyone else is asleep***

I can't sleep because tomorrow is the first day of school. I don't go to Sarsfield School. Tato says I will be going to Notre Dame des Anges school. That's French. Tato says it means Our Lady of Angels. Isn't that a lovely name? I wish Mama could walk me to school tomorrow, but it is her first day at work. She's nervous about taking the trolley but Tato said that he would go with her the first time. Thank goodness my school is only two streets away. We found it after we went to church. I wonder if the classes will be in French or English there?

Speaking of church, we almost had another big fight in our house because Mama wanted us all to go to church. Tato said that there are no Ukrainian churches nearby and Mama should take the hint.

Pemlych's wife knocked on the door just as the argument was getting started. She told Mama that she was going to church and would we like to go with her? You should have seen the look on Tato's face! We were all going to leave with him sitting there at the table. At the last minute he said to me, "Anya, you look like a princess. I think I'll come too so that everyone knows you're my daughter."

I was going to wear my ugly stupid jumper but I changed my mind and put on my best embroidered blouse and skirt. I wore my new boots – I think that's why Tato thought I looked like a princess!

Stefan didn't come and neither did his father. It seemed like we walked forever and by the time we got to the church my feet were aching. These boots may be pretty, but they are not as comfortable as my old shoes.

The church is a French Catholic one called St. Antoine. It is plainer than in our church, but it is very pretty just the same. It is so strange to hear the priest – Father Perepelytsia, a Ukrainian priest – say a Ukrainian Mass in a French church.

Isn't it wonderful that the French community lets us use their church?

This church has benches like the one in Hamburg. Instead of standing at the back, we found a place to sit. I was thankful because my feet were sore.

The best thing about church is that there are girls there my age. I hope they go to my school.

**Monday, May 11, 1914**

***sitting at my desk all through lunch***

Maybe Stefan isn't so bad. Here is what happened:

Mama packed a lunch for me: rye bread spread with chicken fat and sliced onion. She also packed me a jar of sour milk.

I put on my drawers and stockings and plain blouse and that stupid jumper, but when I went to put on my new boots my feet hurt too much from yesterday, so I decided to leave

them off until I got to school. I didn't want to get my new stockings dirty, so I took those off too and walked barefoot.

When I was halfway to school, I could hear someone running behind me. I was afraid that it was the man who yelled at us on the street, but it was only Stefan.

He ordered me to put my shoes and stockings on. When I told him about my blisters he said that didn't matter. Then he grabbed my lunch and smelled it. "You really are a dirtybohunk," he said. I felt like hitting him and almost walked away, but then he said, "Let's trade lunches."

He had that large canvas bag again. It looked empty, but he opened it and showed me a white bread sandwich with butter and brown sugar and a jar of tea. It looked very tasty but I didn't know why he wanted to trade. He told me to just do it. He was angry and in a hurry so I traded.

I put my shoes and stockings on and then Stefan ran off to Sarsfield, leaving me alone to walk the last few steps to Notre Dame des Anges school.

My new school is made of bricks and is two storeys high and there is a fence all the way around it. I wonder why they have girls in one school and boys in another?

There were some girls playing a circle game in the yard when I got there and they laughed and pointed at me and said something English. I could feel my face go hot with shame. Why were they laughing at me? I had my shoes and stockings on and my clothing was just like theirs.

When I looked closer, I realized it was their hair. One girl had hers loose down her back. The only time my hair is loose is when I am about to jump into the bathtub. Another girl had her hair cut to chin length. Something I noticed is that most of these girls wear ribbons in their hair. I like this Canadian custom because for once it isn't plain!

But why were they speaking English? This is so confusing: a French-sounding school with English-sounding students! Oy , this is not going to be easy, going to school in Canada.

I stood there watching until the bell rang, then lined up with the other girls, but as we were walking into the school, a teacher took my hand. She led me up the stairs and we passed classroom after classroom. I didn't want to stare, but it is amazing how many separate classrooms there are. On the second floor alone, I counted four. I think each grade has its own room.

The teacher took me to a classroom at the end of the hallway. I was nervous until I stepped in. Every girl in the class wore braids. They all spoke my language! Even the teacher spoke Ukrainian!

She had her hair braided and wrapped like a wreath around her head. Her name is Panna Boyko but she says to call her Miss Boyko because “Miss” means “Panna.”

The wooden double desks and the black chalkboard are very similar to my old classroom, although there is a window on only one side, not three. In the whole class, only one girl is taller than me. Her name is Mary. Miss Boyko rearranged the room so that I am sharing a desk with Mary, and then she began to teach – in Ukrainian! I was so afraid that school was going to be hard and here it is, being taught in my own language. I wonder why Stefan didn’t tell me about this.

The grammar and arithmetic are easy. The teacher is using a book like the one that our teacher in Horoshova used for the younger children. The geography and history is interesting, though, because some of it is Canadian and some of it is about Ukrainians. There is a map of Eastern Europe and Russia on the wall and Miss Boyko has put a red dot showing the areas where people in our class have come from. She added a new dot for me. The map covers such a big area that some of the dots are almost on top of each other, while others are a little bit apart. It is also interesting to see how close Russia is to Horoshova.

At lunch, Mary noticed what I brought and said it was a good thing I didn’t bring a garlic sandwich like she did the first day. I told her about Stefan taking my onion sandwich and sour milk. She said he must be a true friend. *Stefan* a true friend? That is hard to believe, but it was a very nice thing that he did for me.

### ***Later***

Wouldn’t it be lovely to have a ribbon for my hair like the other girls wear?

I forgot to say that we only have Ukrainian class in the morning. It is not French that we are taught in the afternoon, but English. Miss Boyko teaches us that class too. The English alphabet is completely different than ours but at least some of the sounds are the same.

### ***Even later, at the kitchen table***

That man who yelled at us lives down the street. I was walking about ten steps behind him on the way home from school today and saw when he opened the door to his main-floor flat. I am glad that he didn't see me. I must remember to walk on the other side of the road when I pass his house. I wouldn't

Sorry, Diary. Baba needed help with supper.

Mama just got home and Tato will be home soon so I had to peel the potatoes and chop the onions and then take Mykola out to play. Stefan was outside. He says that the people who lived in our flat before us wouldn't let him go on the roof but he has always wanted to go up there.

We went up together. I had to hold on to Mykola the whole time so that he wouldn't fall off the edge, but it is very interesting. When I look north, I can see the mountain with a chapel and a cross on top. To the south, I can see the port with the ships coming in, and if I squint, I can see across the St. Lawrence River. There is a good view of the trains and trolley cars and people walking on the street below. At the back of our house is where all the stinky dirty outhouses are. *Feh!*

It is more fun looking out in the distance. It was a little bit chilly so we didn't stay up too long. I told Mykola that he cannot go up here on his own.

Mama is calling. It's suppertime, so I must go.

### ***At night in bed***

Things to think about:

- Stefan isn't so bad. Did my sandwich give him trouble at school?
- We should hang the laundry on the roof. I must remember to tell Mama in the morning.
- Why don't our neighbours take better care of their outhouses?

I haven't had any time yet to work on my hope chest. Mama says there will be plenty of time once we get settled.

***Tuesday, May 12, 1914, after school***

Mary lives on Centre Street, which is just two blocks away and right by the school. She says that several girls from our class live close to her.

She loaned me a set of flash cards that she made when she was learning the English alphabet. She has only been in Canada for eight months, but when she speaks English she sounds like our teacher. I tried out the flash cards on Mykola and he thinks it is a wonderful game. He remembers the letters as well as I do. I think he is very smart for a five-year-old.

***Later***

At school we learned that in English, men are called “Mr.” and married women are called “Mrs.” before their names.

I like that!

***Wednesday, May 13, 1914, bedtime***

I have solved a mystery. I know why Stefan has that big cloth bag. He sells newspapers before school and on Saturdays also. The way I know this is because it was raining today and so he didn't manage to sell all of his papers. When I passed him on the way to school, he gave me one so I could cover my head.

I avoided the puddles, but a horse and wagon splashed me with mud. The man shook his fist at me and yelled. Stefan's newspaper kept most of the mud away from my jumper and blouse, but my beautiful stockings and boots were covered. Miss Boyko made me take them off and she stuffed my boots with newspapers so they would not shrink as they dried. She gave me a pair of scratchy woollen socks to wear in class. It was so embarrassing! I had to put my dirty stockings and boots back on when it was time to go home and they were squishy and cold.

When I got home, Baba made me have a hot bath even though it is only Wednesday. She said that my boots are not ruined. They just have to dry with newspaper in them and then she will show me how to brush off the dirt and shine them.

Something else – Mama isn't Mrs. Haggarty's housekeeper after all. She works in the kitchen.

***Thursday, May 14, 1914, after school***

I don't ever want to go back to school.

***Friday, May 15, 1914***

***curled up on the floor with my pillow***

Mama said I could stay home today. I am still so shaken that I can barely hold this pen. This is what happened:

A girl named Slava comes to school dirty and she can't speak any English. Mary says that sometimes she comes without lunch, but when she does bring something, it's an oily bag with pickled herring or stinky cheese. Mary told me that Slava's mother died so it is just Slava's father raising her and he does not know how to raise a daughter.

Yesterday at lunch, the Canadian girls were playing one of their circle games and Slava wanted to play. They let her sit in the middle of the circle.

I didn't know what they were saying, but Mary was listening to their song, and it was all about Slava and that she was a dirty little animal. When they were finished, one of the girls scooped up some dirt and dumped it over Slava's head. The other girls laughed.

At first, Slava started to laugh with them, but then she realized what the girls had done. Her eyes went wide and then they filled with tears. Mary ran up to the girls and grabbed Slava away.

We told Miss Boyko and she calmed Slava down and cleaned her up, but she said for us not to make a fuss about it. She said that we had to get along with these girls and sometimes that means keeping quiet. Why are these girls so mean? Don't they realize that Slava has feelings just like they do? Sometimes I get so angry that I could cry.

Baba saw how angry I was and she sat down with me and we talked about it. She said that I should feel sorry for those mean girls. That confused me, but Baba explained that when people are nasty it means that they don't like themselves. It makes them feel better when

they hurt someone else. I can't imagine doing that, can you? I always thought that if you feel bad, you should do something nice for someone else. That always cheers me up.

Baba wanted to get my mind off it, so she showed me a new stitch. With her help, I sewed a pillowcase for my hope chest this afternoon.

I wonder if Slava went to school today?

### ***Later***

I walked over to the school and watched through the fence. Mary came over to talk to me during lunch. She said that Slava didn't come to school either. She told me where she lives. It is on Centre Street not far from Mary's.

Slava and her father share a room with two other families and you cannot get in by the front door. I had to walk through a skinny alley to the back of the building to find the door. Dear Diary, you cannot imagine how dirty the alleyway was. I had to hold my nose the whole way through. It's as bad as our neighbours' outhouses. The room itself is very dirty too. The floor is so grimed with black that you can't see the wood, and there were bugs. Even the poorest person in Horoshova lives better than this. Sometimes I wonder why we even came here.

Slava was there all by herself so I wrote a note for her father and took her back to our house. Baba boiled water for a bath and then had Slava change into some of my old clothing. Baba is washing Slava's clothes.

### ***Bedtime***

Tato knows Slava's father. They worked at the same factory. When Slava's mother died, her father got sad and didn't come to work sometimes and got fired. Now he works at jobs when he can get them, but half the time he wanders the streets.

Mama said that Tato should go and find him and invite him for supper, but Tato said that we cannot afford to be feeding everyone I feel sorry for. Mama didn't say anything, and in the end, Slava stayed for supper. We stretched out our food as best we could. I don't mind eating a little bit less if it means that Slava gets something warm in her stomach. Even Mykola put less on his plate and ignored his grumbling stomach and Mama said she didn't need supper at all because she had something to eat at Mrs. Haggarty's. After supper, we

all walked Slava back home. ~~Slava's father~~ Mr. Demchuk (Dear Diary, in case you're wondering, I am practising the "Mr." and "Mrs.") was there and he looked so happy to see his daughter clean and smiling.



### **Saturday, May 16, 1914**

This was such an exciting morning!

Stefan and me and Mykola played ball on the roof. It is nice up there because there are no people calling us names. Mary came over and played with us too. Our roof is our own private place. It is tiresome holding onto Mykola, though. Once the ball went over the side and almost hit Mrs. Pemlych as she was coming back from the market. Thank goodness Stefan was playing with us or she might have complained to Tato.

Stefan told me about a dance at the Ukrainian Society tonight and was wondering if I was going to go. Tato should be home soon, so I'll ask.

### ***Later***

Mama said how could we go when there was so much work to do at home, but Tato said that it would be good to have some fun. In fact he even said that he would get Mr. Demchuk and Slava, so we're all going to go!

### ***In my cozy bed***

Today was the best day that I have had since we came to Canada. They moved all the furniture back against the wall and there were lots of people. Many of my classmates were there, including Mary, and there were boys from Sarsfield School. There were also lots of

adults so it was crowded, but they opened the windows and let in the breeze. The band played so many familiar songs that I almost started to cry, especially when the *tsymbalist* was playing. It reminded me of dear Volodymyr. I wonder how Halyna is doing? Does she miss me? I am so glad Volodymyr taught her how to read and write too, because tomorrow I want to write her a letter.

Tato and Mama danced the polka and they were spinning so fast that my eyes blurred. I haven't seen them dance together for so long.

Stefan is a good dancer. He did all the flips and kicks beautifully. He asked me to polka with him, but I am not a good dancer and I was embarrassed. He said he would show me how to dance. We did the polka and I didn't even step on his toes. After that, he danced with Mary. She is much better than I am.

Mama says I must sleep.

#### ***Monday, May 18, 1914***

Mama insisted that I go to school today. I didn't want to walk alone because I am afraid of that man who called us names. I knocked on Stefan's door but no one answered so I had to walk by myself.

Unfortunately, that awful man was leaning against the door of his flat with a smirky look on his face. I had no choice except to pass him because there was too much traffic to cross over to the other side. I kept my eyes on the sidewalk and walked as close to the road as I dared. Just as I passed, I heard a smacking noise and then I looked down and saw a splat of greeny-yellow. It had barely missed me. I walked fast, keeping my head down. Why would he do that? He doesn't even know me.

When I went back out to the schoolyard, I saw that Slava was there and she was in the clean clothing that Baba and Mrs. Sonechko found for her on Saturday night. Those Canadian girls pretended they didn't see her. I know their names now: Ellen, Louisa and Annie (!!!).

I have to help Baba with the supper and then I'm going up to the roof where it's safe. I'll write more later.

## **Tuesday, May 19, 1914**

Miss Boyko is teaching us a song in English. It is "God Save the King." We need to know it by Friday because that is Empire Day, which is sort of like the King's namesday. We stayed inside over recess and lunch to practise.

These are the girls in my class:

- Mary and Slava you already know.
- Sofia, Pasha and Olga are sisters. Sofia is twelve but she's very short, Pasha cries a lot, and Olga pinches.
- Genya is about ten – I think – and her English is rather good.
- Natalka has been in Canada for four years but she is not bright. She struggles with the Ukrainian classes as much as the English lessons. She is a friendly girl and has a singing voice like a nightingale.
- Marusia is friendly and she's smart too. She is also a good singer.
- Stefania has been sick more days than not so I don't know her very well. She's eight years old. She was at school today but her throat hurt too much to sing.

The only Canadian girl whose name I know besides the mean girls is Maureen. She is picked on by the mean girls too. Is it horrible for me to admit that I am relieved that they don't only pick on Ukrainian girls?

Maureen seems lonely and sad. I didn't realize until today that she lives on Grand Trunk Street not too far from me!

## **Wednesday, May 20, 1914**

We painted flags called the Red Ensign in school today. They're very pretty and quite complicated.

The top left corner is the British flag, and the crest is made up of symbols from the provinces. Quebec's symbol is the group of lilies. I wish I could find lilies like that. It is spring, yet I still haven't seen flowers except for the sunflower Tato grew for Mama, and it doesn't count because it is not blooming yet. Mary said she would take me to a forest on Sunday and show me Canadian flowers.

Miss Boyko says that Canada's flag has a British flag inside of it because Britain owns Canada. She says that it is sort of like how Austria owns Galicia.

It was fun painting. After I finished my flag, Miss Boyko gave me another sheet of paper. I made a picture of our village, with the stork, the cemetery and church, and our house. Miss Boyko hung it up on the wall. She says that I am a good artist!

On the way home from school today, I saw Maureen walking about three houses in front of me and she was all alone. I walked very quickly to catch up with her. I think I scared her because she started to walk faster, so I called. She turned around and gave me a big grin. It is nice to walk home together. I wonder if that man does mean things to her also?

### ***Friday, May 22, 1914***

#### ***Empire Day, after school***

We were supposed to have an outdoor assembly today, but it poured rain. We crammed together in the common room instead and listened to a man in a fancy uniform. It was so hot that I thought I was going to faint. Mary said that he talked about how proud he was to be a British subject. She said that part of the speech was said to us in particular, and that we should think of ourselves as British subjects now, and we should learn the languages and the culture as quickly as possible. I agree with him.

After the speech, we held our flag paintings high. Then we sang "God Save the King." Everyone in our class got the words right, which relieved me because I don't want the Canadian girls to think we are stupid.

### ***Saturday May 23, 1914***

#### ***at night in my cozy bed***

The rain on our window makes me sad. It is like tears from the sky. Whenever it rains, it reminds me of Volodymyr.

Dear Diary, I have never told you about my brother, but I will now. I would rather talk about how he lived than how he died, so I'll start with that.

My brother's moustache was just a wisp and it tickled when he kissed me. He was taller than Tato and stronger than you'd think, being so skinny. Because of his beautiful voice,

he would be asked to read the newspapers aloud in the *chytalnya* and that is what started the problem. The more he read, the more hopeless he realized our lot was as long as we stayed in Horoshova.

We had so much debt and no way to get out. Tato didn't like to think about it and he and Volodymyr would have words.

When Volodymyr first fell in love with Halyna I was furious. I felt like I was losing my brother and my best friend all at once. I wouldn't speak to Halyna for a week, but then Volodymyr declared that he was going to teach us both how to read and write. You see, Dear Diary, the young girls in our village were not allowed in the *chytalnya* and many did not go to school. But Volodymyr declared that his wife and his sister would be educated and he taught us together.

He wrote me a lovely *tsymbaly* song about raindrops and sisters and how they are both sweet yet annoying, but always loved. He put it on a piece of paper and made me learn how to read it before he would play it for me. He wrote Halyna a love song, but he wouldn't sing it to her until she could read it to him. He read us the newspapers and tried to get us to understand why he felt the way he did.

If he hadn't read the newspapers, he would have been content with his lot, but he got it into his head that he would make his fortune in the coal mines of Germany.

Halyna cried when she heard this. They were already betrothed.

At the time I didn't understand, but now I know why he went. He was seventeen years old when he died, but he was trying to save up enough money for him and Halyna to get to Canada before he was forced into the Austrian army.

Oy , Dear Diary! If you only knew how many young men from our village had already died while fighting for Austria, you would understand. Volodymyr had only a few years left. He had to earn the money and escape with Halyna before he turned twenty-one.

Back then I thought that Germany was a good place to make money, but when Volodymyr came home once after being there the first month, his skin was so black that no amount of scrubbing could make him clean. When he was drying himself off, I saw a greenish purple bruise that was so large it covered the whole bottom of his back. He laughed at me when I asked him about it. "It is hard work in the coal mines," he said, "but look at what they pay me!" His wad of German marks was thicker than my finger. Volodymyr said that if he worked in the mines for a year, he would have enough to pay our debt and enough left

over so that he and Halyna could move to Canada. It seemed too good to be true, and it was.

My dear Volodymyr toiled for eight long months. He sent most of the money home and Tato was thrilled. Mama was worried, and so was Halyna. She told me she would rather be poor her whole life and married to Volodymyr, than a rich widow. As it turned out, she didn't get to be either. There was a cave-in, and many men died, including dear Volodymyr. When his body was sent home for burial, Mama wouldn't let me see it.

I miss him so much.

Tato gave some of Volodymyr's money to Halyna. She didn't want it, but Tato insisted. He paid off part of our debt, too, and then he used the rest to buy his passage to Canada.

### ***Sunday, May 24, 1914***

Everyone is still asleep. Mama will be getting us all up shortly so that we can go to church. I don't know whether Tato will come or not.

### ***Later***

Mykola has fallen in love with the flash cards. He doesn't use them to learn English letters anymore (he knows them already). He builds houses with them. He built a tower that was six cards high and I don't know how many cards wide. It was amazing! Then Tato opened the door and the wind knocked them all down.

### ***Monday, May 25, 1914***

I went to the forest yesterday with Mary! It wasn't really a forest. It was more like a lord's manor with a big yard and trees.

We had to cross the train tracks, go all the way past Wellington Street and down Fortune Street to get to it. The manor is *huge*. It is made of grey stone and has many windows. It even has windows in the roof! Mary says that it is not a lord's manor. It is called St. Gabriel House and was built about three hundred years ago for girls who came to Canada to find husbands. Such a long way to go for husbands! I don't know what they are using it for now, but there were people inside, so Mary and I tiptoed around.

In the wild area with trees, there were herbs growing. They look similar to what Mama would dry and make a medicine with. One of the plants looks like feverfew. It isn't in bloom yet so I can't be sure. I picked a bit and showed Mama. She says once it blooms she'll know for sure but she thinks it is feverfew. It would be wonderful to find feverfew for Baba's leg ...

***Wednesday, May 27, 1914, after school***

Dear Diary, by the time lights are out and I finally have a moment to myself, I am so tired that I fall asleep before I know it.

Maureen came to my house today. I took her up to my roof and we played with Mykola for a while. It was so nice to see her happy for a change.

Miss Boyko thinks that I am ready to write my English exam. I would be on top of the world if I passed! I showed Maureen the flash cards that Mary gave me and she seems to enjoy testing me with them. Also, when we walk home from school, she corrects my accent when I read the street and store signs.

I am not worried about the Ukrainian exams.

Something else –

Now that I walk home with Maureen, that man doesn't bother us so much. If he is leaning on his doorstep when we pass, we both hold our chins up and look him in the face and it is almost as if he is afraid of us! Just goes to show that two is better than one.

***Thursday, May 28, 1914, after school***

Miss Boyko is teaching us English by reading us stories from the newspaper. There is a group of women called "Suffragettes." I thought that meant they wanted to suffer, but "suffrage" is different than "suffer." It means "vote." These women want to vote. They don't want all women to be able to vote, just white women with property.

I asked Miss Boyko if all men could vote in Canada and she said no. Only white men can vote.

"Who is white?" I asked. (The only white people I have ever seen are those ladies with too much powder on their faces!)

Miss Boyko explained that “white” means different things in different cities and provinces and that it is all very confusing. Men who have been in Canada for a certain amount of time can become what she called “naturalized British subjects” and can vote. She says that immigrants from Europe and Russia can do this if they’ve been here long enough. Immigrants from Britain can vote right away. Chinese and Japanese men can’t vote no matter how long they have been in Canada, and Indian men can’t vote even though they have been here longer than everyone else.

Then Mary asked, “What about Ukrainians?”

Miss Boyko said, “A Ukrainian man may vote if he has been here long enough to become a naturalized British subject.”

This is all very strange. In the old country, all men can vote no matter who they are. Even peasant men can vote. Why are those Suffragettes just interested in giving the vote to women like themselves? What about all the other people?

### ***Later***

When I got home from school, our whole flat smelled like cabbage. It is hard for Baba to keep the house fresh when we only have one window, and especially on cabbage-roll days. Mykola was waiting for me, so we went up to the roof. The fresh air was glorious. I set Mykola on my shoulders and he waved as a grand steamer headed out towards the ocean.

Stefan came by and we played some ball. I told him about the Suffragettes and he told me that the Suffragettes in England are so rude that they stormed the king’s palace. Deep down, I know the Suffragettes only want to help white women, but it gets me mad when boys say bad things about girls. I told Stefan that I didn’t believe him. He turned and left without saying another word. I know it was mean to say, but it made me feel good to see him angry.

In a few minutes he came back with a newspaper. Sure enough, there was an article about Mrs. Sylvia Pankhurst in London, England. She and her friends had stormed Buckingham Palace. They also slashed five masterpieces in the National Gallery.

“How can you give votes to people like that?” said Stefan. He said to do it would cause anarchy.

I don't know what anarchy means but I didn't want to let Stefan know that, so I just looked him in the eyes and shouted, "No it won't."

While we were arguing, Mykola wandered right over to the edge and was dropping twigs over the side. My heart was in my mouth when I realized it. I crept up behind him and grabbed him by the waist quickly and pulled him to safety.

That's what I get for arguing with Stefan. I should know better by now.

