

Everyone said Kanada would be better. Kanada needed farmers and the government advertised for Ukrainians to come. Our farm was too small to divide among all of the brothers. Daddy was the youngest brother and he loved adventure so he left for the New Country. He was going to work and send money so that we could cross the sea in a big ship to a new life in a better country.

I was almost four years old and my sister Lena was just a tiny baby when he left. He was gone so long that I hardly remembered him. He used to lift me up and tell me to touch the sky. We waited and waited. Mamma and my uncles and aunts were kind but without Daddy we were not a family.

I remember the day that the letter came. There was money for our journey and some left over so we could have new clothes to travel to Kanada. The village shoemaker made us our first pair of real shoes; they were red leather boots just like the big girls wore for dancing. We left our straw shoes behind. Uncle took us in the cart from our village all the way to Ternopol the big city where the train stopped. We had never been so far from home!

The train took us to where the ship was waiting. The porter who helped with our luggage said that we were in steerage. It was down a long flight of stairs and dark

inside. We slept in a big room with other people. Mamma said we had to be careful with so many strangers around. The beds were piled one on top of the other---three beds high. Mamma had the bottom bed with our straw basket of things we needed for the trip beside