### **Saturday, May 30, 1914**

Dear Diary, I am sorry for ruining your paper with my tears. A big steamship called the *Empress of Ireland* is now at the bottom of the sea. One thousand people have drowned. Everyone at school is talking about it. This wasn't the steamer we waved to yesterday, but one that left from the Port of Quebec.

To think that just a month ago, we were on a ship in the exact same place where the *Empress of Ireland* sank. I feel dreadful about those people who drowned, but Dear Diary, please don't think badly of me if I confide to you that I am grateful it wasn't our ship.

### **Later**

Stefan needed help selling an extra edition of the newspaper because everyone wanted to read about the *Empress of Ireland*. He gave me a stack of them and asked if I would sell them at the other end of the block. When I was done, he gave me a penny.

I am saving my penny. Maybe I'll use it to light a candle for the poor souls who sank with the *Empress of Ireland*.

## **June 1914**

### **Monday, June 1, 1914**

Dear Diary, there is a sale on ribbons at the dry goods store. For my penny, I could get a beautiful blue ribbon that is one inch wide and long enough to go around my hair and tie in a bow.

### **Later**

I can't buy the ribbon. I would feel guilty every time I wore it. How I wish I had no conscience!

### **Wednesday, June 3, 1914**

The cold weather suits my mood. I am sad, Dear Diary. Natalka Tkachuk is no longer at school. Had she just been able to stay a couple more weeks she would have finished her year.

I had thought Natalka was stupid, but she is just tired. Her mother works the evening shift in a clothing factory, so it is up to Natalka to mind her brother and sister in the evening. Mary told me that she also does the cooking and the housework. Mrs. Tkachuk broke her arm at the factory on Friday. Natalka's father must find enough money to pay the doctor, plus of course Mrs. Tkachuk can no longer work. Her boss offered to let Natalka take her place. She won't be paid as much as her mother because she needs to be trained, but at least there will be some money coming in. Poor Natalka. Poor Mrs. Tkachuk!

I hope God doesn't mind, but after school, I walked with Mary to Natalka's house and I gave her my penny. I shall say a prayer for the dead souls on the *Empress of Ireland*, but I cannot buy them their candle.

I asked Tato what would happen if he got injured. He told me that he has insurance with the Ukrainian Sick Benefit Society and not to worry.

I asked him why Mrs. Tkachuk didn't have Sick Benefits and he says that it costs a dollar a month to join so mostly just men join, because it is expensive and their jobs are more dangerous.

What if Mama gets injured?

I must remind her to be careful.

***Monday, June 8, 1914, after school***

Dear Diary, I feel bad that I haven't written more, but there isn't much to write. Each day seems like the last. I still haven't heard from Halyna. I wonder if she misses me?

- I miss the cool sweet evening breezes of Horoshova.
- I miss our cow and chickens.
- I miss my old school and my classmates.
- Sometimes I even miss Bohdan!

***Thursday June 11, 1914, late***

The girls in my class here are nice and so is Maureen, but why do the others have to be so mean? I am still studying every day and I want to do well, but it is hard to concentrate when it is so hot out.

With Natalka working, it has made me think of what I might do to help my family. Everything is expensive here and I hear Mama and Tato whispering about money when they think everyone is asleep. There are so many things to pay for – food, water, fuel, rent, insurance, clothing, trolley fare for Mama. In Horoshova, we grew our own vegetables and we got eggs from our own chickens and milk and butter from our cow, and of course there was no trolley. I had no idea it would cost so much to live in Canada. Eggs are 14¢ a dozen. Can you imagine? I shall ask Stefan and Mary if they have any ideas where I might find work. Maureen might also know.

We are lucky because Baba bakes our bread. A single loaf costs 5¢ in the store, so I don't know how people manage who don't bake their own. Our barrel of flour will cost \$3.00 to replace when it is empty, and that is half a week's salary for Mama.

Thank goodness for the milk depot.

Baba is experimenting with beans. The taste is not bad, but Mykola now passes gas all night and this is awful, seeing as we share a bed! This is one reason I would like to sleep on the roof.

***Monday, June 15, 1914***

Dear Diary, I am so happy! We had our exams today and I think I did fine. I am glad that I studied so much, but I am even gladder that they are over with.

***Friday, June 19, 1914***

Baba's left knee has swollen up. I think it is because we had more rain today than we've had since we've come to Canada. She says it doesn't bother her, but I know better. Mama has run out of her herb supply, so she cannot make a poultice.

It is too much for Baba to be carrying groceries up all these steps every day. I told her that I could go to the market by myself because I am old enough. She still needs to get down the stairs to the outhouse, but I can't help her with that.

***Saturday, June 20, 1914, morning***

What a lovely day! Cool and pleasant with just a few sprinkles of rain. We got up bright and early and I took Mykola with me to the wooded area around St. Gabriel's House and we picked wildflowers. I am sure that I have feverfew.

***Later***

Mama has made a feverfew poultice for Baba's knee. If only she didn't have to walk up and down the stairs.

### ***Even later***

Mama has decided that Baba is not to walk up and down the stairs until her knee is better. Baba is not unhappy about this. I have noticed that since we came here, she does not like to go out of the house. I think she is afraid of all the new sights and sounds.

Baba is using the chamber pot for you-know-what and guess whose job it is to empty it? I am happy to do it, but it is embarrassing. What if I run into Stefan? That would be more humiliation than I could stand.

### ***Monday, June 22, 1914, bedtime***

I have been going to the market every day since Friday and I really do enjoy it. French-speaking farmers come in from the country and lay out their fruits and vegetables and other things in the backs of their wagons. Seeing these farmers with their suntanned faces reminds me of the old country.

### ***Tuesday, June 23, 1914***

#### ***last day of school***

Miss Boyko had us come to school early and we all walked over together to church. There was a special Mass because tomorrow is the namesday of John the Baptist. The church was filled to overflowing and there were more than the usual number of hymns.

When we got back to school, Miss Boyko handed out our report cards. Each was bound in ivory-coloured cardboard and held together with a lovely red ribbon, which I plan on using for my hair. Not only did I pass my level-one English, but I got a *B*! Miss Boyko even put a silver star on my report card. She wrote that it is for “diligence.” I thanked her and didn’t let on that I don’t know what diligence is. Mary told me later that it means “working all the time to get better.” Mary got the top marks in the class and she got a gold star, which Mrs. Boyko says is for “excellence.” Mary says that means she’s really smart.

Slava did not pass. I thought it was kind that Miss Boyko still put a star on her report card. It is blue and beside it, she wrote, *Rome wasn’t built in a day. Never give up.* Miss Boyko is such a nice lady. Slava didn’t seem to mind that she didn’t pass. She was thrilled with the ribbon and the star.

I feel sad about finishing the school year. I have no idea whether I will be back. The other day, Stefan showed me a newspaper photograph of women who had graduated from university. What a wonderful country this is, that women can go to university. It makes me wonder where they got the money to go.

Mama insists that I will be going to school in September and Tato says that one of the reasons we came to Canada is because girls as well as boys can have a future here. But if we don't have enough money to pay our bills, what kind of future will we have? I dream of buying Mama and Tato a big house with windows and lots of rooms. We could sleep on the bottom floor when it is hot outside and on the roof when we wanted to. It would also be nice to only have one outhouse in the back and room enough to play and maybe room for a cow and a couple of chickens. I know that there are people who live in houses like this because I have seen them. In Canada, all things are possible.

**Wednesday, June 24, 1914**

**St. Jean Baptiste Day**

Today was a holiday and Tato stayed home from work although Mama still had to go in for half a day. We all walked together to St. Catherine Street to watch a most amazing thing. It is called a "parade." It is something like a *provody* but much fancier. Instead of just a priest holding an Icon and us villagers walking behind, this took up the whole street and the people were carried on wagons pulled by horses. Each wagon was decorated like a stage for a play and the people were dressed in costumes. Tato said they're called "floats." On one of the floats was a man dressed up like John the Baptist holding his head on a platter.

Now that school is over, I must find a job. I can't let Mama or Tato know because they would forbid me. That doesn't change the fact that we need money. I hear them whispering and I know how close we are to disaster. What if Mama got sick, or Tato got fired? The streets are filled with clusters of men without jobs. I know that keeping things from my parents is bad, but if we were still in Horoshova I might be betrothed by now, so they shouldn't be treating me like a child.

Stefan says that I can help him with his newspapers whenever they have an extra edition. He will pay me a penny each time. That is not enough though. Mary said she would go with me to the clothing factory.

**Friday, June 26, 1914**

***on the roof at dusk***

Today, Mary and I went to the garment factory where Natalka works. There are some girls who are younger than me. Surely they would hire me too? I didn't see Natalka, but she may have gone in earlier.

We walked up to the man who was stamping the time sheets. I let Mary do the talking. The man looked us both over and said that Mary was hired but that I was too young. I told him that I saw girls younger than me go inside. He just shook his head. He filled out a time sheet for Mary, then stamped it, and she went inside. I will have to ask her what they do in there.

**Saturday, June 27, 1914**

I was so busy studying for my exams and now I don't have to any more. Baba gives me housework and errands but I feel useless. She says to go out and play but I can't find Stefan. Mary was at the factory this morning. I took Mykola with me and we walked to Slava's house, but she wasn't there either. One of the tenants told me that she and her father have moved. I don't know what to think about that.

Baba has set me to work on making a duvet cover for my hope chest. This is very tedious work. I would like to start on some embroidery, but Mama hasn't had time to teach me. Oy , I wish I could make bead jewellery instead of this plain sewing. At least that would be fun.

***Later***

I went to Maureen's house for the first time today. It smells like cabbage just like ours does, because her *maimeo* (that's Irish for *baba* ) cooks cabbage too. They don't eat cabbage rolls. They have cabbage and potatoes.

I also got to meet Maureen's little sister, Brigid. She has the most beautiful toy! A small carved wooden house with four rooms and even tiny wooden furniture. There's a small carved husband and wife and two children.

Maureen said that her father carved it before she was born. Brigid let me play with her. I would love to have a little house like that!

**Sunday, June 28, 1914**

***in my cozy bed, writing by lamppost light***

Dear Diary, I forgot to tell you about Maureen's flat. It is very much like ours. I thought that because her family speaks English, she would be rich, but she's not. There was a picture of the Virgin Mary on the wall and also a Cross. On the floor was a braided rug made from all sorts of colourful scraps of cloth. I think her father made their wooden kitchen table and chairs because they were decorated with carved patterns.

I told Tato about the little house that Maureen's father had made for her and her sister. He said that if I drew a picture of it, he would try to make one for me and Mykola.

**Monday, June 29, 1914**

Another great tragedy. The clouds cried all day because Franz Ferdinand and Sophie have been shot.

I am talking about the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne. And Ferdinand's wife, Princess Sophie. The person who killed them – a student – was a Serbian who wanted his province to be free of Austria.

It is wrong for him to kill the Archduke and the Princess. I can only think how horrible it must be for their families. Ferdinand and Sophie had children. Who will look after them now?

I almost forgot. I tried a new food today. After I helped Stefan with his newspapers he asked if I would like a sandwich. I thought he meant something normal like lard or honey, but he handed me a slice of bread with something that looked like mud spread on top of it. It smelled like nuts. I nibbled at one corner. It tasted like nuts but it was gooey. He finished his whole sandwich before I even had a second bite.

"It's not going to kill you," he said. Then he told me it was called peanut butter. Imagine, making butter out of peanuts!

I took a big bite and almost choked! The taste is good, but it is so gooey that it sticks inside your throat. Stefan pounded me on the back and then he got me a glass of water. I finished the rest of the sandwich taking smaller bites.

His mother bought peanut butter at the Empire Day sale. Neither of his parents likes it, so Stefan has been eating it for breakfast and lunch nearly every day.

Stefan told me that I better not mention to my parents that I had been in his flat without his parents there. I felt my face go hot with embarrassment when he said that! I don't think of Stefan as a boy. He's just my friend.

### **Tuesday, June 30, 1914**

Dear Diary, it is still raining a little bit and it's cold outside. I don't mind, really, because when it is hot outside, it is boiling hot in our flat.

I can't sleep because I keep on thinking that I need to get a job. I told Stefan about what happened at the clothing factory and he told me that it is the law that children can't work until they're fourteen. I told him he was wrong because there are definitely girls younger than me working there.

He said that they must have brought a note from their parents.

This doesn't help me, though, because my parents don't want me to work and they would not lie about my age. Besides, neither of them could write the letter in English.

Speaking about Stefan, his flat is one half of a large room. There's a cloth hung from a clothesline separating it from the other half of the room. I could hear someone snoring over there. Stefan said that his parents rent out the other side to a night shift worker. When his older brothers lived at home, they kept the whole flat, but it is too expensive for just the three of them. (So I guess I didn't do anything bad by being in Stefan's flat because we weren't really alone, right?) His parents are hoping to save enough money to bring Stefan's uncle and aunt over. One ticket is fifteen dollars and

### **Before bed**

Sorry about that, Dear Diary. Baba let out a huge shriek and scared me. She was rolling out the *pyrohy* dough when a big black mouse ran up her skirt and onto the table. This is

the first time I have seen one in broad daylight. You would never know Baba has a bad knee by the way she chased that poor thing around the room.

Baba and I cleaned the flat from top to bottom but we couldn't find the mouse. It is near dark now. Mykola is asleep but I keep thinking I can see mouse eyes.

Oy , I almost forgot to tell you about the thing Stefan does to save money for his family. He walks along the railway track and picks up coal for the stove. I must try this.

### ***July 1914***

#### ***Wednesday, July 1, 1914***

Today is Dominion Day, which means it is Canada's namesday. I only know that because there's a sale at the store and they are calling it a Dominion Day sale. It doesn't seem to be a holiday and there are no parades.

When Tato came home from the *chytalnya* tonight, I finally got up the nerve to ask him if he would sign a letter stating that I was old enough to work. He didn't say anything for a minute or so. Then he gathered me onto his knee like he used to when I was little. He buried his face in my hair and it almost sounded like he was crying. "My dear Anya," he said. "Try to be a child for just a little bit longer."

#### ***Friday, July 3, 1914, lunchtime***

I helped Stefan with the papers again this morning and then we went up to the roof to read one of the unsold copies. Reading the paper is hard, but it is a good way to practise my English. Sometimes I read it out loud and Stefan corrects me. I was so surprised to see a story about "Ruthenians," which is another word for our people, like "Galicians" and "Bukovinians." This story said that the government was upset because of all the "Ruthenians" who can't find a job. Some cities have even been setting up soup kitchens. That's sort of like the milk depot, only with soup. It sounds nice, but it isn't. The story says that people who go to the soup kitchens will be "deported," which means sent back to the old country.

What if this happened to us? We are pennies away from disaster. I pray that Mama and Tato can keep their jobs. If we were deported, that would be the end of us! We have nothing left in Horoshova. We sold it all. Oy . I am so worried.

**Tuesday, July 7, 1914, bedtime**

I haven't seen Stefan for a few days but he came to our flat today to show me another article in the newspaper. He knows that I like to read stories that mention our people. This article said, "Ruthenian vote may sway election in Manitoba."

!?!?!

Stefan explained to me that there are thousands of Ukrainian men in Manitoba who can vote. Isn't that wonderful? It does get me worried, though. If they sway the vote the wrong way, will other voters get angry with them?

**Friday, July 10, 1914**

A letter came all the way from Horoshova just for me. It is from my dear Halyna. I have pasted it into my diary.

*May 25, 1914*

*Dearest Anya,*

*I miss you so much. I hope you find the time to write to me soon.*

*Horoshova seems empty without you. I think of you living in that beautiful big house with lots of food to eat and plenty of money. I am happy for you, but I have a confession too. I am jealous.*

*When I get very sad, I take out Volodymyr's tsymbaly and play a simple tune. It makes me cry but then somehow I feel better. How I wish I could come to Canada and be with you.*

*It is not good here. The lord has increased our taxes yet again and Father does not have the money to pay. Do you remember Pan Smitiuch, our teacher? He has joined the Austrian army. There is no one to teach the older students now, although I have been asked to work with the younger ones. I am not educated like Pan Smitiuch, but I do the best I can. As the days go on, it seems like Horoshova is turning into a village of women.*

*The men who don't die in the coal mines either flee to Canada or join the army. How I wish everyone would leave Horoshova alone.*

*I don't want to make you feel bad, so I will tell you of happier things. The flowers are blooming and our cow Chorna gave birth to a beautiful pink-nosed calf. I am calling her Kvitka because she reminds me of the flowers. I planted fresh flowers at Volodymyr's grave and also for your dido. I have decided to adopt these graves and treat them like family, since we were almost family in life.*

*I hope that you can write to me soon. I think of you every day and send you my love.*

*Your best friend forever,*

*Halyna*

Dear Diary, I hope I haven't ruined your pages with my tears. I was so happy to get a letter from Halyna, but now I am not so sure. I am so worried about her and also worried for everyone in Horoshova. It sounds like she didn't get my letter yet. She must think that I have abandoned her. Oy , I am so sad.

I hope my letter gets to her soon. I told her all the horrible details about our trip on the ship and where we live. I even told her about our stinky outhouses and how much I miss Horoshova. Maybe when she reads it she won't be as sad. She shouldn't be jealous either.

### ***Wednesday, July 15, 1914***

Dear Diary, today is Volodymyr's namesday. At breakfast, Baba put out an extra plate and then we all held hands and sang "Vichnaya Pamyat ." I could feel my throat choking up with sadness as I sang, but I didn't want to cry because I know that would make Mama cry too. We are trying to remember all the joy that Volodymyr brought into our lives. Tato says there is no point in dwelling on the sadness. One thing that I will always be grateful for is that my dear brother taught me how to read and write, and Halyna too. It is such a comfort to me to be able to keep in contact with her. Just think, if Volodymyr had not taught me how to write, Tato would never have given me you, Dear Diary.

## ***Later***

This is the second time I got a letter in a single week. This one is from Irena. In case you don't remember her, Dear Diary, she is the girl I met on the ship. I have pasted her letter below too.

*General Delivery,*

*Hairy Hill, Alberta, Canada*

*July 3, 1914*

*Dear Anya,*

*I promised you that I would learn to write and here is my first letter to you! Are you proud of me?*

*How is your new house? Is it really three storeys tall? Where do you sleep? I am so excited to think of you being in that giant place.*

*Our house is not as grand as yours. Our neighbours are far away and at first I wondered how my father could build a homestead all by himself. It is something like our old house in the village, only more simple. The roof is made of sod and the floor is mud. The homesteaders came all the way from the Willingdon district, a day's drive by horse and wagon, to help my father build his homestead. This is called a "building bee" and it is just like a toloka in the old country. They put our home together in a single day! My father showed me where he lived before and it is just a hole in the ground, with logs propping up some sod.*

*There are other children in the area, although our closest neighbour is a single man named Yurij Feschuk. He is from our village in the old country. There is no school here, but there might be one in a year or two. Right now, I walk to the married neighbours' and several of us children walk the five miles to the nearest school.*

*My teacher helped me write this letter – he says I am learning fast.*

*We have only a small crop of vegetables and wheat because our land is still covered with trees. My father and I clear what we can while Mama tends Olya and the house.*

*I long to be back in my old village with my old friends and without this back-breaking work. It is good to be here with my father, though, and he keeps on reminding me that here in Canada we are free.*

*I miss you, Anya! Please write. Tell me about Montreal.*

*Your true friend,*

*Irena*

*P.S. Olya sends you a big kiss.*

*P.P.S. I am keeping the necklace you made me in a safe place. I look at it often and think of you.*

It is strange to think of Irena out on the prairies. I hope she is able to make some good friends at that school. Maybe Stefan is annoying sometimes, but at least he is a friend. And I have Mary and Maureen too. I wonder where Slava is?

#### ***Monday, July 20, 1914***

When I go to the market, I see that there are more men on the street and waiting in line at the soup kitchens.

Stefan wrote that letter to the factory owner for me yesterday and I signed it myself. I went to the factory as soon as both Mama and Tato had gone to work. Guess what? They hired me.

Oh, Dear Diary, how will I ever break the news to Tato? I know it was wrong of me to sign his name, but this is something I need to do. He is going to be so angry with me for going behind his back. I hope I can convince him that this may save our family.

Here is what the factory is like. There are rows and rows of girls sitting at tables with sewing machines. The lead seamstress put me beside Mary and she showed me that I am to run a seam down one side of a blouse, then stop. Then do the same thing with the next blouse. I have a huge wicker basket of partly sewn blouses. Once I do that one seam in all the blouses in the basket, I pass the basket on to the girl in front of me and she does a different seam.

I get paid a penny for every ten seams. We are supposed to do at least 500 seams a day but today I only did 234 and I also poked my thumb with the needle. Mary told me they

won't pay you for work that has blood or dirt on it. Hopefully, my fingers will toughen up. If I had a sewing machine at home, I would have my hope chest finished in an instant!

I got home just before Tato did. Baba gave me a look but she said nothing.

### ***Friday, July 24, 1914***

Stefan came to my door as soon as he saw that I was home from work. He showed me the newspaper headlines from this morning: *Austrian Government Sends Serbian Government Stern Note*. Stefan said that he overheard men in the soup lines talking about it. He says that Austria thinks Serbia planned for that student to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Princess Sophie. If this is true, there could be a war!

### ***Saturday, July 25, 1914, afternoon***

Stefan was sitting on the bottom step when I came back from my half day today. "Russia is backing Serbia, and Germany is backing Austria," he said. "There is probably going to be a war."

Oy , Dear Diary, I am afraid. Horoshova is close to the border of Russia. If there is a war, it could be in my old backyard. I hope Russia thinks twice about this, and Germany too.

Something else awful happened. Do you remember that man in the dirty brown hat? He passed us as we sat on the steps and flicked a lit cigarette at Stefan. I saw him pass and noticed that he flicked his hand and muttered "Austrian scum" to us. I didn't realize about the cigarette until Stefan's pant leg started to smoulder. I tried to put the fire out with my hands and I burnt my palm. Stefan covered it with his newspaper bag until the smouldering stopped. He is more angry about his ruined pants than the burn on his leg, seeing as these are his only pants. I told Stefan that he should tell the police, but he laughed at that and said, "Do you really think they would take our side?"

### ***Monday, July 27, 1914***

I knew something was wrong even without reading a newspaper. A man from our neighbourhood was being beaten by a group of thugs in the street and yelling for help, but there was nothing I could do for him and I ran all the way to work. Then when I got there

and punched in my time card, the boss said something under his breath about “you Austrians” being unreliable.

Mary says that Austria and Serbia are on the “brink of war.” Their governments are not even on speaking terms anymore. Oy , this is bad!

When I finished at the factory, Stefan was waiting for me and Mary. He was still wearing his burned pants and his leg was bandaged. He said that in these “uneasy” times, immigrant girls are not safe. This makes me worry about Mama. She has to travel so far by trolley and then on foot. I wonder how safe she is?

When we got to the market, the lady who usually sells me onions gave me a dirty look and slapped down my change. At least she didn’t call me an Austrian.

#### ***Wednesday, July 29, 1914, after work***

Austria has declared war against Serbia! All the girls at work are talking about it. I am so afraid! This is a bad bad day.

#### ***Thursday, July 30, 1914, bedtime***

Tato was at the *chytalnya* until very late again last night. Mama looked so worried that I sat with her until Tato came home. After I kissed Tato goodnight and went to bed, I thought I would fall right to sleep, but I couldn’t. Instead, I listened to Mama and Tato whispering in the other room.

Tato said that people at the *chytalnya* were talking about the war. It said in the newspapers today that more than a million Russian soldiers are getting ready to fight. If Russia gets into the war, what will happen to Horoshova? We are so close to the border.

#### ***Friday, July 31, 1914, after work***

It was so hot and sticky in the factory today that I felt I could hardly get my breath. During break, one of the girls showed me a newspaper. It is all about the war. Right on the front page it says the Austrians are attacking and that the Russians are ready to fight. There was also a story that said Canada might fight too. Oy , this is not good for any of us!

## **August 1914**

### **Sunday, August 2, 1914, after church**

Tato doesn't often come to church with us but he did today. The priest read a letter that was written by Bishop Budka. The bishop has urged all men of fighting age to return to Galicia and fight with the Austrians to protect our lands.

Mama and Tato said nothing to each other all the way home and then they locked themselves in the bedroom to talk. I had my ear against the door and heard everything that they said. Bishop Budka's letter has made Tato think. I could hear his voice crack with emotion, and although I couldn't see it, I think Mama sat close to him on the bed and hugged him. I don't want Tato to go. Didn't we come to Canada to be free of all that? But Tato said, "What if the Russians invade Horoshova?"

My heart pounds in fear at the thought of it. Why do all these countries want to fight? Mama told him that he had to think of Mykola and me and her and Baba before he thought of Horoshova, then I heard them both weeping.

### **Monday, August 3, 1914, at lunch**

Oy , Dear Diary, this is a very bad day. Stefan showed me today's headlines as I was leaving for work this morning. Germany has declared war on Russia! And Germany has invaded France! Britain is getting into the war, and Stefan says that means Canada will definitely be in the war too!

I was so worried about this all morning that I wasn't watching my sewing as carefully as I should. I poked myself with the needle. I had to wrap my finger tightly with a strip of cloth so my blood wouldn't ruin the garments.

### **Tuesday, August 4, 1914, after work**

Tato has lost his job. They have fired the Ukrainians at his factory. When Tato asked why, his boss said, "For patriotic reasons."

I don't know that means, so I asked Mary. She told me it means they don't like foreigners. She says it didn't help that Bishop Budka had just told Galicians to go back to the old country and fight for the Austrians and Germans. I asked her if we might get fired too, but she said that the boss wouldn't be able to get enough Canadian girls to do our job, so we are probably safe.

### ***Later***

I had no choice. I had to tell Tato that I took a job. He would have found out anyway, now that he is going to be home in the daytime.

He was upset that I went behind his back. I was so ashamed that I burst into tears. I told him that I only did it for the family, and then I held out the \$5.71 that I have earned so far. He set the money on the table, then sat me on his lap. "I should be the breadwinner, not my wife and daughter."

"It will get better," I whispered.

He hugged me tight. I could feel his tears on my cheek.

It is like a weight off my shoulders to have finally told him. I don't like keeping secrets from my parents.

### ***Wednesday, August 5, 1914***

Tato went to the market on his own so that I would have one less chore, but Baba scowled when she saw his choices. The onions are shrivelled and he bought the expensive eggs by mistake and he forgot to get the soap, so next time, we will go together.

### ***At dusk on my roof***

My hand trembles as I write this. It has happened. War has been declared.

### ***Later***

Stefan tells me that the newspapers are full of stories about "the foreigner problem" and how we are a burden to Canada. How can the newspapers say such things?

Tato has been to every factory for miles around and no one will hire him. Tato says that they think he is the enemy.

I fear for Halyna and all of our dear friends in Horoshova.

***Friday, August 7, 1914, late at night***

Tato walked me to work today. He tried to pretend he was doing it for my company, but I think he's worried about my safety.

Tato spends his days either at the *chytalnya* or looking for another job.

Almost forgot – Mama also has a travelling companion. Mrs. Haggarty's housekeeper, Mrs. Casey, is one trolley stop away from us. Tato walks Mama to the trolley stop and watches while she gets on, and then Mama rides one stop on her own and then Mrs. Casey gets on and sits with her the rest of the way. Mrs. Haggarty sends her gardener to walk them both from the trolley to her house.

Mama says that Mrs. Casey is a stern-looking woman (but she is actually very kind) and they both feel safer when they travel together. I wouldn't mind if women like Mrs. Haggarty got the vote.

Mrs. Casey should get the vote too.

***Later***

Mama should get the vote too.

***Saturday, August 8, 1914, after supper***

Tato was at the *chytalnya* almost all day today. Even when he comes home he still seems to be thinking about what he heard and discussed there, which is probably all about the war. Sometimes he talks to Mama about it when he doesn't think anyone else is listening. Other times, he keeps it to himself.

It was so hot in the factory yesterday that one girl fainted. Our flat gets very hot and stuffy. It gets hot up here on the roof too, but at least there is a breeze and today is a little bit cooler.

**Sunday, August 9, 1914**

Tato came to church with us again today and there was another letter read aloud from Bishop Budka. He says that since Britain and Canada have now entered the war, he is supporting the British. This is all so confusing! Britain and Canada are on the same side as Russia. Isn't Russia Galicia's enemy? Tato is angry at Bishop Budka. He says that it is because of Bishop Budka's letter last week that so many Ukrainians were fired.

**Tuesday, August 11, 1914**

Dear Diary, each day is more dreary than the next. It is very hot at the factory and no cooler at home. Halyna sent me another letter, dated before the war began. It is pasted below:

*Horoshova, Borschiv County, Galicia*

*July 24, 1914*

*Dearest Anya,*

*Thank you for your May letter. It was so interesting to read about your trip over the ocean and about your new house. I am thrilled that you are going to school and that you are learning English. Life is not very good here. As you know, the Archduke was assassinated. This has caused much trouble for us. They say there is going to be war. The army is hungry for soldiers but also for our crops. Our taxes have gone up so much that I think we must starve.*

*I have some other news and I hope it will not upset you. I am betrothed. I am sure you remember Bohdan Onyshevsky? I know that you and he never really got along, but he is much nicer than you remember. I hope you will give us your blessing. Please know that I still love dear Volodymyr, but he is dead and life must go on. Bohdan has offered to help my parents with their taxes. I do not love him, but he is kind. Maybe now that you are in Canada, you will be able to choose your own husband. How I wish I lived in Canada too.*

*Do you remember my newborn calf Kvitka? She has grown big and strong. The soldiers took away her mother Chorna, so we have no milk until Kvitka is older.*

*Please write and tell me about your wonderful new life. It makes me happy to know that you are happy and safe.*

*Your true friend,*

*Halyna*

Oh, Dear Diary, my heart almost stopped when I read that Halyna is marrying that horrible Bohdan! It is a true sign that all of the men are gone. I don't know whether I should tell Halyna all of the things that are happening to me. I don't want to upset her. But she is my friend so I should tell her the truth. Maybe it will make her feel better about her own life.

### **Sunday, August 16, 1914**

On the way to church today a man ran up to Baba and grabbed her *babushka*. Baba held onto it and wouldn't let him pull it off her head. He pulled so hard that he knocked her to the ground, but Baba still wouldn't let go. Tato yelled at the man but it didn't do any good and by this time, there were a couple of other men gathered around and even a woman. They were all laughing at Baba, telling her she should go back to where she came from.

Tato's face was red with anger and he punched the man in the mouth. That made the man let go of Baba's scarf. Mama and I helped Baba to her feet. There was blood on the man's teeth. I watched in horror as he punched Tato's stomach so hard that Tato fell down. I ran to help him up, but before I could get there, another man kicked Tato in the ribs. Just then, a couple of men from the *chytalnya* came to Tato's defence. The other men scattered. I hate to think what would have happened if those friends hadn't come by right then.

Mama said that maybe we should go back to the flat, but Tato brushed all the dust from his clothing and then checked to see if Baba was injured. Without saying a word, he held out an arm for Baba, which she took. Mama walked on the other side of Tato and gently looped her arm around his back so he didn't limp too much.

Mykola looked like he was about to burst into tears. "Do you want a piggyback?" I asked.

A smile poked through his sadness, so I crouched down and he hopped up and we continued on our way to the church.

### ***Later***

Stefan came up to the roof after church and sat with me. "What are all these little white and yellow balls?" he asked, looking at my feet. They were the beads from the beautiful necklace that Irena had made for me. The threads must have broken without me realizing it. I stood up and shook out my clothing and more beads fell to the ground. What I was hoping was that the one special Venetian bead somehow got stuck in my clothing and wasn't lost. Stefan got down on his hands and knees and helped me look, but we couldn't find it. I don't know when it broke. Perhaps when I gave Mykola a piggyback?

It makes me sad to have broken the necklace that Irena made for me, but if I hadn't lost the Venetian bead I could have at least put it back together. Oy , can things get any worse?

### ***Thursday, August 20, 1914, after work***

I don't have much new to write, but just wanted to say that Mary's eyes were red this morning. She told me that her older brother has enlisted in the Canadian army. I didn't know she had a brother. She has never mentioned him before. It turns out that he lives in Toronto and speaks good English. His name is Ihor but he calls himself George.

### ***Friday, August 21, 1914***

It rained all day. I got soaked going to work and coming home!

### ***Later***

Tato just came home. He says something called the "War Measures Act" has been put into place. It means that people who recently came from Austria-Hungary or Germany can no longer get newspapers or letters from home, and if the government wants to, it can take property away from us because we're "enemy aliens." As if we owned much.

**Monday, August 24, 1914**

***dusk, on my roof***

I am getting better at doing the seams. My stitches are so neatly done that the boss has moved me to another job. In one way this makes me sad because I no longer sit beside Mary, but I do make more money. My new job is working with the buttonhole maker. It is a more difficult job and Mary told me that they have trouble keeping people in it. I am going to try my best, even if it means staying late at work. I cannot lose this job. My family depends on it.

**Tuesday, August 25, 1914**

It is cold, Dear Diary, and so is my mood. Because of the War Measures Act, men who are not "naturalized British citizens" must report at the Immigration Building on St. Antoine Street. This means Tato must report too! He went there today for the first time. Some men are being held as prisoners there, including Slava's father! Where could Slava possibly be? I am worried about her.

**Thursday, August 27, 1914**

The Russians have invaded Germany. Each day, the news gets worse. My life is black black black and all this has happened because of that student killing the Archduke.

This may sound awful, but even though it is bad here in Canada, I am glad that we are here and not in Horoshova. If we were there, Tato might be dead by now.

**Friday, August 28, 1914, at bedtime**

Now Germans have invaded the north of France. They are calling this "a terrific struggle waged all over the world." I am sad for all the people who are being killed. And all because of an argument between Austria and Serbia.

### **Saturday, August 29, 1914**

The British have sunk four German warships. It is good that Britain is doing better in the war, but what about all of those Germans? They don't deserve to die. None of these people deserves to die. It is all so unfair.

Since it is unsafe to be outside, I have been doing work on my hope chest. It is a dreary life to work in a sewing factory all week and then to handsew on the weekend, but I am trying to stay busy to take my mind off the war.

### **Monday, August 31, 1914**

The weather was so nice that I asked Tato if we could go to the market together today. He is getting good at shopping, but I need to get fresh air once in a while. I was shocked at how rude a few of the farmers are to him. Some of the people that I used to buy goods from will no longer sell to us. There are still farmers who will sell to us, thank goodness.

## **September–December 1914**

### **Wednesday, September 2, 1914**

I am forcing myself to look happy today even though my heart is breaking inside. Mykola is going to school, but I am not. How can I possibly go to school when I have a good job? Tato was angry with me when I told him I would not quit, but deep down I know he was relieved. After he sat quietly at the table for a bit, he said if his daughter wasn't in school, then his son would be. I think Mykola is too young to go to school, but Stefan says other boys his age go, so Mykola should also. Besides, with me working such long hours, what child is here to play with him? Stefan said he would take Mykola to Sarsfield School with him and he has promised to watch over him. I just hope Stefan stays in his nice mood about this.

I wish I had the kind of job Stefan has so I could work and still go to school, but I am thankful for what I have. It makes me proud that I can help support my family.

***Friday, September 4, 1914***

Mykola came home from school today with a bloodied lip and a big grin. He said the school bully tried to beat him up but he stood his ground. "He looks a lot worse than I do," he said. I asked where Stefan was when all this was happening. "He was being beaten up too," said Mykola.

Oy . My little brother is growing up too quickly. I wish he didn't have to learn how to fight, but I know he has no choice. At least he isn't afraid to stand up for himself.

***Sunday, September 6, 1914***

It is Mykola's namesday and he is now six. He was in a bad mood because it poured rain all day and he wanted to play on the roof with me. Baba and I surprised him with our special present. I was able to purchase some cloth from the head seamstress at a good price, and also some buttons. She let me stay after work. I made Mykola a Canadian shirt. I don't know how to make trousers with a sewing machine, but I brought home some cloth for that too, and Baba handsewed a pair of Canadian trousers while Mykola was at school. You should have seen his eyes when he opened up the package! Maybe now he won't have to get into fights.

Mama gave him a pair of knitted socks, and Tato gave him a penny. Mykola wasn't going to accept it at first, but Tato insisted. I wonder what he will buy with it?

Almost forgot – there was some cloth left over so I gave it to Stefan. His mother patched his pants and they look much better.

***Friday, September 11, 1914***

The British forces have pushed the Germans back thirty-seven miles! Oy , I hope this war is over soon.

My life is dreary and every day is the same. The only news is from the newspapers and it is not good!

**Tuesday, September 29, 1914**

Dear Diary, I am so sorry that I have not been writing in you more often, but there is nothing to report except the same old bad news about the war. Each day is like the last and my hands are so sore from working in the factory all day that I don't want to write in you unless I have something different to say.

**Wednesday, October 7, 1914**

**(cold all day)**

The newspaper says that 22,000 Canadian soldiers are being sent to Britain for training. I wonder if Mary's brother is one of them?

**Monday, October 19, 1914**

**(cold and rainy like my spirits)**

Dear Diary, I barely have the heart to write. The war is going well for Canada and that is good, but it makes me wonder about what is happening back home. I have had no letters or news from Halyna because of the War Measures Act. From what the newspapers say, it sounds like there could be fighting right in Horoshova. I am so worried and sad.

**Tuesday, October 27, 1914**

There was frost on my window when I woke up this morning and the puddles I saw on the way to work were frozen. Again I find that the weather fits my spirits. In the paper today there was a map of northern Europe showing the enemy line. I wish they would show a map of what is happening in eastern Europe. It is hard not being able to hear news from home. Also, the newspaper said that the Allies (that's the Canadians and the British and France and Russia) have taken prisoners. I wonder if any of them are from Horoshova?

**Sunday, November 1, 1914**

Dear Diary, my hands have been too sore to write and too sore to do more work for my hope chest. I am just going to stay curled up on this pillow and try to think of happy things.

**Tuesday, November 10, 1914**

The buttonhole machine is finicky and I have poked my fingers more than once, but I am good at it and I need this job. There was frost on the window yesterday morning and my hands were blue with cold by the time I got to work, but it is milder now.

All of my days are the same.

**Sunday, November 29, 1914**

It says in the paper today that eight Victoria Crosses have been awarded in England. Five were given to privates and three to officers. I wonder if Mary's brother got one.

**Saturday, December 19, 1914**

**Late at night, exhausted after a wonderful day!**

When I got home from work at lunchtime, Mama and Tato and Baba and Mykola were all sitting at the table, grinning. There were two small parcels wrapped up in red cloth and tied with string.

I had forgotten that it was St. Nicholas Day today.

Do you know what was inside, Dear Diary? A beautiful carved little girl, with braids made of real hair and a cloth kerchief and a little flowered skirt. Inside Mykola's parcel was a carved boy with a sheepskin vest.

Tato made the dolls, and Mama and Baba sewed the clothing for them. I have no idea when they made them. I suppose while I was at work or after I went to bed. Mykola seemed to know all about them. Tato said he didn't have time to make a doll's house yet, but he would. He says that he wants me to stay a child just a little bit longer.

It makes me feel bad that I have no gifts to give, but Mama said that I give so much every day, what with work and helping with Baba's chamber pot!

**Wednesday, December 23, 1914 (cold!)**

There was a letter waiting for me when I got home from work! Even before I saw the return address or the stamp, I knew it couldn't be from Halyna because of the War Measures Act. It was from Irena. I have pasted it in below:

*General Delivery,*

*Hairy Hill, Alberta, Canada*

*November 30, 1914*

*Dear Anya,*

*Sorry that I have not written sooner but you would not believe all the work there is to do on a homestead. I have no idea how my father managed before Mama and me and Olya got here! Our crops were small this year because we still have only managed to clear away the trees from a few of our 160 acres.*

*You would be surprised at the dry air here. The palm of Mama's hand cracked from dryness and it is taking a long time to heal.*

*We did get our small crop in, though, and our vegetables are in the root cellar and our grain is in sacks. Father bought a musket and ammunition from an Indian and he and our neighbour have been hunting. This is good because if it wasn't for the duck and geese, we would be hungry. Father says that the Indians are the ones to count on when you're in trouble because they don't look down on us.*

*We have heard that some new immigrants in the cities are being put in prison. Is this true? Our men must go into town and get their papers stamped at a government office, but that is all.*

*Olya sends you kisses and so do I. Mama says hello to your Baba and Mama.*

*Your good friend,*

*Irena*

**Friday, December 25, 1914 (colder!)**

I am bundled in my comforter even though it is daytime!

Dear Diary, people in Canada celebrate Christmas today and so I have a day off work. It is so cold today that I cannot believe it. It never gets this cold in Horoshova. Stefan and his parents came up earlier for a visit and they said that our flat is warmer than theirs! They told me it is two degrees below freezing!

***Monday, December 28, 1914***

It says in today's newspaper that the Russian army has captured 17,000 men in Galicia and the Carpathians. I can hardly hear the news anymore without weeping. I wonder how many of our men have been arrested in Canada?

***Later***

Tato said that I could come with him tomorrow to the Immigration Building where he has been reporting in every Tuesday since the War Measures Act started. He doesn't think it is a good place for girls to go, but I told him I wanted to see for myself who they were holding there.

***Even later***

Mama and Baba amaze me. Even though we have very little to eat ourselves, they made a small batch of honey cookies (they used corn syrup because honey is too expensive) for me to take to the prisoners. Mama says that times are difficult for us, but at least we can still live together at home and we always must think of those less fortunate.

***Tuesday, December 29, 1914***

Tato met me outside of the factory after work and he had the package of cookies with him. As we walked to the Immigration Building, we talked about what was in today's paper. The Russian army is right on top of our homeland. I am very fearful because the Russian Tsar wants to conquer our people. Also, the Austrian army has been cut in two. Who will be left after this war is over? It is too bad Ukraine sits almost in the middle of Germany, Austria and Russia.

When we got inside the Immigration Building, I almost cried. They are holding so many immigrants as prisoners.

The men seemed to be happy for the cookies, but there were so few cookies that some men only got a bite. After that, we stood in line for about half an hour and then Tato got his registration card stamped. He has to carry this card with him wherever he goes.

You will never believe who is one of the soldiers there! Remember the awful man in the dirty brown hat? Him! He is Private Howard Smythe. He wears a uniform now and I almost didn't recognize him, but as we left he whispered something so evil that I can't write it here. Tato pulled me away but I turned around and looked at Private Smythe. He has grey eyes and dark eyebrows and would actually be nice looking if it wasn't for his personality.

## ***January–March 1915***

### ***Wednesday, January 6, 1915***

#### ***Svyat Vechir, which is Christmas Eve in English***

Oy , what is *Svyat Vechir* without the carolling? But how can we go carolling with the way that people feel about us? At least the blanket of snow outside hides the litter and the coal dust on the streets. I am amazed at Baba. She somehow managed to make something for all twelve courses. Each course was very small, but here is what we had. I will write the English words too:

1. *kolach* (braided egg bread)
2. *borshch* (beet soup)
3. *vushka* (mushroom-stuffed noodles for the *borshch* )
4. mushroom-stuffed *nalyshnyky* (thin pancakes)
5. cheese and potato *pyrohy*
6. sauerkraut *pyrohy*
7. kasha *pyrohy* (buckwheat perogies)

8. meatless *holubtsi* (cabbage rolls made with mushroom and rice)
9. *studenetz* (jellied fish – *feh!*)
10. *kutya* (my favourite – a pudding made with poppy seeds, honey, nuts and grain)
11. compote (another wonderful treat – stewed fruit)
12. and even a torte (the first time in our new home)

Baba must have been planning for weeks. We set an extra plate so that the spirits of Volodymyr and Dido could join us. I think perhaps they should stay in heaven right now though because it is so cold here. Then again, they could enjoy Baba's cooking! This is a very late night and I must be at work tomorrow, even though it is *Rizdvo*, our Christmas Day. Good night, Dear Diary, and *Veselykh Svyat* – or Happy Holidays!

### ***Thursday, January 7, 1915***

#### ***Rizdvo, late at night***

This is the worst Christmas ever. I didn't mind working on *Rizdvo*, truly I didn't. We need the money. But when I got home I found Mama in tears. She has been fired. Mrs. Haggarty did not want to fire her. She is a fine woman and she even sent a package of food home with Mama today. Mrs. Haggarty said it was for Mama's "own good" that she not work for her just now, but said as soon as the war is over she can have her old job back.

I am so angry. Doesn't Mrs. Haggarty know that we depend on Mama's pay? Oy, how shall we live now?

### ***Saturday, January 9, 1915***

My hands are sore and every day is the same. Nothing new to write about.

### ***Wednesday, January 20, 1915, after work***

It has happened. Our rent was due on January 15th. We paid as much as we could, but the landlord is kicking us out if we cannot pay the rest by the end of the week.

***Thursday, January 21, 1915***

Mama came with me to work today. I thought maybe they would hire her, but they say she is too old. She held her head high, but I could see the tears in her eyes. How will we manage? What is going to happen to us?

***Saturday, January 23, 1915***

I have only a few minutes to write, because we are *packing*!

The landlord came today and told us we had to be out of the flat by midnight. It doesn't matter to him that there is a blizzard outside. We must be out. Where shall we go? I am so scared!

***Sunday, January 24, 1915, at Stefan's***

Thank goodness for Stefan and his parents. The person who was renting the other half of their flat has been arrested. Mr. Pemlych has lost his job too, and they were having trouble paying their rent. They have rented the other half of their flat to us. Between my job, Stefan's, and what Mrs. Pemlych earns, we have enough to cover the rent. There is very little left over for food.

***Monday, January 25, 1915***

***at dawn at Stefan's***

I know that it is awful for me to say, but I am almost glad that the Pemylchs' boarder was arrested. Where could we go if he was still living here?

***Friday, January 29, 1915***

I have been too sad and too cold to write. Besides, the days seem just the same.

**Monday, February 8, 1915**

Tato and I had words today. He said that he was going to stand in the soup line. I told him that people who go to the soup line might get arrested. He didn't believe me, Dear Diary! I am so worried about him! We still have a few potatoes and a quarter barrel of flour. Mykola can still get free milk. I know it's not very much food, but I would rather go hungry than risk having Tato get arrested.

**Wednesday, February 10, 1915**

*My namesday* : I am now thirteen.

At lunchtime today, Mary and the other girls sang "*Mnohaya Lita* , " or "Many Years," which was very nice. Mama and Baba made a small batch of potato *pyrohy* and our family and the Pemlych's all ate together. What really surprised me is that Mykola made a picture for me at school today as a present. It is pinned to the sheet that separates our part of the flat from the Pemlych's part. He drew me a picture of our old cottage in Horoshova. Stefan made a poem for me. Here it is:

Roses are red

Violets are blue

Sugar is sweet

And so are you

**Thursday, February 11, 1915**

Stefan didn't make up that poem. Mary told me it is an old Canadian poem. I still like it, though!

**Friday, February 12, 1915**

Today it is almost warm. Maybe Tato was right about the soup kitchen. He and Mr. Pemlych have said that they see the same people there every day and no one has been arrested. Maybe the rumours were wrong.

### ***Later***

Mykola is doing well at school. He brought home an arithmetic test that he got 100% on! Tato hung it up on the sheet beside the picture. I am pleased for my brother but I am also jealous. I wish I was still going to school so that Tato could be proud of me too.

### ***Monday, February 15, 1915***

This is a terrible day. Tato has been arrested and so has Mr. Pemlych. They are being held at the Immigration Building. Baba says that Mama and Mrs. Pemlych have gone to the Immigration Building to see what they can do to bring the men home.

### ***Later***

#### ***at the Pemlych flat, wrapped in my comforter***

All I can do right now is wait. Here is what happened.

I knew something was wrong as soon as I finished work, because Tato wasn't there waiting for me. At first I thought he was just late so I told Mary and the other girls not to wait for me and I stood just inside the doorway and waited. And waited. And waited. After about twenty minutes the boss gave me the eye so I waited outside.

I was worried about Tato by that time, but I was also worried about myself. It's dangerous enough walking home by myself, but can you imagine if I walked home in the dark? So before it got dark, I decided I had to leave.

About half a block from the factory, Stefan came running up the street to walk me home. He came to meet me as soon as he heard what happened to our fathers. Things are very bad for us, but I am thankful that I have a true friend in Stefan.

Someone is at the door.

***Later***

Mama is back from the Immigration Building. She says the arrests were for "loitering." That means standing in the street when you don't have a job. What I don't understand is where are you supposed to stand if you don't have a job?

***Thursday, February 18, 1915***

Oy , Dear Diary, I asked Mama to take me to the Immigration Building to see Tato, but she said not this time. She and Mrs. Pemlych went together. I wrote a note and drew a picture for Tato and Mama took that with her. When she came back, her eyes were rimmed with red. She said that she was tired and went straight to bed. I knew she wasn't really tired, Dear Diary – she was sad. I could hear the muffled sound of her sobbing.

***Later***

Mama says that Tato may be sent away but she doesn't understand where. Oy , Dear Diary, I am so worried!

***Wednesday, February 24, 1915***

Stefan has been arrested. Must go.

***Friday, February 26, 1915***

Why does Canada hate us so much? How could they arrest Stefan when he is not even a man? Even though he has grown tall very quickly, he still has the face of a child. It seems that any Ukrainian male who stands on a street corner gets put into jail. I thought Canada was a land of freedom. This makes me sad and scared.

***Tuesday, March 2, 1915***

Mama and I visited Tato yesterday. It was so crowded that it was hard to speak to him. His eyes have a blank look, like he can't believe what is happening. He tries to make us feel better, though, and he doesn't complain. He even made a joke, saying at least they feed

him. He and Stefan and Mr. Pemlych are all in the same big room with many other men. I noticed that Stefan's hands were clenched into fists and he has a scowl on his face. On the way out, Private Howard Smythe bumped hard into my shoulder as if it was a mistake, but I know he did it on purpose.

***Thursday, March 4, 1915***

Since Stefan has been arrested, there is no one to walk me home. Mary and Natalka and the other girls are in the same situation, so we have started to meet up and walk together before and after work. I still have to walk half a block by myself and that is very bad. I am learning new words but they are not ones that I would ever repeat! We all go to the market together too.

***Friday, March 5, 1915***

Oy , Dear Diary, it gets worse and worse. In today's paper it says that the war is being fought right in Galicia and that the Austrians have lost twenty-five battles in a row. Who can still be alive in my homeland? It must all be in ashes now. You should see the look in people's eyes as they pass me. In Canada we are despised and in the old country we are dead. I am so sad.

***Monday, March 8, 1915***

Every day is the same. My heart is wrapped in sadness.

***Monday, March 15, 1915***

It says in the paper that the Allies think the war may be over in three weeks. I am praying that this is true. I want Tato to come home!

***Thursday, March 18, 1915, after supper***

Oy , Dear Diary, in today's paper it is all about the Russians who are winning battles in Galicia. Also, I just got a letter from Irena. It is no better for her. Here is her letter pasted in below:

*Hairy Hill,*

*Alberta, Canada*

***Tuesday, March 2, 1915***

*Dear Anya,*

*I can barely write this letter because I am so sad. Our neighbour Yurij Feschuk has been arrested! Here is what happened.*

*Father and our neighbour went to town to get their papers stamped. They stamped Father's, but then refused to stamp Yurij Feschuk's. Instead, they handcuffed him and took him away. Father found out that he has been taken to a work camp just outside of Jasper, Alberta. Anya, this is just not right! Our neighbour did nothing wrong!*

*Father was afraid that they were going to arrest him too, but they didn't. Father went to Feschuk's homestead and closed it up to protect it from the weather. He brought his cow and horse to our place. After all, who would feed them? Anya, I am so sad about Yurij Feschuk, but having milk is nice. It is also good to have the horse.*

*Mama is upset and scared. She fears that they will take Father next.*

*Your dear friend,*

*Irena*

Oy , Dear Diary, that is terrible about Irena's neighbour, but I hope you don't think I am awful if I admit that I'm glad that it wasn't Irena's father who got taken away.

**Saturday, March 20, 1915**

Dear Diary, every time I think it can't get worse, it does. Ten Canadians have been killed in battle and three Allied warships have sunk. Canadians are angry as bees and they are taking it out on us. Tato, Stefan and Mr. Pemlych have all been sent to northern Quebec. I heard that it is very cold up there and that there are wild animals that eat people. What did we do to deserve this? Didn't they ask us to come here in the first place? If the Canadian government didn't want us, why did they encourage us to come?

**Sunday, March 21, 1915, Easter**

A man sent by the Austrian consulate was waiting by the door of our flat today when we came back from Mass. He was kind, but I could see from the look in his eyes that he doesn't think our living arrangement is very nice. Baba, Mrs. Pemlych and Mama keep it as clean as they can, but it is difficult when it was so dirty to begin with. We did not have rats in Horoshova. We have killed every single one we have seen, but there are always more. It embarrasses me to see this man's eyes judging us. Doesn't he know we would have a nicer place if we could afford it? And how can we afford it when they have taken our men away and no one will hire Mama?

**Thursday, March 25, 1915**

The headline today was all about the great battle raging in the Carpathian mountains and also that Canada is going to spend one hundred million dollars for the war.

***One thing I wonder***

If Germany and Austria are the enemies, why aren't the battles happening there? Why is it that all of the battles seem to be taking place in Galicia? After the war, Germany and Austria will be fine, but Galicia will be destroyed. I have done nothing to hurt anyone in my whole life. I know it is the same for Tato and Mama and Baba and Dido and Volodymyr too. All we have ever wanted is to have enough food and to live in peace. Is there something wrong with that???????

***Sunday, March 28, 1915***

Dear Diary, this man sent by the consulate, Mr. Foster, is kind. He brought us food and he told our landlord that if we were evicted, he would set the Health Department on him. I didn't understand what that meant, but he said that it is against the law for landlords to rent out flats that have rats and no hot water. The Health Department is like the health police, so if we are kicked out of this flat, our landlord will be in big trouble. This is a relief.

Mr. Foster says that Tato is in a good place. He says that the men work on farms without fences. It is clean and healthy living, and there is plenty of food. He said that as soon as there is a house built for us, we will go there too.

Dear Diary, I really want to believe Mr. Foster, but I don't know if he is telling the truth. Also, Irena makes it sound like her neighbour who was arrested is in a jail. Can both things be true?

***Tuesday, March 30, 1915***

The Canadians are even angrier today and I don't blame them. In the newspaper it said that German submarines torpedoed two British steamers. These were not war steamers. There were women and children on them. They say that the Germans laughed as the women drowned.

It makes me angry, too, that the Germans would do this, but why do Canadians think that all foreigners are bad?

***April 1915***

***Sunday, April 4, 1915, at night***

Mr. Foster did not come today. I think it is because it is Canadian Easter.

***Tuesday, April 6, 1915***

The newspaper headlines today are not about Eastern Europe. I am praying that the reason is because the war has moved to someplace else. It is not that I want anyone else to suffer, but my old country needs a rest. Also, when there is a story that mentions anywhere in Eastern Europe, that day is worse for us here.

P.S. – in case you think I am buying all these newspapers, Dear Diary, you are wrong. Most of the time there is a day-old copy left lying around by one of the supervisors at work and I read it whenever I can.

***Sunday, April 11, 1915***

The time has come. Mr. Foster says that there are houses built for us and in a week or so we will get on a train and travel way up north to the camp where Tato is. Mr. Foster says it is called Spirit Lake Internment Camp. I asked him if “internment” means jail and he says no. He says it means a place to keep us safe.

He told us that Spirit Lake got its name because of an Indian legend that a huge star appeared over the lake. This star is the Indian spirit of God. I hope that Mr. Foster is telling us the truth. Maybe God is looking over Tato now and will soon be looking over us.

***Tuesday, April 13, 1915***

Mary says that “internment” means something different from what Mr. Foster told us. She said that it is definitely a kind of jail. This makes me worried. Are Tato and Stefan and Mr. Pemlych in a jail right now? Are we going to be sent to a jail too?

***Saturday, April 17, 1915***

Even if “internment” means jail, I would rather be in jail with Tato than be here without him.

When Mr. Foster came today, Mama told him that we would not go. She said we have done nothing wrong and we do not deserve to go to jail. She asked him why weren’t they arresting the people who call us names? Why don’t they do something about the bosses who fire us just because of where we were born?

Mr. Foster just sat there and shook his head. "You have no choice," he said. "All ninety-two people from your parish are getting on the train tomorrow to go to Spirit Lake Internment Camp."

### ***Later***

Maureen came to see me this evening. She gave me the carved wooden table and chair set from her dollhouse. Her eyes were round with sadness but she did not cry. I wanted to give her something in exchange. Mama stopped her packing and drew out an embroidered belt that she had made for her hope chest when she was my age.

Maureen's mouth made a little O of surprise when I gave her the embroidery. She hugged it to her chest and blinked back tears. I may never see her again, but every time I look at my wee table and chairs I shall think of her. I hugged her tight and even though I wanted to cry, I didn't.

Mama made a nest for Maureen's gift inside our wooden chest so it wouldn't break. She also carefully packed the dolls that Tato made for us.

### ***Monday, April 19, 1915***

Dear Diary, first the good news: Slava is safe. She has been in a home for orphans, but Mr. Foster found her.

Right now I am sitting in a train that is travelling north into the wilds of Quebec. Mykola is sitting beside me. He is quietly pulling off chunks of bread from a bun that one of the officers has given him. He is putting each bit into his mouth and savouring it. He reminds me of a bird.

Beside Mykola is Slava. She is eating her own bun and looking out the window.

This train is not like the one we took from Chernivtsi to Hamburg, where we sat on our trunks in the gloomy darkness of the railway cars. In this one there are big windows and comfortable benches. Baba and Mama sit in front of us, but they face away from us. Mama keeps on turning around to make sure we are still here. She shouldn't be worried, because although the train is packed full, these people are not strangers. Besides, where would we go?

The motion lulls me into thinking that we are travelling back home, to our dear Horoshova, but then I remember where we are really going and it frightens me. The train rumbles, but I have taken my coat off and made a table for you, Dear Diary, on my lap, so that I can write neatly.

At least we will be with Tato again.

When I look out the window, I see the most beautiful sights. The rocks here are a deep brown grey and the way they're cut at sharp angles makes me think that God was angry one day and kicked them so hard that they shattered. The lakes still have big chunks of pale blue ice floating in them and the water itself is a deep dark blue. I have never seen water like this. On top of the sharp dark rocks is snow, and there are fir trees with huge ragged boughs. Every once in a while I see a deer or moose. I have tried to point them out to Mykola but by the time he sets his bun down to look, we have passed them.

#### ***Afternoon, still on the train***

You know, Dear Diary, I have not embroidered since leaving our village, and that makes me sad. If we still lived in Horoshova, I would have made more than simple pillowcases and duvet covers for my hope chest by now. Maybe I would even be betrothed. But my hands were so sore while working at the factory that I couldn't bear to embroider things for my hope chest.

I wonder what our new house will look like? I hope Mr. Foster isn't lying and that we aren't really going to a jail. I hope there is room for chickens and maybe a little garden.

#### ***Later in the afternoon, still on the train***

When I look out the window now, I don't see so many rocks. The ground is flatter and there are still many trees and lakes. Mixed in with the fir trees are birch trees. They remind me of the birch forests in Horoshova. Oh, Dear Diary, how I miss my home.

#### ***Thursday, April 22, 1915***

Mama needs help unpacking and then I must look around. I will write later.

Here is what happened early this morning.

I woke up with a jolt when the train came to a stop. I looked out the window and my heart sank. There were soldiers with guard dogs, guns and stern faces glaring in at us. Behind the soldiers were buildings behind a high barbed-wire fence, with tall guard posts on each corner. A shiver went through me. Mr. Foster had said that there would be no fences.

I thought we were going to get off the train there, but instead, the soldiers stepped in (with their dogs!!) and the train moved again very slowly and then stopped. Not far from the second train stop was another set of buildings, but at least these were not surrounded by barbed wire. The soldiers ordered us out of the train and then they inspected us. When it was Mama's turn, they made her take off her wedding ring and give it to them. They also took her money. It was only a few dollars. Why did they take it? Baba's wedding ring was too tight on her finger and it wouldn't come off. They *cut* her ring off. Don't they know that Baba has never taken it off her finger since the day she was married? Baba did not cry when they did this. I think she wanted to, but she didn't want them to see how much it bothered her.

They didn't take my hair ribbon, but I would have gladly given it up if they had left Baba's wedding ring alone. I could tell by the way that Mykola gripped onto my hand that he was afraid of the dogs. We must have looked quite a sight, because one of the soldiers (who looked no older than Stefan) smiled kindly and even ruffled Mykola's hair.

As we followed them to the second set of buildings, Slava let out a sob as we passed a well-kept cemetery with what looked like a small church behind it. I wish she hadn't done that because it got us all sobbing and I didn't want the soldiers to see how frightened we were.

As we got closer, I could see that some long wooden buildings were half built and others were finished. There were men dragging logs and sawing wood and banging nails into the sides of the unfinished houses. Suddenly the work stopped. I could see each man search our faces, looking for a loved one. I spied Tato just as he saw us. He threw down his hammer and ran towards us. He gave Mama a big smacking kiss on the lips and then he held her tight. I could tell by the way his body was trembling that he was sobbing, so I looked away. Men don't like to be watched when they're crying.

One of the other men was staring at us. I didn't recognize him at first, but it was Stefan! His face looks older now, and his shoulders and arms are much bigger than when he was in Montreal. Cutting down trees is harder work than selling newspapers.

Stefan set down his saw and came over to me and shook my hand. Why is he so formal with me? He looked angry or sad, I don't know which. Then he walked over to where his mother was and hugged her tight.

Stefan's hands are so rough now. Where is his father?

### ***Later***

I am thankful that the soldiers did not go through our luggage, because they would have found the silver spoon that has been in our family forever. I don't think Baba could bear it if it was stolen.

### ***Friday, April 23, 1915***

Dear Diary, I just realized that it has been a year and three days since I stepped onto the ship to Canada. I never dreamed then that so much could happen in a single year.

Our new house is not blue like our dear cottage in Horoshova, nor is it three storeys tall like our house in Montreal. This house is long and made of wood. It has just been freshly built by Tato and the other men and I love the house itself, if not the fact that we are prisoners. There is enough room in it for four families. More later.

Almost forgot – they are called bunkhouses.

### ***Saturday, April 24, 1915***

Dear Diary, everything is a muddle here so I cannot write much, but I just wanted to say that Spirit Lake Internment Camp is two separate camps. The one we are in is for the married prisoners and their families. Down by Spirit Lake (the actual lake, I mean) is the bigger camp. It is for the guards (who are soldiers) and their families and also all of the unmarried prisoners. I will tell you

Sorry, Diary. Mykola couldn't go to the outhouse on his own because he said he saw a ghost. Was it the spirit from Spirit Lake?

It was getting dark, so I went out with him. This outhouse looks like a small bunkhouse but inside, instead of bunks, are ten individual water closets along one side and then ten along the other side. I like water closets better than outhouses. They are cleaner than the

outhouses behind our home in Montreal. No matter how often we scrubbed them they would still be stinky. These water closets smell of pine needles and soap. There is another building beside the outhouses and it is a wash house. It has a pump with cold water and also big tubs for washing clothing and a stove to heat water.

***Sunday, April 25, 1915, at dusk***

I am sitting on a sawed-off tree stump at Spirit Lake Internment Camp. It has been so busy since we arrived that I have not had a chance to write about everything I have seen and heard. If I pretend there is no guardhouse in our camp and no barbed wire around the single prisoners' camp, Spirit Lake is beautiful. There is snow dotting the ground, a beautiful lake and the sun setting on it. The water sparkles like diamonds and there are snow-covered fir trees all around.

I wonder if the Great Spirit is looking down on me as I look out at Spirit Lake?

***Monday, April 26, 1915***

***in bed at night***

It was warm today but right now it is chilly. I am wrapped in a blanket sitting on the edge of my new bed and using my lap as a desk. This bed is wooden and the mattress is made of tree branches covered with cloth. It may not sound comfortable, but it is fine. It is nice to have a bed to myself. In some ways it is like the sleeping quarters from the ship, but it smells like sweet wood instead of you-know-what. Like in the ship, it is bunk beds. I sleep on the top and Mykola sleeps on the bottom. Baba has a bed of her own across from Mykola. Slava sleeps on the bunk above her. Mama and Tato each have a bunk bed too.

Each prisoner has been given five blankets, which is a good thing because Tato says it gets very cold here at night.

Slava's father does not live in this part of the camp because it is for married prisoners. Even though he has a daughter, he must live in the main camp enclosed with barbed wire, with the single men. Slava misses her father. At least she knows that he is close.

We have more space here than at our flat in Montreal. It is nicer too because there is more than one window. But in Montreal we were not prisoners. At least here we only have the soldiers to deal with, and no one calls us names.

Tato says Stefan's father is in "solitary confinement" but I don't know what that means.

***Wednesday, April 28, 1915, dawn***

Dear Diary, it was raining in big icy plops when I first woke up, but now it is just plain rain. I am too wide awake to keep my eyes closed. This bed made of branches is a little bit scratchy, but I wrapped myself up in my blankets so I am cozy. I wish I had my down comforter from the old country.

Baba and Mykola and Slava are still asleep. I can hear Mama and Tato talking in low whispers. I can't make out what they're saying, but they are not arguing.

We share our bunkhouse with three other families, so Stefan lives here with his mother, and Mary lives here with her older sisters and parents. I had never really paid attention to Mary's older sisters before. Olga is a year older than her and worked in a factory. Lesia is even older and she worked for an English family. Lesia is married and expecting a baby, but her husband has been sent to a different internment camp. I hope he will be sent here instead so they can be together when their child is born.

Natalka's sister Lyalya is younger than Slava but tall for her age. Those two will be good friends.

There are no individual rooms, so Mama has put up sheets to separate the families. We share a side with Mary's family, and then in the centre of our bunkhouse are two heating stoves and two rows of dining tables plus a big iron bathtub and a cold-water pump and basin. There are two big pails for heating bath water on top of the stove. Stefan lives on the other side and so does Natalka.

***Thursday, April 29, 1915***

Things that I like about our new house:

- we are with Tato
- it is clean and fresh
- I have seen no mice or cockroaches
- there are no steps to trouble Baba's knee

Things that I don't like:

- we are prisoners
- the guard dogs
- this is far away from everything
- the soldiers, except for the one who smiles

***Friday, April 30, 1915***

***something important***

Before he left this morning, Tato explained more about Stefan's father. Mr. Pemlych tried to run away and he was caught. "Solitary confinement" is a kind of punishment. I need to ask Stefan about this but I can't right now because all the men have gone off to cut down trees and build more bunkhouses. They do this from 7:30 to 5:30 each day and they are supposed to get paid twenty-five cents a day. That is much less than what I was making at the factory. Tato says that the prisoners don't actually get the money. It is kept for them and they can buy things at the camp store with the money.

I am still trying to figure out why we are all prisoners. If people are mad at us because they see us as Austrians, why doesn't the government just tell them the truth? I don't understand how it solves anything to put us in an internment camp.

***Later (just after lunch)***

In the married prisoners' village I have counted more than a dozen soldiers. I don't like the soldiers with dogs and it makes me scared to see their bayonets. I am thankful to be in the married prisoners' camp though, because we don't have a barbed-wire fence like the unmarried prisoners' camp. Their camp has four guard posts manned by soldiers with bayonets. Are we that dangerous?

**May 1915**

**Saturday, May 1, 1915 (cold!)**

I just saw an awful thing. Do you remember Private Howard Smythe, that bad man with the dirty brown hat who became a soldier? He is here! He walked through our camp this morning. When he saw me, he gave me an evil smile.

Most of the soldiers march off with the men beyond the camp to work, but a few of them stay with us. Today, one of them who stayed was the smiling young soldier and I now know that his name is Private Palmer. His first name is Robert. He brought us new prisoners some clothing. The women and girls got stockings and the boys got woollen socks. He also brought caps and undershirts for each of the children and some bolts of cloth. As each item was given to us, Private Palmer marked it in a book. Each family was also issued a broom and a towel. This makes Mama happy, as she likes to keep things clean.

I almost forgot –

Private Palmer has a camera. He got all of the children in the camp to stand together and he took our photograph. I saw him taking photographs of the buildings and other things too. I wonder if he will show us these photographs sometime?

**Sunday, May 2, 1915**

***after supper, in my bunkhouse***

That little building behind the cemetery is a church. There is a Ukrainian priest in our camp, but he is not here right now. I think he travels to different camps to say Mass. A French priest from the village of Amos (which is a few miles from here) came and said Mass for us this morning. Tato wouldn't go. Not many of the men went. I think they are tired because Sunday is the only day that they don't work. They played cards instead. Mama didn't say anything to Tato about this. I thought she would be angry with him, but she is just so relieved that he is fine and that we're all together that she sees no need to argue about things they will never agree on.

I went to Mass with Baba and Mama and Mykola and Slava, and after Mass we put pebbles on the graves in the cemetery. I said a prayer for my dear grandfather and brother up in heaven.

***Monday, May 3, 1915***

Stefan and I finally got a chance to talk last night after supper. We went on a long walk together in the woods beyond the camp, and just from the corner of my eye, I thought I saw a white form flit by. Maybe it was the ghost that Mykola had seen. I asked Stefan if he had seen it, but he said no. Maybe it was my imagination.

There are birch trees mixed with the fir trees and now that some of the snow is starting to melt, the ground is covered with hundreds of round golden birch leaves from last fall. I never thought about it before, but birch leaves look something like gold coins. Maybe this is what Halyna meant about Canada being paved with gold?

Stefan told me about his father. He had been worked very hard and he is not as strong as he used to be, and one day while they were out in the woods cutting down trees with only a few guards to watch over them, two of the men set down their tools and walked away. Mr. Pemlych wanted to go and he wanted Stefan to go with him, but Stefan said no, so Mr. Pemlych ran after the other two men. One of the guards ran after him and it didn't take the guard long to catch him. The other two men have not been caught.

They have put Mr. Pemlych in a small dark room all by himself and he is being given nothing but water and a little bit of bread. This is what "solitary confinement" means.

What I don't understand is, where did he think he could run to? There is nothing but wilderness for hundreds of miles. Stefan said that some people have escaped and not been caught.

I think Stefan is more angry with himself than anyone else. He thinks that if he had run with his father, the two of them would have had a better chance. I am glad that Stefan did not try to escape.

***Later***

Stefan also told me something else. I wondered how he could have been arrested as a man in Montreal when he is only fourteen years old. He told me that he refused to show

the police his papers. He wanted to get arrested because he wanted to be with his father. Stefan can be very annoying, but every once in a while his kindness shows.

***Wednesday, May 5, 1915***

Dear Diary, I have now been in Canada for one full year.

I don't know if we are better off for coming to Canada or whether we should have stayed in Horoshova. ~~If we had stayed, I would be with the people that I have known since I was born and I would be living in my cozy blue house and I would have graduated from my old school. Maybe I would even be betrothed by now. But we had so much debt that our lives would never have been good. Also, there is now war. Tato would have been a soldier for the Austrians. I worry about my friends in the old country and I pray for their safety every day.~~

Oy, Dear Diary, I just read that last paragraph I wrote and I am so wrong. If we had stayed in Horoshova, I could be dead now. The place I left does not exist anymore except in my dreams. The war in Europe is being fought right in my old front yard. I will hold the old Horoshova in my dreams and I will pray that the people we left behind have somehow found a way to live.

It is sad to be a prisoner at Spirit Lake Internment Camp, but I am thankful to be alive. And I know this may sound strange, but it is such a relief to be here instead of in Montreal. I can go outside here and breathe fresh air. In Montreal, I was supposed to be free but I did not feel safe.

I keep on reminding myself about all the good things in Canada. There are no lords, and in the future maybe we will own land and maybe we will be free to live like other Canadians. And if we didn't come to Canada, I wouldn't have met Maureen or Irena or Slava or Mary or Natalka.

I would never have met Stefan.

Sometimes I think of Stefan as my best friend. I would never tell him, though, because he would tease me.

This may sound strange, but if we hadn't come to Canada, I never would have seen Spirit Lake. It is sad that this is a jail and also sad that it may be haunted, because it is one of the most beautiful places in the whole world.

If there wasn't the war, I think we could have a good life in Canada.

***Thursday, May 6, 1915***

The soldiers give us some old newspapers to use for toilet paper and also to stuff our boots with if our feet are cold or the boots are too big. One of the newspapers they gave us today was dated April 30th and Stefan and I read it together. The Germans attacked the Allies with gas a few days earlier and the British were so upset about it that they attacked Germany even harder. I have noticed that when there are bad stories in the paper about Germans or Austrians, the soldiers here are meaner to us.

Stefan says that his oldest brother enlisted in the army and is fighting for Canada. Stefan's brother changed his name from Ivan Pemlych to John Pember so they don't know he's Ukrainian. Stefan says lots of Ukrainians have done this.

His other brother, Petro, also tried to enlist, but he hadn't thought to change his name and so he is interned in Kapuskasing.

I hope John Pember is not sent to fight near Horoshova.

***Friday, May 7, 1915***

Even though it is May, there was a skin of ice on the wash basin when I woke up this morning.

Mama has sewn me a warm wraparound skirt, and a coarse blouse and shawl from the cloth that nice Private Robert Palmer gave us, but she wants me to take the time to make some better clothing for myself. I am very good at sewing and I shall enjoy doing this.

My beautiful black boots no longer fit. Even if they did, I would not want to wear them here because the ground is too rough. I have packed them away and will give them to Slava when we get out of here. The soldiers have given us each a pair of boots. Mine are too big so I stuffed them with newspaper. I have been wearing my handmade shoes from the old country when I am in the bunkhouse. I don't tie them quite as tightly and they fit fine. The floor is always cold, even through warm stockings and shoes.

Something else –

I think I must be a true Canadian because now I like my drawers. They keep my bottom warm!

### **Saturday, May 8, 1915**

That bad Private Smythe brought us newspapers from May 3 and he seemed to be more angry than usual. There was a story that 5,000 Canadian soldiers have been killed in the war. Private Smythe seems to think this is all our fault. There have also been 40,000 German soldiers killed in a single battle. Why do people have to kill each other like this? Why can't they just talk it out when they disagree?

### **Sunday, May 9, 1915**

#### ***in my bunk bed at night***

Private Smythe was one of the soldiers who came with us to church today and he was his usual mean self. What surprised me was that some of the nicer soldiers were mean to us too. It is as if something has changed. I wonder what happened?

It is cold, so after church we stayed indoors. I unwrapped my wee table and chairs and also the dolls that Tato had carved for Mykola and me. Mary's older sister had made some rag dolls for the children and we put these all on one of the tables and played together. When Tato saw what we were doing, he had a grin on his face and went outside in the rain. A minute later, he came back, carrying something hidden under a cloth. It was a beautiful dollhouse! It is plainer than the one Maureen's father had made for her, but Tato says that he will keep working on it. It has three storeys and four rooms on each level. The roof is flat like at our Montreal home. I put my doll on the roof so that she could see everything that happens!

### **Monday, May 10, 1915**

I now know why the soldiers seemed angry with us. Private Palmer says that a telegraph message arrived early Sunday morning with terrible news. A passenger ship called the *Lusitania* has been torpedoed by the Germans. There were 2,000 people on board and no one knows yet if there are any survivors. He said that the mood in the soldiers' quarters is very bad. They are all blaming "people like us" for the sinking. I told him that we are not

German and we are not truly Austrian. He says he knows that but it doesn't make a difference with most of the soldiers. It is like they need to find someone to blame. Can't they see that we are people just like them?

**Tuesday, May 11, 1915**

Dear Diary, all of our men have been organized into new teams. They will not be going into the forest and chopping wood right now. All of the teams will be building more bunkhouses.

**Later**

More people are being sent to Spirit Lake. That is the reason for building the new bunkhouses. Oy .

Private Palmer says that a new telegram came. The sinking of the *Lusitania* has caused "hysteria" in the cities ("hysteria" means when a bunch of people get angry all at once). To calm people down, the government is arresting more Ukrainians.

Oh, Dear Diary, I am so confused. What is the government thinking? They must know that we are not German and we are not Austrian. We are *Ukrainians* . Even if we were Germans or Austrians, how could we sink the *Lusitania* from here? Why would we? It seems to me that the government isn't thinking straight.

**Friday, May 14, 1915**

Dear Diary, early this morning, the train stopped at the main camp and hundreds of new prisoners have arrived. Since the sinking of the *Lusitania* , there has been a frenzy against foreigners. I guess being interned is for our own safety, but I feel so bad about it. I wonder if there will be more women and children too?

**Later**

There were four more families on the train. They look so scared and frightened and tired and thin. Is that what we looked like when we arrived?

**Saturday, May 15, 1915**

Can you believe that it is snowing today?

**Wednesday, May 19, 1915**

It is the middle of May and yet it is still so cold. My wash basin was again frozen this morning, and even though it is nearly noon, I can still see my breath.

Stefan's father was let out of "solitary confinement" last night. Mrs. Pemlych volunteered to cook supper today even though tomorrow is her usual day. The food that we get here is plain and not very plentiful, but she wants to fatten her husband up fast because he is so skinny and old looking.

Mrs. Pemlych offered to do laundry for one of the unmarried camp guards in exchange for a bit of beef. She is in the cookhouse right now making a thick rich stew for tonight's supper. We all get some, but Mr. Pemlych gets the most. He has gone off with the others to chop wood. I don't know how he can do it, but I guess it is nothing new to him. Stefan told me that even though his father was on bread and water rations while in confinement at night, he still had to do hard labour every day.

**Monday, May 24, 1915, Empire Day**

Dear Diary, we were all marched down to the parade grounds in the centre of the main camp and we listened to the Commandant give a speech about our duty to Canada. He said that when the war is over, we will be able to go back home and live good lives as British citizens. He also said that any of us who want to stay here after the war would be allowed to. This confuses me. Why would we want to be prisoners?

**Later**

Mary explained. They think we might like to become farmers up here.

### **Wednesday, May 26, 1915**

It is almost June and it is far too cold. The chill seeps in through the floor and through the walls. I am bundled in my bed with all five blankets. Everyone is still asleep and so I thought I should take this time to write down what my day-to-day life is like in the internment camp.

We have breakfast with our men and then they go off with the camp guards to cut down trees and clear land. One of the guards has purchased some land up here and Tato says that sometimes it is his land they're clearing, which makes Tato angry.

While the men are gone, some of the women begin preparing food for the next meal, while others do laundry. The men get so muddy that every day is a washday.

There is no school and no teacher, so Mary gives the younger children English lessons each morning. Mary knows some French, so she is also teaching a bit of that too. I don't teach, but I do help Mary. The children play mostly hide-and-seek and ball games in the afternoons and we keep an eye on them. The air up here is fresher than in Montreal. Mykola has a healthy glow about him.

I also sit with Mama in the late afternoons and we do sewing chores. I have made an outfit for Slava and one for Stefan. I also made a new shirt for Slava's father. I made a blouse and skirt for myself with the bolt of cloth that Private Palmer brought us. Mama is so pleased with my handiwork that I will be making something special for my hope chest. She has given me a length of cloth that she has bleached pure white and I am to make a *rushnyk*. I don't know the English word for *rushnyk*. It is a long piece of embroidered cloth that is only used on special days. I work on my embroidery at night. I will not be working on this beautiful length of cloth until I have perfected the satin stitch. I have made eight handkerchiefs using a blanket stitch.

Private Palmer has his family here with him. His wife is as nice as he is and sometimes she brings me mending and I get paid for it. They have a son who I think is the same age as Mykola. He is quite chubby though. Sometimes he comes here when Mrs. Palmer brings mending but he is not allowed to play with us.

### **Thursday, May 27, 1915**

This morning, a woman from Amos came. She had two children with her and a basket of eggs. Mary's French is good enough that she was able to talk to the woman and found out

that she wanted to sell us her eggs. We all crowded round and showed her items that we thought she might be interested in trading the eggs for. Mama brought out a pair of my newly embroidered handkerchiefs and the woman's eyes lit up. For two simply embroidered handkerchiefs, we got twenty eggs. Mama will make *babka* to fatten up our menfolk and I shall help her. I can hardly wait to see Tato's face when he comes home this evening!

Oy , my hope chest is not getting any fuller, but our stomachs shall be!

### ***Later***

I had a good idea and Baba thinks it is an excellent idea too. We are going to blow out the eggs so that we can still make *babka* with the insides, but we will have hollow eggs to make *pysanky* with – of course they won't *really* be *pysanky* because you never ever would make a real *pysanka* with a hollow egg. Besides, it isn't Easter. But we are going to decorate these blown-out eggs and trade them for food!

### ***Later***

You're probably wondering why you don't make *pysanky* out of hollow eggs, aren't you, Dear Diary? *pysanky* are supposed to be made of raw eggs. If you boil the eggs, the dye doesn't take, and if you blow out the eggs, they don't sink into the jars of dye. Also, giving a *pysanka* as a gift is like giving a wish, and everything about it means something. Giving a live egg (I mean a raw egg) is good luck. All the designs we write on the eggs mean things like good health and long life.

Baba says that it is okay to make these ones on hollow shells because we are not giving them to friends as wishes, but are selling them to strangers for things that we need.

### ***Friday, May 28, 1915***

We women are allowed to go into the woods to gather mushrooms. I guess the soldiers know that we would never run away and leave our men. When it gets warmer, maybe I will be able to find some more feverfew for Baba's knee, but today Mama and I went into the woods looking for black walnut bark. In case you don't know, Dear Diary, you make black dye for *pysanky* and embroidery thread by boiling black walnut bark.

We walked past the clearing and down a rough and narrow path in the woods. There was a whiff of smoke and we thought that we were probably close to some of our men cutting down trees. The trees got farther apart and then there was a clearing.

It wasn't our men! We saw a cluster of cloth-covered cone-shaped tents. And there was a woman in a hat and a long white dress who stepped out of one of the tents. She looked right at us and my heart almost stopped beating. It was my ghost!

I pulled Mama's hand and we ran away, tripping and bumping our knees and toes on the rocks and underbrush. We ran all the way back to our camp. I was out of breath and so was Mama. I have never been so scared in my life!

### ***Later***

Stefan is so mean. I told him about our scare and he laughed at me.

### ***Saturday, May 29, 1915***

#### ***(cool and sunny)***

Do you remember Natalka's little sister Lyalya? She is the girl who is close to Slava's age. She woke up this morning with a cough and she was wet with sweat. Mama made a tea from her herb collection and gave it to Mrs. Tkachuk to give to Lyalya. Mrs. Tkachuk has been sitting at Lyalya's bedside all day. I hope she will be all right.

Speaking of Slava, she doesn't see her father very much. Tato said that her father has gone strange in the head since he's been here and that it's for the best if Slava stays away. I think that is very sad. Tato says we should think of her as part of our family now. Does that mean she'll live with us when we go back to Montreal?

### ***Sunday, May 30, 1915***

I am no longer hurt by Stefan.

He put some of the *babka* we had baked into his coat and then he told me to follow him. When I realized that we were going back to where Mama and I saw the white tents, I almost turned back, but Stefan grabbed my hand and said, "Trust me."

That woman is not a ghost at all, but a lady. She wears a man's hat decorated with a kind of ribbon and her hair is braided like mine. This time she was stirring something in a big pot over an open fire. Her skin is a lovely golden tan and her teeth are strong and white. She motioned to us to come to her. Stefan gave her the *babka* and she grinned with delight, then took it into the tent.

A moment later, the lady opened the tent flap from inside and motioned us to come in.

Stefan slipped onto his knees and bent his head. I did the same. With my head bent down, I tried to look out of the corner of my eye. I saw an old woman sitting on the ground, surrounded by beautiful animal pelts. And you will never guess what else I saw, Dear Diary! On some of the fur pelts was intricate beadwork like what I sometimes do myself! Also, sitting on her lap was a piece of smooth leather with the outline of a beautiful and delicate bead design that was partly finished.

Dear Diary, you are not going to believe this, but she was using small seed beads just like mine. Who would have thought that I could travel halfway around the world and up into this faraway part of Quebec only to find a stranger doing my own special craft? The floral design that she was creating reminded me of the beadwork and embroidery that we do on sheepskin vests. I feel like I have met a long-lost relative!

I sat and watched as she wove her magic into that piece of leather. I have no idea how much time passed, but she created one whole flower petal. Stefan gently took my elbow and said, "We should go now."

She held up her hand as if to say, "Wait a moment." Then she reached into her skirt and drew out a leather pouch. I held out my hand and she tipped the bag over. Many tiny seed beads, all different colours, fell into my hand. Just before she closed the bag back up, a red Venetian glass bead fell out. It has a delicate etching of a bird in flight and it is the most beautiful bead I have ever seen. The woman chuckled with delight and then she placed her two grizzled hands over my fingers and closed them tight around the beads.

### ***Monday, May 31, 1915***

I am sitting outside at dawn on my favourite tree stump, still thinking about yesterday.

Stefan told me that these are the Pikogan people, and part of the Algonquin tribe. Before the internment camp was built, they would hunt and fish around Spirit Lake, but now we

internees and soldiers scare away the animals. Also, when all those trees are cut down, the animals have fewer places to live. It is not such a good life for the Pikogans any more.

If this is the Pikogans' land, why did Canada build the internment camp here?

### ***June 1915***

#### ***Tuesday, June 1, 1915, at lunch***

Mary and I had trouble keeping the children interested in their lessons this morning because it is so hot.

I am still thinking about our visit with the two Pikogan ladies. They do not know us and yet they are so kind. Our camp has ruined their hunting grounds and still they are so kind. I think they must know that we did not come here on purpose. They have seen the soldiers.

And did the elder read my mind? It is as if she knew I had lost Irena's precious bead. Maybe there really is a spirit of Spirit Lake!

#### ***Wednesday, June 2, 1915***

**(very hot!!!)**

A year ago I thought Stefan was mean, but I don't think that now. Is it me who has changed, or him?

#### ***Thursday, June 3, 1915***

**(third hot day in a row!!!)**

I got a letter from Maureen today! You remember Maureen, my Irish friend from school, don't you, Dear Diary? I can hardly read it, though, because most of it is blacked out. At least I know that she is okay and that she is thinking of me.

**Friday, June 4, 1915**

***late at night, in my bunk bed***

Dear Diary, Lyalya seemed to have recovered, but this morning her coughing was bad again. Mrs. Tkachuk made her stay in bed and Mama made a mustard plaster for Lyalya's chest.

Almost forgot – Private Palmer showed us some of the photographs he took! Some were of the Pikogan women and also our men when they are out working. He also has pictures of the officers and their families down at the main camp. I didn't realize there were so many soldiers with children here. It is too bad we are not allowed to play with them.

**Saturday, June 5, 1915**

Perhaps I should not have complained about how cold it was because for the last week it has been hot. And with the heat come these little blackflies that are wicked biters. Private Palmer says that they will be with us until September.

We also have clouds of mosquitoes. When the men come back from the woods, they are bitten pink. Baba came up with something that seems to take away the worst of the itch. You know that tasteless bread that they give us? We make our own good bread now, so Baba takes the tasteless bread and soaks it in water and plops it onto the bites. I have bites all over my knees and it seems to cool them. Tato has a bite on his scalp where he's going bald and he looks silly with this white glop on his head, but at least he is more comfortable.

**Sunday, June 6, 1915, after supper**

Dear Diary, we have been making hollow *pysanky* all day and is has been so fun! I hope the Amos villagers will like them.

***Later***

Oh, Dear Diary, Lyalya got into a coughing fit and was even coughing up blood. Private Palmer sent for the doctor and now Lyalya is in the camp hospital. Will she be okay?

**Monday, June 7, 1915, noon**

**(hot and dry for several days)**

A man from Amos came with the lady who sold us the eggs. He had a large jar of something that smelled like lemon and mint put together. This is a salve that you put on your skin and blackflies don't bite you so often. I asked how much and the lady said she would take two of our written eggs! This salve will be wonderful for Tato and Stefan and the other men in our bunkhouse when they go out in the woods, and also for us.

**After supper**

The salve works!

**Late at night**

one of us was shot and killed

will write when I know more

**Tuesday, June 8, 1915, noon**

The man who was killed was Ivan Gregoraszczuk. Right now, his body is being prepared for burial. Here is what happened.

Mr. Gregoraszczuk escaped about a week ago with three other men and they got sixty miles away from the camp and almost into Ontario. He was walking along the railway track and a farmer from Amos shot him and then brought the body back here.

Mr. Gregoraszczuk has no wife or children, but the men in the main camp identified him. The farmer said that Mr. Gregoraszczuk had a gun, but that is not true. Some men went out from Amos and hunted down the other three escapees. They are all now in solitary confinement, but one of them saw the farmer shoot Mr. Gregoraszczuk and he says it was in "cold blood," which means the farmer killed him on purpose. Tomorrow there will be a funeral and another cross in the graveyard. The skies have burst open with angry rain. I think it is God crying for Mr. Gregoraszczuk.

***Wednesday, June 9, 1915, dusk***

Dear Diary, I must tell you that I know in my heart that Mr. Gregoraszczuk should never have tried to escape, but the government should never have put him in this prison. How would that farmer like it if Canada put him in jail just because he was French? I wish that these soldiers and farmers could walk in my shoes for just one day.

What makes me even sadder is that Mr. Gregoraszczuk has no family here to pray at his grave. Does he have a mother and father back in the old country? Maybe he has a brother or sister somewhere else in Canada or Ukraine. How will they ever find out what happened to him? My heart could burst with sadness. I gathered some pebbles and placed them at his grave after everyone had left.

I am worried about Lyalya. We are not allowed to visit her in the hospital in case we catch what she has. Private Palmer says that she is not doing well.

***Thursday, June 10, 1915***

***in my bunk bed at night***

Mama thinks she may have figured out how to make that blackfly salve. She tried mixing different local herbs together until they smelled like the salve from Amos. Then she mixed the herbs in oleomargarine. Tato is going to try it out tomorrow. If her salve works, we will be able to share it with more of the prisoners.

***Friday, June 11, 1915***

***early (rainy)***

Oy , I am in trouble and I don't know why. I am to go to the Commandant's office!

***Afternoon***

That bad Private Smythe has told the Commandant that I have stolen food from the officers' mess. This is not true!

### ***Later***

Private Smythe told the Commandant that I have been stealing eggs to make *pysanky*. Mama came with me to see the Commandant and so did Mary. We brought the *pysanky* that haven't been sold yet to show him that they are just shells, not food. The Commandant took our eggs and told us to go back to our bunkhouse. His eyebrows were creased with anger. I wonder what he is thinking? Why does Private Smythe hate me so?

### ***At bedtime***

Does the Commandant think I am a thief? I am frightened. I hope I don't get sent to solitary confinement.

### ***In the wee hours of the morning***

I could not sleep all night. There is one good thing I forgot to tell you, Dear Diary. Mama's salve did work. But I wonder if we would be allowed to use the oleomargarine for the salve? Maybe Mama will be accused of stealing food too. Then again, it is the oleomargarine for the prisoners that she is using, so maybe that would be fine.

### ***Saturday, June 12, 1915, afternoon***

My stomach is in knots. Private Smythe has a nasty grin on his face. Does that mean the Commandant believes those lies about me stealing food????

### ***Sunday, June 13, 1915, suppertime***

Still no word from the Commandant!

### ***Later***

Private Palmer says that Lyalya seems to be on the mend. She is not coughing but is very weak and thin. They are giving her meat soup to make her stronger.

**Monday, June 14, 1915**

Dear Diary, the Commandant has not come to the married prisoners' camp ever since Private Smythe accused me of stealing food. Private Smythe has been here each day and he struts around like he thinks he's important. I have a very bad feeling about this.

**Tuesday, June 15, 1915**

Still no word from the Commandant.

**Wednesday June 16, 1915, morning**

The Commandant has sent for me, Mama and Mary. More later.

**Afternoon**

Dear Diary, I just got back from the Commandant's office.

He sat behind his big desk and Private Smythe stood on the other side of the room. The lady from Amos was there too! She showed him the handkerchief that I made and the Commandant nodded. Then she showed him the two hollow *pysanky* that her husband had bought in exchange for the blackfly salve. This time when the Commandant nodded I saw that he had a little bit of a smile on his face. He thanked the lady and she left.

Next he asked Private Smythe to step forward. "You are being reassigned," he said curtly.

You should have seen the look of shock on Private Smythe's face! Then the Commandant said, "Pack your bags. You will be leaving for Kapuskasing Internment Camp tomorrow morning."

As Private Smythe left, he flashed me an ugly scowl and whispered something under his breath, but I don't care. I hope to never see him again! I just feel sorry for the prisoners in Kapuskasing!

"Anna Soloniuk, step forward," said the Commandant. With a trembling heart, I did. "Your needlework is handsomely done," he said. "When you are able, please make me a handkerchief. I will pay you, of course." I was so surprised that no words would come out of my mouth. I just nodded and curtsied. Then he said, "You are dismissed."

Mama and Mary and I almost ran all the way back to the married prisoners' camp. We were so happy! Not only does the Commandant not think I am a thief, but he likes my needlework. Better yet, he got rid of Howard Smythe! This is a very good day!

One more thing. When we got back to our camp, Mama got up the nerve to ask Private Palmer if he thought it would be allowed for her to make the blackfly salve with some of the oleomargarine the prisoners have been given. He was very interested in her recipe and said that not only was it fine, but could she make some for the soldiers as well? Private Palmer said that he would bring her more oleomargarine. Mama is happy and we are all relieved.

I just remembered –

Stefan's brother Petro is a prisoner at Kapuskasing! I hope he finds a way to avoid Private Smythe!

***Friday, June 18, 1915***

***in bed at night***

We had a special visitor at the camp today. Father Redkevych is a Ukrainian Catholic priest and he has been visiting all of the internment camps across the country. He inspected our bunkhouses and the men's work area and he also said Mass and heard confession. He blessed our little church and cemetery and we all said a special prayer for Mr. Gregoraszczuk.

Mama got the impression that Father Redkevych is troubled by our treatment, but she wonders whether if he complains, he might not be allowed to travel from camp to camp. At least he can keep an eye on things and say Mass for us. But I wish there was someone who could set us free.

I have re-strung Irena's necklace. It looks quite different now because I used all of the original white and yellow beads that Stefan helped me find, and also the beads that the wise Pikogan lady gave me (some yellow – there are no white – but also some blue and a few red). The red Venetian bead with the bird in flight looks so nice on this necklace. I am afraid to wear it in case I lose it, but I showed it to Stefan and he thought I did a good job.

**Sunday, June 20, 1915**

Dear Diary, we were given more old newspapers for the outhouse today. Before they were torn into strips, Mary read the stories aloud from the front page. The headline in one was that the Russians were victorious in Galicia, leaving thousands dead on the battlefield. I wonder how many of those dead are our people? I have trouble even being able to think of that many people all dead. The murder of Mr. Gregoraszczuk was bad enough, but "thousands" is a nightmare.

There was another story about school children who were collecting "a mile of coppers" to send to the Red Cross to help injured soldiers. If I had a penny, I would send it to them. I hope they help injured soldiers on both sides.

**Thursday, June 24, 1915, la Saint-Jean**

*La Saint-Jean* is what the people in Amos call St. Jean Baptiste Day. The men got the afternoon off. I wonder if there is a parade in Amos?

**Saturday, June 26, 1915**

Lyalya is still in the hospital. I thought she was getting better.

**Monday, June 28, 1915**

I got another letter from Maureen today! It seems that most of what she wrote was fine with the censors, so I can read all but two lines. Here it is:

221-1 (front) Grand Trunk Street,

Montreal, Canada

**Thursday, June 17, 1915**

Dear Anna,

*I am glad that you are not kept in a jail cell. It sounds like where you are is beautiful, but it is still prison. How awful that that mean Howard Smythe is a soldier up there. I was*

wondering where he went. School is almost over. I have done well this year but I have no friends. I miss you so much. Do you get a chance to play with your dolls? I hope so.

I think the government should let all of you come home. Everywhere we see "Help Wanted" signs. The factory where your father worked can't get enough workers and neither can your clothing factory. ~~It seems so strange to put all of you in jail when you are needed down here.~~

I am going to apply to the clothing factory as soon as school is out, seeing as I will soon be fourteen. How I would love to be able to go back to school in the fall, but how many girls go to grade nine?

Write to me soon, please.

Your true friend, Maureen

It is good to hear from Maureen and I am glad that she told me about her own news for a change. How strange that there aren't enough workers anymore. Just a few months ago there were huge lineups at the soup kitchens. I guess all the workers are either in the army or in prison like us.

### **July–August 1915**

#### **Wednesday, July 7, 1915**

Oy , Dear Diary, my heart is breaking as I write this. Lyalya has died! I thought she was getting better. There will be another cross in the graveyard.

#### **Thursday, July 8, 1915**

The men in the married camp were given a couple of hours off work this morning so they could attend Lyalya's funeral. Her coffin is so tiny, Dear Diary. What kind of a life has she had? Natalka is taking this really hard, as you can imagine, and so are Mr. and Mrs. Tkachuk. Her father made a marker for her grave out of tin. He used a nail to etch out her name and birth date and death date. Dear Lyalya will never be forgotten.

### **Monday, July 12, 1915**

It is very hot. I do not have the heart to write. I am still so upset about Lyalya's death. Slava is also very sad. She and Lyalya were not good friends, but they were close in age and I think it shocks Slava to see that someone her age can die. She has already lost her mother, and her father is acting so strange, and now this. Oy .

### **Wednesday, July 14, 1915**

Dear Diary, we got some more newspapers for the outhouse. They were from about a week ago and the headline was about the Russians fighting in Poland. That is still very close to Galicia and my heart sank when I saw that, but then as we read on, it said that the war has moved on from Galicia. I know it is bad that there is still a war, but I am relieved that it is not being fought in my old front yard right now.

### **Tuesday, July 20, 1915**

The old newspapers that we got today had headlines about Canadian war heroes. I wonder how Stefan's brother is doing? Has the army figured out he's not Canadian yet? I also wonder about Mary's brother. I bet they are both heroes.

### **Saturday, July 31, 1915**

We have settled into a dreary routine here so there is not much to write about. The food is not good and the men are worked hard. It is not so hot here as it is in Montreal and there is hardly any rain.

I spend my days with Mary, playing with the younger children and teaching them lessons. In the late afternoon, I am still mending for other people. This is the curse of being good with my hands. Each of the bunkhouses was issued another bolt of cloth and so some new items can be made also. I have had some time to work on my hope chest and I am almost finished the *rushnyk* . I made a new shirt for Tato and he loves it. Right now, when I am not working on the *rushnyk* , I have been making a shirt for Stefan.

**Sunday, August 1, 1915, afternoon**

I forgot to mention yesterday how good Mykola is in arithmetic. Mary says that he is the best of all the children. The men were playing cards in our bunkhouse today and Tato let Mykola sit on his lap while he played. Mykola caught on so quickly that the men ended up letting him play his own hand. What a funny sight, to see a seven-year-old sitting there frowning like an old man, playing cards!

**Tuesday, August 3, 1915**

I got another letter from Maureen. Part of it says that she got a job at the clothing factory and that the supervisor said to tell me that he would like me to work for him again as soon as I am free.

So if this war ever ends and we are allowed to go back to Montreal, I shall have a job!

**Sunday, August 8, 1915**

More old newspapers arrived today and since it was Sunday, the men could read them too. One headline said that "the Allies will eventually wear the Germans down to defeat." I hope that is true! Another said that the Austrians are running out of food and water. That is so scary to think of. I want the war to end, and I pray that no more people are hurt on either side. I can't be happy when either side does well because then I am afraid of how the others are suffering.

**Tuesday, August 10, 1915**

The Pikogan lady (the younger one) just came to the camp. The guard let me greet her and she handed me a cloth bundle and then she left. The bundle was filled with fresh wild berries. They are tiny and blue and they are delicious! I took them into our bunkhouse to show Mama. She said that maybe Baba could make fruit *pyrohy* with them for supper tonight. Won't that be a treat?

Something to think about:

My Pikogan friend gave us these delicious berries, but I have given her nothing in return. Baba says that she will think of something.

**Sunday, August 15, 1915**

It is dry as stone for days on end, and then of course, it pours on Sunday when the men have a day off.

I don't know how Baba manages with the scanty supplies, but she made up a big batch of *khrustyky*. They're just bits of dough rolled flat and then deep-fried crisp and sprinkled with sugar. She made extra for me to take to my friends in the woods.

It cleared up by mid-afternoon so I asked Stefan if he would go with me. When we got to the camp, it wasn't just the two ladies, but some men and children too. It looked like they were packing things up. I wonder where they are going?

I was glad that Baba had made so many *khrustyky* because there were so many more people than what I had expected. I walked over to where the elder stood and I bowed my head and held one of the bundles out towards her. She reached out a grizzled hand and took a *khrustyk* and threw it on the ground, saying something that sounded like a prayer. Then she popped another into her mouth and smacked her lips in pleasure.

Other people in the camp were watching, and they gathered around and tried the *khrustyky* too. Everyone liked them!

When we turned to leave, the lady who had brought the berries walked along with us and pointed out various wild nuts, berries and roots. Dear Diary, you won't believe all the food she helped us to collect.

**Later**

Dear Diary, have you ever noticed that people who don't have very much are always willing to share?

**Sunday, August 22, 1915**

**(or maybe Monday morning)**

I woke up and cannot get back to sleep. I keep on having the same dream. My Pikogan elder is in the dream and she is standing over a fire, pouring water on it. The dream is so vivid that I can smell the smoke.

**Wednesday, August 25, 1915**

Dear Diary, so much has happened in the last few days that I don't know where to start. I woke up in the early hours of Monday with a jolt. It was not a dream. Smoke was curling into our bunkhouse through tiny cracks in the walls and roof. I scrambled out of bed and shook Tato awake. He shouted for everyone to wake up and we opened up our door and more smoke poured in. I wanted to close the door so that the fire couldn't get to us, but Tato made us all go outside. I didn't even have time to put my boots on. Mykola didn't whimper. He did what Tato said.

Once we all got outside I realized that Slava was still in the bunkhouse so I ran in to find her. It was dark and the smoke was heavy and I smashed my toe into something, but I heard Slava screaming. I followed the sound and then wrapped my arm around her waist and pulled her with me as I stumbled back out. It was our cookhouse that was burning and the flames were licking so high that I feared the whole married prisoners' village would burn down.

The people from the other bunkhouses were up and Tato shouted orders to people to get pails and basins. Someone dragged out a bathtub and set it under the water pump. Mary and I took turns pumping water into it. Then people scooped water from it and threw it on the fire. But the flames licked higher. Two women threw a water-soaked blanket onto a burning wall – that helped for a little bit.

The fire was finally getting under control by the time the first soldier came, but he did carry a box that contained glass balls filled with something to put out fires. He threw them one by one into the building and the flames got a bit smaller.

We worked until dawn. When the sun shone through the smoke I realized that it wasn't only the cookhouse that had burned down, but one of the bunkhouses had nearly been lost too.

Even though there was much damage, I am grateful that we were able to put the fire out before it reached the woods.

***Friday, August 27, 1915***

General Otter came to inspect our camp today. He said that if we hadn't got the fire out as quickly as we had, Amos could have been destroyed because the fires up here travel fast. He gave us all extra rations as a reward.

Dear Diary, I am thankful that the fire did not spread to Amos, but it makes me wonder if the people in Amos know how close they came to disaster? If we hadn't acted so quickly, there would have been a big tragedy. I also wonder about that Amos farmer who shot and killed Mr. Gregoraszczuk. Does he realize that people just like Ivan Gregoraszczuk just saved his town? Private Palmer told me that the farmer who killed Mr. Gregoraszczuk was put in jail. I wonder if he is treated better than we are?

What I am most thankful for is that the fire didn't hurt my Pikogan friends in the woods. They have lost so much already.

***September–December 1915***

***Thursday, September 2, 1915***

Dear Diary, it has been hard finding the time to write because we have been cleaning up after the fire. All of our blankets and clothing are smoke damaged and my hands are raw from washing them. A new bunkhouse is partly built, but in the meantime the men from that building are sleeping in the main camp and the women and children are scattered throughout the rest of our bunkhouses.

***Saturday, September 4, 1915***

Still cleaning up from the fire. Hands too sore to write more.

***Wednesday, September 15, 1915***

Dear Diary, do you remember Private Palmer and his camera? He came by today with some more photographs. One of them was of Lyalya before she got sick. He gave that one

to Natalka so that she could remember her sister in better times. That was a very thoughtful thing for him to do. He is the nicest soldier here.

***Thursday, September 23, 1915, after supper***

We were given more newspapers for the outhouses and of course we saved the parts that were still readable before tearing them into strips. The news is bad yet again. I thought the war was no longer in Galicia, and it wasn't, but now the Russians have pushed the Austrians back there and the war is raging right in Galicia again. I am sick with worry. How can anyone at home still be alive?

***Tuesday, September 28, 1915, at dawn***

Dear Diary, it has gone below freezing three nights in a row. At least the blackflies are gone. Mary and I need to think of something different to do with the children because we have run out of things to teach them. I think we should just let them run and play. After all, the weather is mild right now but it won't be for long. If we had a ball and sticks, we could play street hockey.

***Later***

Mary thinks we should show the older children how to mend and knit. This isn't a bad idea. They don't have to do it for very long. Maybe an hour a day.

***Monday, October 4, 1915***

It never seems to rain just a little bit at Spirit Lake. It is dry forever and then it comes down in buckets. Everything is muddy and the children cannot play outside.

***Tuesday, October 5, 1915***

Dear Diary, my smart brother has made up a card game with his own handmade set of cards. You place all of the cards on the table, number down, and then each person gets to pick up two cards. If they add up to eight or less, you get to keep them. If it is more, then

you have to put them down in the exact same place. Each person around the table keeps on getting a turn until all of the cards are gone. It is quite fun! What is even better is that some of the children who were bored with arithmetic are enjoying it and I think they are learning their numbers better.

***Wednesday, October 13, 1915***

When Tato came back from the woods today he looked very angry. He said that some of the men in his unit are refusing to work because they are just too tired. The soldiers put them into solitary confinement. Tato said that the rest of them had to cut down more trees to make up for the fact that there were fewer of them working. That doesn't seem fair!

***Thursday, October 21, 1915, at lunch***

In the newspapers it sounds like the "enemy" is doing better than the Allies, but the fighting is in the Balkans, not Galicia. This is still not good news, but it is better than the worst news. Why can't the war just end? How does a war end anyway?

***Monday, October 25, 1915***

I finally got another letter from Irena. I have been so worried about her. I can't read the whole thing because there are black lines through some of it, but from what I could read, it sounds like her neighbour is still in an internment camp. At least her own father has not been arrested. The government has given their neighbour's farm to a Canadian family because they said Mr. Feschuk had abandoned it.

Oy , Dear Diary, I am glad that Irena's family is all together and that her father has not been arrested, but I do feel sorry for her neighbour! How can the government say he abandoned his farm when they have taken him away? It does not seem fair.

***Sunday, November 7, 1915***

Dear Diary, when we got the newspapers today, everyone gathered into one bunkhouse so we could read the articles together and talk about them. The war is still going strong, but there is no more mention of Galicia so I am hoping that is a good sign. Something that

got me angry was a story about how Canada is getting lots of orders for ammunition. In fact, Canadian business will be selling nearly half a BILLION dollars worth of ammunition to Britain!!!! It scares me to think of how many people will be killed with all of this ammunition.

***Thursday, November 11, 1915***

Mama got a letter from Mrs. Haggarty! Mama says I can paste it into my diary. Here it is:

*23 Victoria Avenue,*

*Montreal, Quebec*

*November 2, 1915*

*Dear Mrs. Soloniuk,*

*I have been in discussion with the mayor and have expressed to him my displeasure with the circumstances of you and your family's internment. He says that the matter is federal, not municipal, and is thus out of his hands. He did, however, make note of my complaint.*

*Please know that I have written the authorities on your behalf. I think it is scandalous what the government has done, not just to you and your family, but to all of those unfortunates of your race.*

*When you are finally released from prison, please let me know. I shall hire you back in an instant.*

*Sincerely,*

*Mrs. Albert Haggarty*

Dear Diary, Mrs. Haggarty uses such big words that I hardly know what she is saying. Mary explained that she is contacting important people to see if she can get us out of here! I could understand the last part about Mama's job. That is good news too. I think it is interesting that there were no black lines through Mrs. Haggarty's letter. That's probably because those censor people didn't understand the big words either.

**Saturday, November 20, 1915**

We got a newspaper dated just a week ago and the Russians have taken whole armies of prisoners. It also says that the “enemy” wants the war to end but the Allies will keep on fighting so that they are the ones to win. If the Austrians don’t want to fight anymore, doesn’t that mean the Allies have already won?

**Sunday, November 28, 1915**

Dear Diary, I am very lonely and sad. It is cold and the wind whips through our bunkhouse walls. Even all my blankets are not enough to keep me warm.

I wish I knew where my Pikogan ladies went to. Did the government arrest them too?

I am thankful that our family is all here together. At least I know that we are all safe. It is also nice to have Mary close by. I think we are a good team, looking after the children together. I wish Stefan did not have to work so much. I hardly see him except for Sundays. I find that I like him much better than I used to.

**Tuesday, November 30, 1915**

**(cold and snowy)**

Oy , Dear Diary. Another newspaper and more loss of life. The Russians have captured 10,000 people in Serbia.

**Wednesday, December 8, 1915**

It is cold out and there was a heavy snowfall last night, but the soldiers are still forcing our men out into the woods. This is so unfair! They do not have proper boots or gloves for this kind of weather. Why is it that the soldiers are dressed warmly and our men are not? I don’t think

**Later**

I am sitting in the hospital, beside Stefan’s bed. He has finally got to sleep. This is what happened, and why I had to stop my writing and run:

It was so cold this morning that Stefan's hands were frozen clumsy. His saw slipped and gashed his leg wide open. The men carried him back. The doctor here often refuses to treat prisoners, because he thinks they come in to complain as a way of getting out of work, but when he saw Stefan's leg he knew that Stefan truly needed a doctor.

***Thursday, December 9, 1915***

***at the hospital***

Tato has carved me a crochet hook and Baba has shown me how to use it. I have unravelled a blanket that was ruined in the fire and I am using that for yarn. I am crocheting a pair of gloves for Stefan while he dozes. When he wakes, we talk. Sometimes I read him the newspaper.

While I am sad that Stefan has been injured and must stay in the hospital, in some ways I am glad. He has a chance to rest and they give him more food. Also, the doctor found out that he isn't as old as everyone thinks, so when he gets out of the hospital, he doesn't have to go back to the woods. Stefan says he wants to stay with his father. The doctor says that this is not a good idea. He says that he could find him a job here. I would love it if that happened.

***Friday, December 10, 1915***

Dear Diary, Stefan's leg still looks very bad. I read him some articles in one of the newspapers that the doctor has in the hospital. It is from last Saturday. It says that the army has left Lviv, Galicia, because there is "scurvy" there. The doctor says that scurvy is an illness that happens when people don't eat enough fruits and vegetables.

***Sunday, December 12, 1915, morning***

The priest from Amos came and said a Mass right in the hospital so that Stefan could attend. Stefan's mama and my mama and other prisoners came to hear Mass too. I didn't notice until after that Stefan was the only male! He told me later that he wouldn't have gone if he had a choice. Why is it that men don't like to go to church?

***Wednesday, December 15, 1915***

Stefan is feeling better and can get up and walk around. His leg still looks bad but he says it doesn't hurt as much. I taught him that card and number game that Mykola thought up and Stefan enjoys playing it. Since he has been in the hospital, we have had a good chance to talk. You know what, Dear Diary? He said that he liked me from the very first time that he saw me. He asked me if I felt the same way and I said no and it is true. I did not like Stefan for a long time, but now he is very dear to me.

***Sunday, December 19, 1915***

***St. Nicholas Day***

Dear Diary, is it silly of me to admit that even though I am a prisoner, this is the best St. Nicholas Day that I can remember? My family is all together and we are safe. Stefan is out of the hospital and he is not limping much. His father insisted that he take the job the doctor found for him so he is working as a cleaner in the hospital and this is much safer and warmer than going out into the woods. I just wish Tato and Mr. Pemlych could be given safe jobs too.

I am also happy because I have managed to make a gift for each and every friend and loved one. Here is what I have given:

Mama – a crocheted scarf

Baba – same

Tato – crocheted gloves to wear under his mittens when he works

Mykola – a shirt with embroidered edging

Slava – a blouse with embroidered edging

Stefan – I made him a pair of gloves but he gave them to his father, so I made him another shirt, this one with a bit of embroidery. He loves it.

Mary – an embroidered handkerchief

I also gave an embroidered handkerchief to Private Palmer.

In case you are wondering where I got all the cloth to make these gifts, remember how the Commandant wanted an embroidered handkerchief? Instead of being paid in money, I

asked for an extra length of cloth. Mama made the coloured embroidery threads for me with her dyes and of course the gloves were made with the wool I got from the burned blankets.

I have something very special for my Pikogan ladies. I hope I see them soon.

### ***Later***

In all the excitement of telling you what I gave to others, I forgot to tell you what I was given! Tato did some extra carving on my dollhouse and he also made more furniture for it. Mama gave me a beautiful embroidered nightgown from her hope chest and Baba gave me the silver spoon that has been in our family forever. I was so surprised by that. I am thankful that the soldiers haven't found out. I have hidden it in a safe place. From the gifts, I can tell that Tato wants me to stay a little girl, while Mama and Baba see that I am almost a woman.

Stefan amazed me with his gift. It is a woven bead bracelet with a leather tie strap. When did he learn how to bead weave and when did he find the time to make it? I shall cherish it always.

The biggest surprise was a box that arrived for Mama from Mrs. Haggarty. It was filled with used clothing and winter boots. There was also a box of chocolates. Here is what the Christmas card said:

*Dear Mrs. Soloniuk,*

*It seems rather silly of me to be wishing you a Merry Christmas, considering the present circumstances, but please know that I do think frequently of you and your family. My fondest wish is that your freedom be obtained quickly.*

*God Bless.*

*Mrs. Albert Haggarty*

What the letter means without those big words is "have a Merry Christmas and come home soon!" I think Mrs. Haggarty is very smart to be able to find words that the censor doesn't black out.

**Saturday, December 25, 1915**

Today is Canadian Christmas and so our men were given today and tomorrow off. This is the longest holiday that they have had since we got here. Mykola wanted to build a snowman but it is so cold that you can't even build a snowball! We are all staying inside.

**Monday, December 27, 1915**

Dear Diary, we were given old newspapers again and the headline story is very scary. The Germans were planning on blowing up the Welland Canal! This is in Canada. The newspaper says it was German spies living in Canada and the United States who planned this. I am hoping that the government doesn't blame this on us again.

Private Palmer told me that the soldiers don't get us confused with Germans, only Austrians. He said that there are some actual Germans who are prisoners of war in Canada, but that they are treated better than we are. They have good food and they do not have to work. In fact, some of them have brought servants to wait on them inside their camps! I guess they are treated better because they have more money. It doesn't seem fair.

**January–July 1916**

**Tuesday, January 4, 1916**

Not so cold today, but lots of snow.

It was Baba's idea to gather all of us women together today to prepare a traditional Christmas Eve dinner for all of the prisoners in the main camp. There are 80 or so of us women and older girls in the married prisoners' camp and there are about 800 men in the main camp. That means that each of us is responsible for making food for about ten prisoners. We worked in teams. Some of us baked *kolach* and some of us made cabbage rolls and sauerkraut *pyrohy* and cabbage *borshch*. If there is one thing plentiful in this camp, it is cabbage!

It was wonderful to see the men's faces when we brought down all the food. It is prepared for them so all they have to do on *Svyat Vechir* is warm it up in their own cookhouses and they will have a twelve-course feast. I feel sorry for them because they are so lonely and far away from their loved ones. At least in the married village we are with our families.

***Wednesday, January 5, 1916***

More snow. Much colder, especially last night!

We worked in the same teams and made the food for our own camp. These have been two work-filled days, but I enjoyed every minute of it.

***Thursday, January 6, 1916, Svyat Vechir***

Dear Diary, it has been a wonderful day. We are just back from midnight Mass. The thermometer says that it is 27 below zero, and I can believe it. I had to cover my face with a scarf, with just a small opening for my eyes, and even then my face was so cold that it ached.

It is beautiful to look outside right now because the snow sparkles like diamonds. These bunkhouses are not made for the cold. I have my socks and shoes on and my clothing and coat and all my blankets. It is hard to write with gloves on!

Just a year ago we were in our flat in Montreal and we were all together. Tato has been in this camp for nearly a year now, and it is over eight months for us.

We had our Christmas Eve dinner with everyone in our bunkhouse and it was wonderful. The food was delicious and the men were allowed to come back from the woods a little bit early today. We had a special surprise! Some Ukrainian newspapers and churches took up a collection on our behalf. We received a parcel filled with all different kinds of fruit. I think everyone who is interned has received one of the parcels. This really surprised me because I thought most of the Ukrainians in Canada were interned, but I was wrong.

It is wonderful to have this fruit. Maybe we won't get scurvy like the people in Lviv.

***Tuesday, January 11, 1916***

Lots of snow last night, very cold.

I can't believe that I am running out of pages! This was such a fat diary too. I will not write anything unless it is very important.

***Sunday, February 6, 1916***

***(cold, clear, crisp)***

The newspaper says that women in Manitoba can now vote!

***Thursday, February 10, 1916***

Dear Diary, it is my namesday and a bitingly cold 13 below zero.

I cannot believe that I am fourteen years old. It was two years ago that Tato gave you to me, and now your pages are running out. When I flip back and read, I am amazed at all I have seen and done.

I am glad that I am with Tato on my namesday, but I am sad that we are still prisoners here at Spirit Lake.

Mama and Baba had a big surprise for me at supper. They made me a birthday cake. It isn't really my birthday, but my namesday, but they said that since I am now in Canada, I should start celebrating like a Canadian and that means a birthday cake. I think it was Private Palmer's idea and he got some of the ingredients, including a bit of cocoa. Instead of having many layers like a torte, this birthday cake has two fat layers with a sweet creamy layer in the middle and spread over the top. It was a bit too sweet for my taste, but Mykola loved it.

It was also funny because both Stefan and Tato gave me almost the exact same thing. Tato carved me a stork to set on the roof of my dollhouse (he said that even though Canada has no storks, I should have one for good luck), while Stefan carved me a small eagle, its wings outspread. You can't put it on anything because it wobbles. Stefan told me it is meant to be held.

***Sunday, April 9, 1916, Ukrainian Easter***

Dear Diary, our whole family is together. This is the first Easter in three years that we have all been together. How I wish we were not prisoners.

***Wednesday, May 17, 1916***

Some prisoners have been released! A dozen or so left a week ago, and then another twenty yesterday. I hope we get to leave soon.

***Monday, May 22, 1916***

Dear Diary, I got a letter from Irena, but it is several months old. A man from the government came to her homestead. Irena's parents were scared because they thought her father was going to be arrested. They were actually looking for Yurij Feschuk, though. He escaped from the internment camp in the winter and they thought he might have come back to Hairy Hill, but Irena says no one has seen him. I wonder where he is? It must be scary to have the government chasing you.

***Saturday, May 27, 1916***

There have now been more than one hundred prisoners released. I have found out what is happening. They are not going home, but are being sent to mines and factories to work. Why can't they go home?

It bothers me so much that these men have been in prison so long for something that they didn't do. Can't the government see that the factories and mines need workers? Why don't they just let us go free? Then we can take these jobs. We want to work, but we also want to be free.

***Later***

I think I saw my Pikogan lady, but when I walked towards her, she was gone.

***Friday, June 9, 1916***

Oy , Dear Diary! One of the guards told me that there has been a "riot" at the Kapuskasing Internment Camp. A riot means people yelling and screaming and throwing things. This

riot involved 1,200 prisoners and 300 guards. I hope Stefan's brother is safe. That is also where that awful Private Smythe is. I wonder if he was part of the problem?

***Thursday, June 15, 1916***

Dear Diary! Good news!!!

Tato's boss is asking for Tato to come back to work. He also asked for Mr. Pemlych. As long as Tato reports in with the government when he is supposed to, and as long as he carries his papers, he should be fine. I also know that my job sewing buttonholes is waiting for me. Maybe I can go to school at night. Mrs. Haggarty is waiting for Mama. We will be leaving sometime soon. I can hardly wait!!!

***Later***

Will people be mean to us when we get back to Montreal?

***Friday, June 16, 1916***

Speaking about mean, Slava's father is not going back to the factory. Today he was sent to a mine on the east coast of Canada. About twelve men were chosen for that. Slava cried and cried. I think it is terrible that they are separated. They are the only family each other has. I do as Tato says and think of her as my little sister. She will be living with us in Montreal.

***Thursday, June 29, 1916***

Dear Diary, I thought we would have left by now, but we are still waiting for the official papers. There are not very many people left at the internment camp. Most of the unmarried prisoners from the main camp are now transferred to other places. I think it is mean that they are not being freed.

Another mean thing – Mama was not given her wedding ring back, and she didn't get her few dollars back either. Baba did get her broken ring back, but she cannot wear it, of course. I try not to think about it too much, though, because that will not change the situation. Thank goodness Tato got the money that he earned while he was a prisoner.

**Wednesday, July 19, 1916**

In two days, we leave!!!

**Thursday, July 20, 1916**

I saw my Pikogan ladies again, Dear Diary! Here is what happened.

The younger one was standing at the edge of our camp, motioning for me to follow her. I ran into the bunkhouse and got my gift. I also found my beaded necklace and slipped it over my head. I am proud of it and I wanted to show it to my dear Pikogan elder.

The lady took me a different way through the deep woods. After what seemed like an hour of walking I was tired and hungry, but we finally came upon a clearing. There were children playing and a young man was cleaning a rifle.

The lady went into one of the tents and I could hear her talking to the elder. Then she opened up the tent flap and motioned for me to come in. The elder looked frail and her eyes were weary. This broke my heart. Why was she sick? The younger lady motioned for me to show the elder my beadwork. I lifted the necklace over my head and handed it to her.

Her eyes lit up. She took the necklace in her grizzled hands and held it to her heart, then she held it close to her eyes, carefully examining the beadwork, then she gave it back.

Then I drew out my *rushnyk* .

Dear Diary, I know what you are thinking! The *rushnyk* took me so long to make! But I can always make another. I can never replace these friends.

The elder held out her hands and I passed it to her. She caressed the needlepoint as if the cloth were a child, and then she held it to her face and examined each stitch. She draped the *rushnyk* around her shoulders and smiled. I thought at that moment that she looked so noble. I think she is the spirit of the lake.

I began to stand up, but she held up her hand as if telling me to wait. Then the younger woman left the tent. She came back with a canvas bag. The elder opened the bag and pulled something out of it that looked like a fur. I unfolded it and gasped. It was a vest, much like a *kamizełka* from the old country. But instead of being decorated with colourful

embroidery and beads, it was tooled with something I had never seen before. They are like long white beads.

It was so beautiful I was almost afraid to touch it. The younger woman took it from my lap and motioned for me to put it on. It fit perfectly.

I was so overwhelmed that I felt like bursting into tears. I kept on saying thank you thank you thank you as I was getting up and leaving the tent. The younger lady led me back to the internment camp. When we were just outside the camp, she tipped her head and then she disappeared.

Each time I touch this soft leather vest, I think of my dear friends. And when I hold it to my face, there is a scent of smoke and wild berries. I will never see my Pikogan friends again, but they will always be with me.

***Friday, July 21, 1916, early morning***

***(hot and humid)***

We are finally leaving Spirit Lake Internment Camp! I can see the blackflies and the mosquitoes outside the train window, but the ones that were inside have all either been swooshed out or swatted. Even though the windows are open, no more flies are getting in because we are moving too fast.

I am sitting beside Stefan. Mama and Tato are in front of us. Baba is sitting with another of the older women and they are having a good conversation. I am not exactly sure where Mykola is right now. He had been sitting with Slava, but he dashed off down the aisle.

I almost forgot – Stefan says those long beads on my vest are made of porcupine quills. Can you imagine?

***Later***

We are still in a train going south to Montreal. Stefan is leaning against the window and is sound asleep. I think half of the people on the train are either asleep or trying to sleep. I must end here, Dear Diary, as your pages have run out. Please know that I am safe, and happy, and with my family. And also with Stefan.

## ***Epilogue***



Once the Soloniiks were back in Montreal, money was still very tight, so Anya and Stefan's family shared a flat for six months. Slava moved in with them. During this time, Anya and Stefan's friendship deepened, although Stefan would get moody at times – brooding about his internment memories. Anya did her best to cheer him, and she mostly succeeded. When the families could finally afford to rent their own flats, it was a bittersweet time for Anya, for she realized just how precious Stefan had become to her. But they still saw each other daily. Slava continued to live with Anya's family – in everything but name, she was the younger Soloniuk daughter.

Anya and Mary were enthusiastically received back at the garment factory. Anya was worried that they would be treated with hostility, but the supervisor could get so few Canadian-born workers that he even raised their pay. When Anya suggested he hire Slava, he didn't hesitate.

Anya was now back at the buttonhole machine – a job she was good at but hated. One day she got up her nerve and asked the supervisor for a different job. At first reluctant, he eventually said, "I am going to take a chance with you," and promoted Anya to "trainer." Instead of making buttonholes, she showed new girls how to make them. And then she trained girls how to put in zippers. This job was much kinder on Anya's hands and it paid better too.

As the years progressed, Anya received more promotions, but even with more responsibility and less grinding routine, she did not enjoy the work. She yearned to go back to school, but could not afford to quit working.

In 1919 Anya made a big decision. She would continue to work, but she enrolled in night school, intending to get her high school diploma. Her favourite class was English literature, but she surprised herself by getting top marks in French and Latin. While she loved this opportunity to learn, it did mean that she had less time to see Stefan.

Stefan had less time to see her during these early years too. His first job after being released from the internment camp was in the factory with his father and Anya's father. He

hated the job and quit after a week. At first he started selling newspapers again, then umbrellas and hand fans and other items. After a year or two he was so successful he was able to hire others to sell for him while he concentrated on sourcing the next popular item.

Baba lived to a healthy old age, although her leg continued to bother her. When the Soloniiks got their own flat, they made sure to get one on the ground floor so that Baba didn't have to climb the stairs. To supplement the family's income, Baba took in laundry. She also did all of the cooking and cleaning for the family. The one problem with Baba staying at home and looking after the housekeeping was that she never learned to speak English or French. The only places she ever went were church or the Ukrainian hall or the market. To her dying day, she only knew scattered words and phrases in English and French.

Mama was welcomed back, as promised, at Mrs. Haggarty's. She received a small raise, and every once in a while Mrs. Haggarty would drive Mama home in her automobile! The first time this happened, Mama clutched the door handle with white-knuckled fear, but after a while, she began to enjoy it. She especially enjoyed the astonished looks on the faces of the people on the street as they passed by.

Anya's father would often come home from the factory exhausted and wet with sweat, but with a smile on his face. Once, his supervisor called him into the office and suggested that he change his name. "If you were George Sloan instead of Yurij Soloniuk, I could make you a manager," the man said. "But I'm not George Sloan," replied Anya's father. He related this story over dinner one evening as if it were funny, but no one else saw the joke. "That's not fair," said Anya, anger flashing in her eyes. "Life is not fair," said her father, gently squeezing her hand. "It will work out in the end."

It didn't. Howard Smythe was made manager. A year or so later the factory workers went on strike and Mr. Soloniuk was elected union steward. Howard Smythe handled the whole situation so poorly that the factory almost had a riot on their hands, and he was fired. Anya's father resolved the strike with tact and patience, ensuring that the workers got a modest raise, but most importantly, job security. He also was able to convince management that this security was the factory's security too. The supervisor was so impressed that he offered Mr. Soloniuk Howard Smythe's job. Anya's father took it, reasoning that it was better to have a union man in management than anyone else. So in the end it did work out – and he didn't have to change his name.

Mykola was the least hurt by the internment camp experience. He learned his schoolwork quickly and graduated from high school with top marks in mathematics and science – and a full scholarship to the University of Toronto. After four years Mykola obtained a degree in Engineering, making him the first person in his family to get a university degree.

Anya wouldn't admit even to herself that she was jealous of her brother. She was determined to revel in his achievement and she planned the perfect graduation present. Two weeks before his graduation, she asked him to accompany her on an errand, and then she steered him through the doors of a fine men's shop. "My brother needs a suit," she said to the salesman. Mykola nudged her in the ribs and whispered, "I can't afford a suit here, Anya." She whispered back, "This is my gift." And then she watched, swallowing back tears of pride, as her little brother was measured up for a fine black suit that even the prime minister would be proud to wear. It cost her four months' wages, but it was worth it. Mykola was hired after his very first job interview – with the Canadian National Railway as an intermediate mechanical engineer.

Mary did not stay at the garment factory like Anya. After being there only a month, she was offered a teaching position at Notre Dame des Anges school. In addition to teaching full-time, she volunteered at night, teaching English to new immigrants. One of her students was a serious young man with a brown curly beard and wire-rimmed glasses. Roman Krawchuk picked up English quickly and Mary was impressed by the fact that he put so much effort into his assignments. After the last class of the year, Roman stayed seated until all of the other students had left and then he got up and approached her desk. "Miss Mary," he said, in his careful English, "would you allow me to buy you a cup of tea?" She smiled and nodded. They later married and headed west to begin a new life.

Like Mary, Slava stayed at the factory only a short time. But unlike Mary, she had become moody and silent. Less than a year after leaving the internment camp, she simply quit working. She stayed at home and helped Baba with her laundry business, but one day she went out to do errands and never came back. The Soloniiks had no idea where she had gone, but they suspected that she was in search of her father.

Anya did get her high school diploma, but she never achieved her dream of going to university. She kept up with her art, though, and her father built her an easel and set it up in front of the biggest window in their flat. One of his union colleagues spotted a poignant sketch that Anya had done. In this sketch, a youthful Slava sat at an industrial sewing machine, her head cradled in her arms and her body limp with exhaustion. The man

purchased the sketch from Anya for five dollars and asked if he could use it in one of the union's publicity campaigns. Anya readily agreed. That sketch ended up on posters in a national campaign to fight child exploitation. Anya hoped that Slava might see the poster somewhere and get word back to her, but if Slava ever saw it and recognized herself, she never made contact.

Anya and Stefan were both determined to achieve the things they had set out to do, but even when they were the most busy, their love for each other continued to grow. After one particularly big sale went through in 1921, Stefan went to a fine jewellery store and purchased a white gold ring with a turquoise stone set in the centre. On bended knee, he proposed to Anya. She got down on her knees and looked him in the eye. "Yes," she said, "I shall be your wife, and your friend and companion forever and a day." They were married in 1923.

Anya continued working at the factory until she was pregnant with their first child. Halyna was born in 1924. In 1925, Irena was born, and then in 1929, they were all delighted with the birth of Bohdan – who insisted on being called Robert as soon as he went to school.

Anya and Stefan would often tell their children stories of their internment, but Halyna, Irena and Robert would look at each other with bewildered amusement. It didn't seem possible that Canada had imprisoned their parents. They had assumed it was just a story. When the children were in their teens, Anya and Stefan took them on a car trip up to Spirit Lake. The buildings were still there, but it was now a government experimental farm. The cemetery was overgrown, but Anya and Stefan led their children to it and, despite the weeds and mud, they all got down on their knees to pray for Lyalya, Ivan Gregoraszczuk, and all the other internees buried there. Anya and Stefan also tried to locate their Pikogan friends, but could not find them.

Anya continued to exchange letters with Irena in Alberta. She had married Max, a neighbouring farmer, in 1924. In the early 1930s the Depression devastated many farms in the area, including Irena and Max's. It took many years for them to recoup their losses.

One letter from Bohdan Onyshevsky found its way to Anya a few years after the end of World War I:

*Dear Anya,*

*You are now the closest thing I have to a relative. Little did I realize when we were young that I would ever think upon you so fondly. I am glad that you are in Canada and safe. I*

*only wish I had the foresight to send my poor Halyna there before the war began. But how could I have guessed how devastating the war would be? My dear wife and son both died in the war. I loved Halyna with my heart and soul and I despair that I was never given the chance to kiss my dear sweet child, Ivanko. Halyna and Ivanko are buried with your grandfather and brother. I put pebbles on their graves every week. I have also learned to play your brother's tsymbaly. I don't know if I will ever get married again. The hole in my heart is too huge. Pray for Horoshova and our homeland, dear Anya. It is a grim time for us.*

– B.

## ***Historical Note***



### **World War I Breaks Out in August 1914**

When World War I started, Anna's village of Horoshova was stuck between two battling countries. While Austria-Hungary saw the crownlands of Galicia (which included Horoshova) and Bukovyna as their property, Russia considered these lands as "little Russia." Soon after the war began, Russia invaded these provinces.

As the Austro-Hungarian army was pushed back, Hungarian soldiers terrorized the local Ukrainian-speaking population, whom they assumed were Russian spies. One of the reasons for this was because people in Anya's region called themselves "rus'ki" which means "Rusyn," or "Ruthenian," old terms used to refer to the inhabitants of the area, but the troops thought they were saying "Russian." Thousands of Ukrainians were shot, hanged or herded off to internment camps in the west.

Meanwhile, Ukrainians were considered enemies by the tsarist government, and so Ukrainian cultural institutions were closed. Russian was taught in schools instead of Ukrainian, and the Ukrainian Catholic Church was to be dismantled. Many priests, bishops, intellectuals and patriots were being executed, but then in June 1915, this abruptly stopped. The reason is that the Austro-Hungarian army, with the help of Germany, pushed back the Russians. Anya's village of Horoshova, however, was in a small strip of territory still controlled by the Russians. They continued to hold this area for almost the whole war. Several Ukrainians somehow managed to thread their way into the local tsarist administration so that the Ukrainian population in the area did not suffer as much as they otherwise would have. However, there were Ukrainians in both Russian and Austrian internment camps.

Nationally conscious Ukrainians in Galicia and Bukovyna wanted autonomy. They also wanted to separate the Polish part of Galicia from the Ukrainian part. Unfortunately, Austria and Germany were more interested in meeting Polish interests, so in November 1916, they announced that they were going to create a Polish state from the territories

they had captured back from tsarist Russia. They said that they would deal with Ukrainian interests once the war was over. But everything changed in March 1917 when the Russian Revolution toppled the tsarist Russian empire.

At almost the same time as the Russian Revolution, Ukraine had a brief period of independence, between March 1917 and October 1920, during which time they went through a number of revolutionary governments. After 1920, Ukrainians found themselves divided up between four different countries (Soviet Ukraine, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania). By October 1920, the Soviet government had firmly established itself throughout central and eastern Ukraine, but Galicia came under Polish control, Bukovyna under Romanian control, and Transcarpathia became Czechoslovakian. The country would not become free until 1991.

### **Ukrainians, Canada and the First World War**

Approximately 170,000 Ukrainians immigrated to Canada between 1891 and 1914.

Most of them came to Canada from the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Bukovyna and Galicia. Some came to avoid being conscripted into the Austro-Hungarian army. Others came to get out of debt or to make a better life for themselves in a new country. The portion of land that most of these farmers owned was too small in which to eke out a living, so they needed to supplement their earnings by such methods as renting additional land. However, most of the land in Bukovyna and Galicia was owned by Polish aristocrats. These wealthy landowners did rent land to poor families, but charged unreasonably high prices.

Through the years 1896–1905 the Canadian government had encouraged East European peasants to immigrate because they had a reputation for being good hard-working farmers, and the Canadian government in Ottawa wanted to open up Canada's West. The vast majority of Ukrainians did settle in the prairie provinces, but some, like Anya's family, settled in Montreal and other big cities. In 1914–1915, Montreal's Ukrainian community numbered only about five hundred people, in a city of more than half a million. While the majority of Ukrainian immigrants came from Austria-Hungary, there were some who came from areas of Ukraine that were controlled by tsarist Russia.

Ukrainian immigrants who settled in Montreal tended to become more politically aware than those who settled in the prairies, since these urban immigrants had different

adjustments to make. Ukrainians who settled in the prairies struggled for daily survival on blocks of land that were close to each other and often far from other Canadians. In contrast, the small group of Ukrainian immigrants who came to Montreal worked as labourers, so their struggle was not for physical survival but to find a way out of their social isolation. Because they spoke neither French nor English and lived in the poorest of neighbourhoods, Montreal's Ukrainians had a compelling reason to quickly establish several mutual-aid organizations. These first organizations were not church oriented, an element that is in stark contrast to the first organizations in the prairies. These Montreal groups all shared the ideology of the Drahomanov Society, which had an anti-church bias and advocated socialism and independence for Ukraine. Ukrainian immigrants in Montreal usually thought of themselves as "Ukrainian" years before an independent Ukraine existed.

When World War I broke out, many Ukrainian immigrants didn't know whether they should go back to the old country to defend their homeland, or whether they should fight for Canada, their new country. Many Ukrainians enlisted in the Canadian armed forces and fought for their adopted home. Ukrainians who had immigrated with Russian passports were allowed to enlist in the Canadian armed forces. Others changed their names to Smith or Jones or lied about their origins in order to fight for Canada. One corporal, Filip Konowal, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery.

In 1914 the Canadian government implemented the War Measures Act. One result of the Act was that 8,579 immigrants were labelled "enemy aliens" and interned in 24 camps across the country. Approximately 6,000 of those interned were Ukrainians, but some Poles, Bulgarians, Turks, Rumanians, Jews, Croatians and Serbs were also interned. When these people were brought to internment camps, they were forced to give up their wallets, pocket watches and other items of sentiment and value. Another 80,000 individuals (mostly Ukrainians) were required to register with the authorities as "enemy aliens" and to report in on a regular basis. Immigrants who had already become naturalized British subjects were not slated for internment; however, in some cases, naturalized subjects were interned, contrary to what the Act indicated. In fact, even some children who were born in Canada were interned. Carolka Manko, who was born in Montreal, died at Spirit Lake internment camp when she was two years old.

It is still not known exactly why the government decided that there was a need to intern thousands of Ukrainian immigrants. The British government had assured the Canadian government that Ukrainians were not "Austrians" and thus were not the enemy. But as the war went on there was mounting hysteria against foreigners, resulting in some employers

firing them for “patriotic” reasons, particularly in Canada’s West. This, in addition to a recent recession that had left many people jobless, meant that there were many Ukrainians out of work and homeless.

It is even more difficult to understand why Canada decided to use these people – who had done no wrong – as forced labourers. Some municipalities simply wanted to take advantage of the forced labour that these people could supply, and to be spared the expense of providing relief for them. Several hundred men were still being held in internment camps nearly two years after the war ended.

When the internees were released, they expected to get back their personal items, but in many cases this did not happen. Also, while interned, the men were told that they would be paid twenty-five cents a day, the rate paid to military POWs – that is, captured enemy soldiers – for the hard labour they were forced to do. This amount was well below the daily wage of the time. Even so, some were never paid even that paltry amount. Upon their release, many internees were very bitter. Some even left Canada.

Some Germans were also interned in Canada during WWI, but while Ukrainian internees were considered “second class” and forced to do labour in often brutal conditions, the Germans were considered “first class.” They were not required to work, and some of them lived in small houses instead of barracks. They were allowed to bring servants with them and some had their own gardens. They were also given an allowance that they could use to buy tea, candy, tobacco and other luxury goods. One German internee was even able to bring in his own supply of caviar.

Of all 24 camps, it was only at Spirit Lake that Ukrainian women and children were interned. In the other camps, it was mostly single men. The internment camp at Vernon, B.C., interned some German women and children with their husbands, but because they were considered first-class prisoners they had comfortable conditions. The Ukrainian prisoners at the same camp were all male and were treated as “second-class” prisoners.

In 1917, while the war was still in progress, the government took the right to vote away from Ukrainian men who had not been naturalized by 1902, because the government feared being voted out. These men did not get the vote back until 1919.

## **Acknowledgment and Restitution**

Many people who were interned during WWI were so ashamed and bitter about what Canada had done to them that they hid the fact from everyone – even their own children. Also, the government destroyed the internment records except for internees' release dates. The fact of Canada's first national internment operations was brought into the public spotlight in 1977 by Lubomyr Luciuk while he was doing research about the historical geography of Ukrainians in Kingston. Since that time, an organization called the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association has been asking the federal government for acknowledgment that the internment operations were unjust, and for a promise that no one in Canada will ever again be jailed because of where they came from.

For eight years, Inky Mark, the Conservative MP for Dauphin-Swan River-Marquette in Manitoba, has pushed for recognition of the Ukrainian internment. In November 2005, just before the fall of the Liberal government, Inky Mark's Private Member's Bill C-331 became law.

This Bill "calls upon the federal government to acknowledge that thousands of Ukrainian Canadians were unjustly interned and disenfranchised in Canada during the First World War; to provide funding to commemorate the sacrifices made by these Canadians; and to develop educational materials detailing this dark period of Canada's history." In 2006 the Conservative government set aside two and a half million dollars for plaques and commemorative projects. The goal is to make us all aware of Canada's first national internment operations so that never again will Canada imprison people because of where they came from.

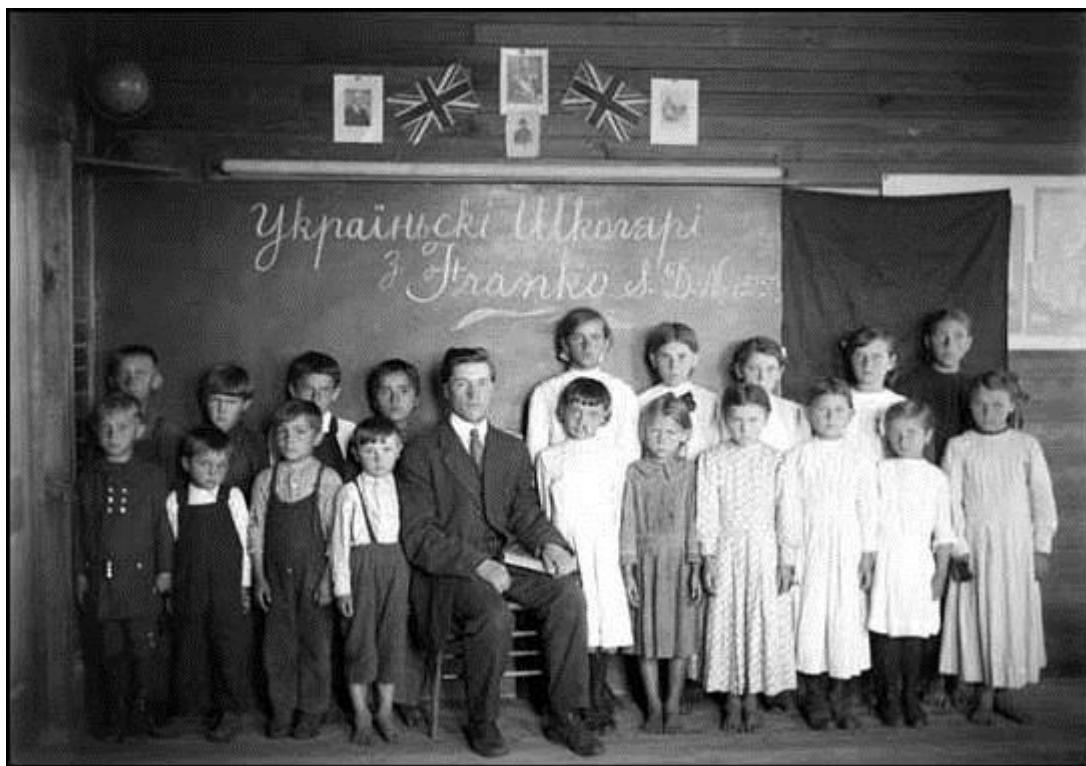
*Images and Documents*



*Image 1:* A Canadian Department of Immigration poster, written in Ukrainian, promises 160 acres of land to immigrants who will come to Canada, saying that there are 200 million acres of land available in western Canada.



*Image 2:* Galician immigrants at a train station after their arrival in Quebec in 1905.



*Image 3: A Ukrainian classroom in Alberta in 1920.*



*Image 4: The open square used as a parade ground in the centre of Spirit Lake Internment Camp. In the foreground is an ornamental stone wall made by the prisoners. In the background are buildings for the soldiers, including two barracks.*



**Image 5:** Internees sawing wood close to Spirit Lake Internment Camp.



**Image 6:** A work party at an internment camp in Castle Mountain, Alberta, in 1915.



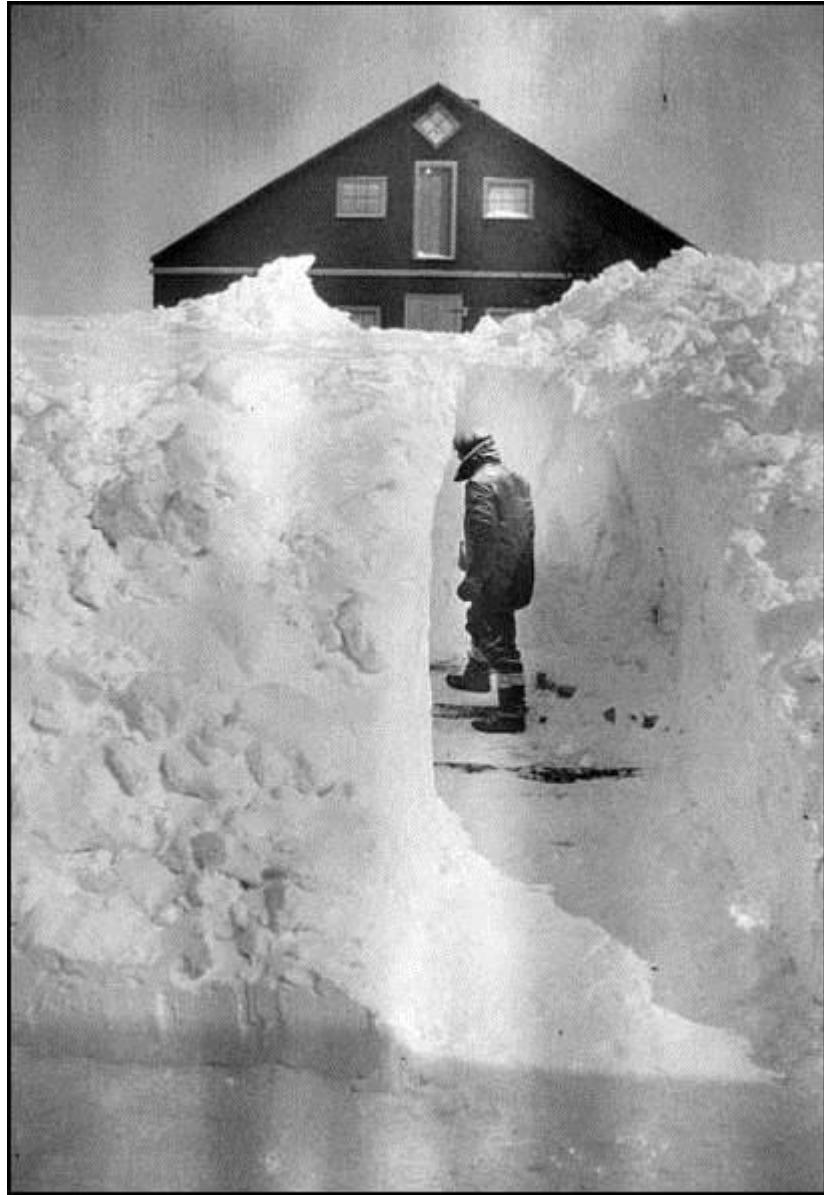
*Image 7: Children interned at Spirit Lake.*



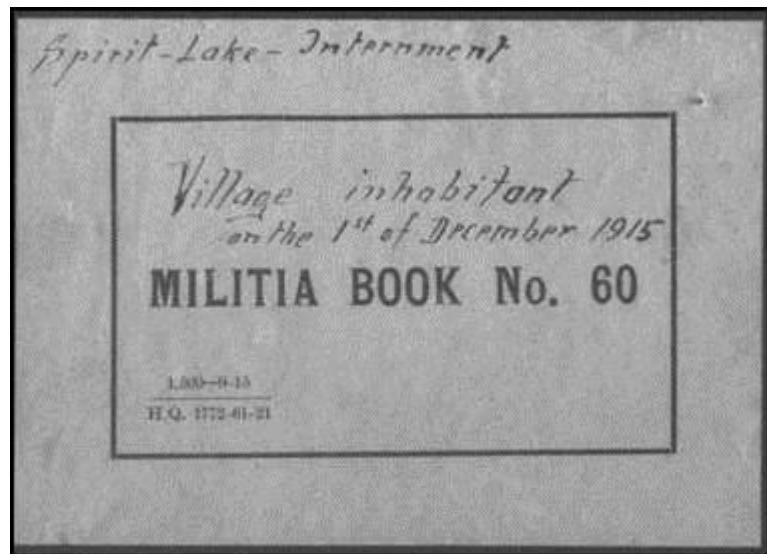
*Image 8: Internees standing in front of one of the dwellings in the married prisoners' camp at Spirit Lake Internment Camp.*



*Image 9: Women and children interned at Spirit Lake. In the centre of the photo is one of the soldiers.*



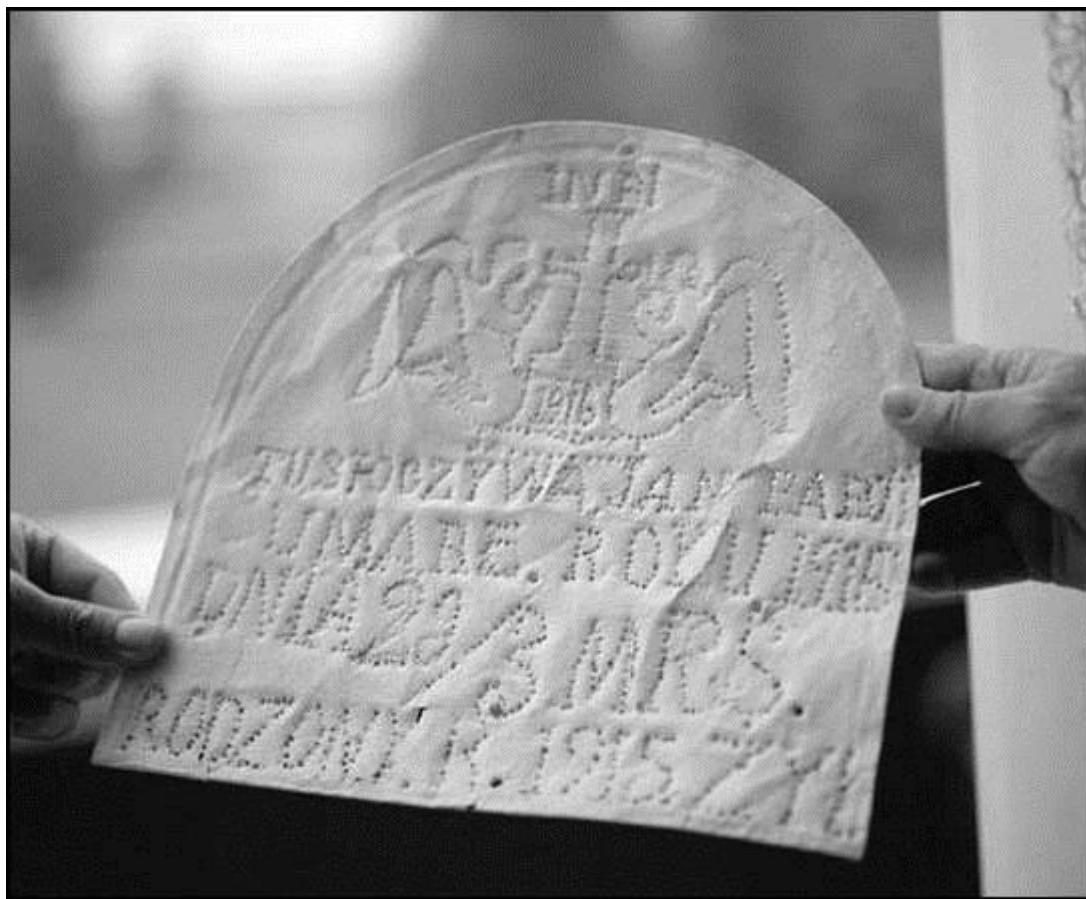
***Image 10:*** An internee shovels snow that's higher than he is.



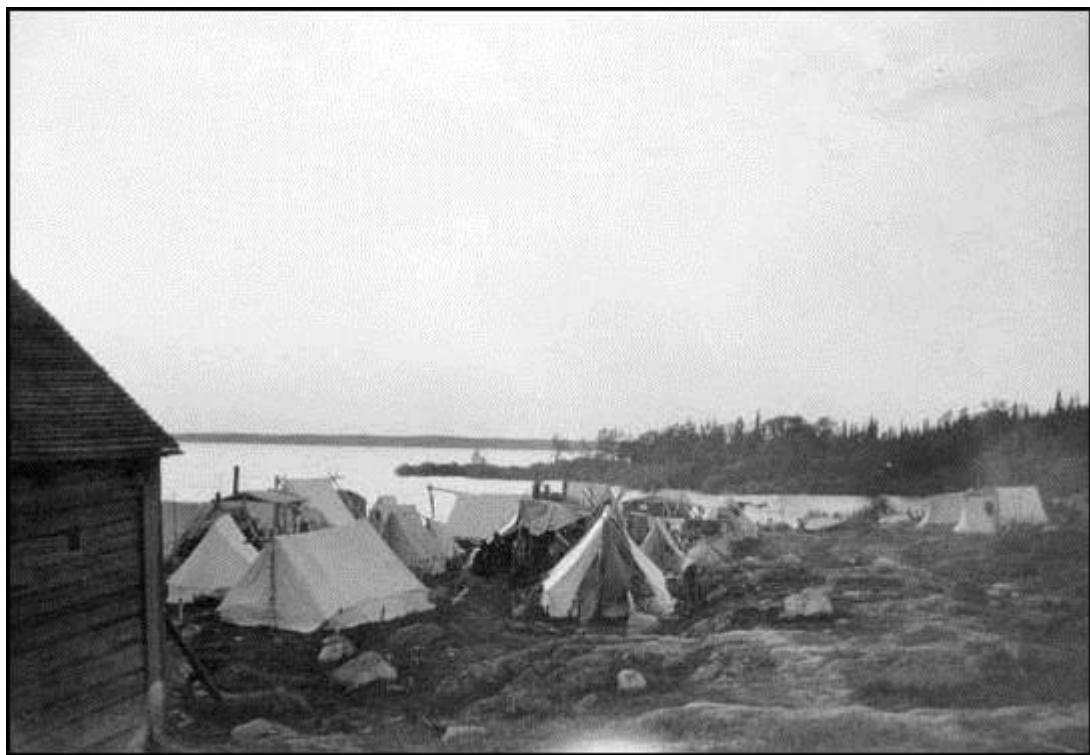
**Image 11:** Militia Book No. 60 detailed the daily lives of the internees at Spirit Lake. Most of the government's own records were destroyed. John Perocchio found this copy at a flea market in 1996 and purchased it for 50¢ .

House No 57	Portion No 2	Register No 46-X			
Name of the Person and his Wife	Sex	Name of the Children	Age	Sex	Size
Baby Andrew	9	Levi	3 yrs	7	
Mary	8	Frank	2 yrs	6	
		Susanna	1 yr	5 and	
Total 16					
December: 1 pair of slacks, 2 pairs black flannel, 1 pair black flannel, 1 pair white, 4 lbs wool 2 cap Lin children, 1 pair of shorts, 1 cap for man, 1 undershirt, 1 undershirt, 1 pair of socks, 1 pair of mittens, 1 undershirt, 1 undershirt.					
January: 1 pair of socks, 1 pair of women stockings, 1 top skirt					
February: 1 pair of women mittens.					
March 25th floor brush					
May: 2 pairs of children's boots, 2 pairs of children stockings, 1 pair of women stockings, 1 pair of mittens, 1 pair of socks, 1 coat, 1 pair of overalls.					

**Image 12:** Entries in Militia Book No. 60 listed internees' ages and heights and shoe sizes, the supplies they were given, and so on. In the register above, the name of one child who has died has been crossed out.



**Image 13:** A grave marker written in Polish, with letters punched into a piece of tin:  
Here lies Jan Babi, died March 29, 1916. The marker was taken from the internees'  
cemetery at Spirit Lake in 1945.



***Image 14: Tents of the Pikogan community situated near Spirit Lake Internment Camp.***

This is to certify that **J. Maksym Boyko**  
 a subject of **U.S.S.R.**,  
 who was interned as a prisoner of war by Canada at **SPIRIT LAKE, QUE.**  
 described for identification as  
 follows:-

Age	44 years	Height	5'6"	Weight	165 lbs.
Complexion	Fair	Hair	Brown	Eyes	Black.

Marks:-

I have been discharged from internment subject to the following conditions:-

1. That I will not leave Canada during the period of hostilities without an escort issued by competent authority.
2. That I will observe the laws of the country, abstain from espionage or any acts or correspondence of a hostile nature or intended to give information to or assist the enemies of the British Empire:

Dated at **Spirit Lake, Que.** this **fourteenth** day  
 of **June**, **1916.**

*Maksym Boyko* Signature

*G.V. Roberts* Signature  
 Witness: **G.V. Roberts**, Lieut.  
 Adjutant,  
 Internment Camp, Spirit Lake, Que.

INTERMENT CERTIFICATE
JUN 16 1916
OTTAWA

*Image 15: A portion of the release certificate of Maksym Boyko. The second condition of release was a promise to "abstain from espionage or any acts or correspondence of a hostile nature."*



**Image 16:** A monument put in place at Spirit Lake to honour those who were interred there.



**Image 17:** Europe in 1914, as World War I began. The shaded area indicates the boundaries of Ukraine established in 1991. Galicia and Bukovyna are the areas of present-day Ukraine, then part of Austria-Hungary, where many people spoke not Russian or Austrian, but Ukrainian.



**Image 18:** Twenty-four internment camps across Canada held Ukrainian and other internees. Only at Spirit Lake, Quebec, and Vernon, B.C., were families also interned.

## **Glossaries**



### **Ukrainian**

*baba* : grandmother

*babka* : a rich, sweet egg bread traditionally baked for Easter

*borshch* : beet soup

*chytalnya* : reading room

*dido* : grandfather

*gerdan/gerdany* : an intricately designed glass beaded necklace

*holubtsi* : cabbage rolls

*kamizelka* : vest

*kasha* : cooked buckwheat

*khrustyk/khrustyky* : sweet fried dough crisps

*kolach* : a round braid of egg bread

*kolomyika* : a lively traditional dance where onlookers crowd around, clapping, while others come forward and try to out-dance those who danced earlier

*krashanka/krashanky* : boiled eggs that are dyed in solid colours for Easter

*kutya* : a Christmas dish made with boiled wheat, poppy seeds, honey and nuts

*kystka* : tool for applying hot wax to eggs

*Mnohaya Lita* : a greeting song wishing one a long life

*nalysnyky* : crepes

*provody* : a religious procession to commemorate the dead

*pyrohy* : stuffed noodles, called perogies in English

*pysanka/pysanky* : Easter eggs, unboiled, decorated using a wax-resist method of dyeing

*Rizdvo* : Christmas Day

*rushnyk/rushnyky* : cloth for special occasions

*studenetz* : jellied fish

*Svyat Vechir* : Christmas Eve (literally: Holy Night)

*tato* : father

*toloka* : a building bee

*tsymbaly* : stringed instrument

*Veselykh Svyat* : Happy Holidays

*Vichnaya Pamyat* : lament sung at Ukrainian funerals and commemorative services

*vushka* : mushroom-stuffed noodles

### **German**

*kronen* : Austrian coins

### **Irish**

*maimeo* : grandmother

## **Acknowledgments**



Every effort has been made to trace ownership of visual and written material used in this book. Errors and omissions will be corrected in subsequent updates or editions.

Cover portrait: detail from *Young Galician immigrant holding envelope labelled “Red Star Line”*. Saint John, NB. May, 1905 , Library and Archives Canada, C-063254

Cover background: *Officer standing at train station with gun resting on his shoulder, watching as train approaches the station* , R. Palmer/Library and Archives Canada, PA-170492

Image 1: *160 Acres of Free Land* , Library and Archives Canada, C-006196

Image 2: *Galician immigrants c. 1905* , John Woodruff/Library and Archives Canada, C-005610

Image 3: *School children at School District No. 1515, Frank, Alberta, ca 1920* , Gushul Family Fonds/Glenbow Archives, NC-54-4198

Image 4: *Hundreds of prisoners standing in open square of internment camp* , R. Palmer/Library and Archives Canada, PA-170457

Image 5: From the documentary film “Freedom Had a Price,” directed by Yurij Luhovy

Image 6: *Prisoners of war at internment camp, Castle Mountain, Alberta, 1915* , Glenbow Archives, NA-3959-2

Image 7: *Children of prisoners of Spirit Lake Internment Camp*, Library and Archives Canada, PA-170470

Image 8: *Prisoners of Spirit Lake Internment Camp with their family members*, Library and Archives Canada, PA-170623

Image 9: *Women and children prisoners of internment camp*, Library and Archives Canada, PA-170620

Image 10: *A prisoner shovelling a pathway through snowbanks*, Library and Archives Canada, PA-170641

Images 11 and 12: *Militia Book No. 60* cover and one interior page, courtesy of John Perocchio

Image 13: Grave marker, courtesy of Sandra Semchuk

Image 14: *Camp of prisoner tents on shore of Spirit Lake* [actually the Pikogan camp near the internment camp], R. Palmer/Library and Archives Canada, PA-170467

Image 15: Portion of release certificate of Maksym Boyko, courtesy of Otto Boyko

All sketches, and image 16, courtesy of the author

Images 17 and 18: Maps courtesy of Paul Heersink. Canada map: data © 2002 Government of Canada with permission from Natural Resources Canada.

The publisher wishes to thank Barbara Hehner for her careful fact-checking of the manuscript, and Sophia Kachor for checking the spelling and translation of Ukrainian words and terms.

We are indebted to Orest Martynowych, author of *Ukrainians in Canada: The Formative Years, 1891–1924*. His detailed observations in vetting the manuscript were always helpful, even in sections where we opted to reflect a different interpretation of the events. We also thank Dr. Frances Swyripa, author of *Wedded to the Cause: Ukrainian-Canadian Women and Ethnic Identity 1891–1991* and *Ukrainian Canadians*, and co-author of

*Loyalties in Conflict: Ukrainians in Canada during the Great War*, for vetting the Historical Note.

## **Dedication**

*This book is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, George Forchuk (Yurij Feschuk), who was interned at Jasper Internment Camp, Alberta, during World War I. Dido, you are not forgotten.*

*Many thanks to the following people who supplied me with precious tidbits of information:*

*Dr. Lubomyr Luciuk, Yurij Luvovy, Zorianna Hrycenko-Luhova, Peter Melnycky, Sandra Semchuk, Brenda Christian, Andrea Malysh, Maria Rypan, Ghyslain Drolet, Myron Momryk, Margriet Ruurs, Dr. Desmond Morton, Olga Temko, Walter Kowal D.D.S., Olga Kowal, Mary Moroska, Orysia Tracz, Connie Bilinsky, Linda Mikolayenko, Larry Warwaruk, Danny Evanishen, Paulette MacQuarrie, Dr. Denys Hlinka, Gerry Kokodynaiak, Roman Zakaluzny, Orest Martynowych, Dr. Frances Swyripa, Orest Skrypuch M.D., and Dorothy Forchuk.*

*Sincere thanks to all of the fine “Private Kidcrit” participants in Compuserve’s Books and Writers Community.*

*Huge thanks and appreciation to Sandy Bogart Johnston, editor extraordinaire, and to Diane Kerner for all of her help and support, and – as always – to my agent, Dean Cooke, who makes all things possible.*

## ***About the Author***



As a child, Marsha Skrypuch heard bits of conversation about her grandfather having been “put in jail for something he didn’t do,” so she would ask her father for details. He would tell her intriguing anecdotes about her grandfather, but wouldn’t answer the question. When she asked aunts and uncles to clarify, they clammed up. Then, in the late 1980s, Marsha read an opinion piece in the *Globe & Mail* by Lubomyr Luciuk, about the Ukrainian internment during WWI. She phoned her father and asked if he had ever heard of such a thing. Her father sighed and said, “Of course. What do you think happened to Dido?”

Marsha’s grandfather was dead by this time, so she sat down with her father and peppered him with questions. She learned that George Forchuk, who at the time was known as Yurij Feschuk, had been interned at Jasper Internment Camp in Alberta. He had come to Canada from Bukovyna in 1912 and obtained prime farmland in the area around Hairy Hill and Willingdon, Alberta. Like Irena’s neighbour, he was single, and had to report regularly to the authorities to have his “enemy alien” registration card stamped. Like Irena’s neighbour, Marsha’s grandfather was arrested during one of those reporting sessions, and was taken to Jasper Internment Camp. Just like Stefan’s father, Ivan Gregoraszczuk and so many others, Yurij found the conditions at the camp intolerable. He worked from “dark to dark” in brutally cold weather. One thing that he learned to do while imprisoned at Jasper was to “carry a fifteen-foot log on his shoulder at a dog trot.”

One evening, he decided that it was time to go. Instead of going back to the internment camp with the other prisoners at the end of the day, he escaped into the woods. He could hear the soldiers’ “bullets whistling through the trees” but he was not shot. He hid in the bush for a while, then changed his name and went to the Lethbridge area, where he worked in the coal mines. He kept away from people as much as he could until 1918. One day he was surprised to see a fellow internee walking down the street. Everyone had to wear masks at that time because of the Spanish Flu epidemic, but Yurij pulled down his mask to talk to the other man. A policeman saw him do that and fined him two dollars.

While Yurij was counting out his coins, he said to the officer, "You may as well know, I am also an escapee from the prison camp." The policeman looked at him in confusion. The fellow internee interjected to explain that the internees at Jasper had been released eighteen months ago. That was the first time Yurij realized that he was a free man.

Yurij travelled back to his old homestead in the Willingdon area, but was dismayed to find that his farm had been sold to someone else and his livestock had been divided up among the neighbours. He also realized that the people in the area thought he must have done something wrong. Otherwise, why had he been interned? The farmland in the Willingdon area was some of the best in the province. There wasn't any left to buy, and even if there had been, Yurij didn't feel comfortable staying in the area, nor did he have enough money to buy land there. He left for good and saved up enough money to buy another homestead. Good land was too expensive by this time, though, so he ended up with marginal farmland between Myrnam and St. Paul. It wasn't until 1939 – a quarter of a century after being interned – that Yurij was able to save enough to buy a homestead in Innisfree that was comparable to the one he had lost in 1914.

In November of 2004 Marsha made the long trek to where Spirit Lake Internment Camp used to be. The railroad has long since been dismantled, so she flew to Val D'Or, then drove to Amos, where she met Ghyslain Drolet. He had been working towards putting together a Spirit Lake interpretive centre for a number of years. He took Marsha out to the cemetery at Spirit Lake first. It is now all grown over with brush and abandoned.

The person Anya Soloniuk is based upon, Mary Manko, was only six when she and her family were taken from their Montreal home and sent to Spirit Lake Internment Camp. Mary's two-year-old sister Carolka died at the camp. Mary Manko was in her nineties when this book went to press; she is the last known survivor of the Ukrainian internment operations.

While she was at Spirit Lake, Marsha visited the Pikogan Community Centre. There were not many artefacts, but there were maps showing the Pikogan community's traditional hunting ground in the early 1900s, so Marsha was able to confirm that her Anya could very well have met up with people from that community. At a store in Val D'Or that sold authentic Pikogan beadwork and crafts, she saw designs similar to what the Pikogan used in 1914. Marsha was able to purchase a bead necklace that is much like a Ukrainian *gerdan*.

Marsha is the author of *Aram's Choice* (CLA Canadian Children's Book of the Year Award finalist and nominee for the Silver Birch Express Award), *Stolen Child* (named a *ResourceLinks* Best of the Year selection and shortlisted for the CLA Book of the Year Award for Children), and *Making Bombs for Hitler . Prisoners in the Promised Land* was named a *ResourceLinks* Best of the Year selection.

Earlier novels include *The Hunger, Hope's War* (nominated for the Manitoba Young Readers' Choice Award, the Snow Willow Award, the Rocky Mountain Book Award and CBC's Canada Reads People's Choice book) and *Nobody's Child* (nominated for the Red Maple Award, the Alberta Rocky Mountain Book Award, and the B.C. Stellar Award). She has written three picture books, *Silver Threads, Enough* and *The Best Gifts*, and edited an anthology called *Kobzar's Children: A Century of Untold Ukrainian Stories*. Her newest book is *One Step at a Time: A Vietnamese Child Finds Her Way*.

### ***Author's Note***



Events mentioned in this story did happen to actual people, but the characters themselves are fictional, with the exception of Mr. Foster, Pte. Palmer, Ivan Gregoraszczuk, Father Redkevych, Father Perepelytsia, and my grandfather, Yurij Feschuk.

Anya would never have graced these pages had it not been for the help of many people. First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge Mary Manko Haskett, the last survivor from the Montreal community, who was interned at Spirit Lake. Mary Manko's personal story, and that of her sister Carolka, who died at the camp, as well as that of another little girl who was interned there, Stephania Pawliw, inspired me to write this story.

I would also like to thank Otto Boyko, whose father was interned at Spirit Lake, and my own father, Marsh Forchuk, for his crisp recall and his willingness to finally open up about my grandfather, despite the pain.

– M.S.

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While the events described and some of the characters in this book may be based on actual historical events and real people, Anya Soloniuk is a fictional character created by the author, and her diary is a work of fiction.

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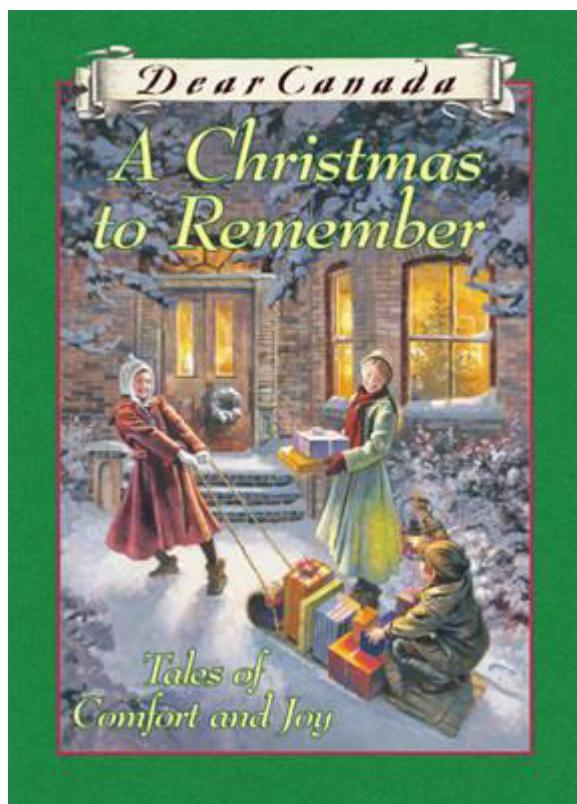
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ISBN: 978-1-4431-2404-1

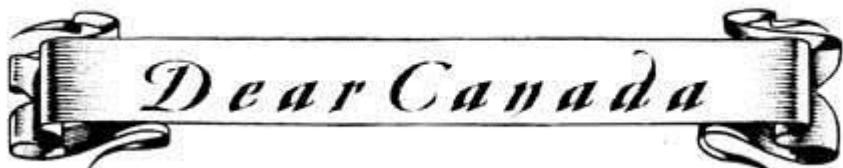
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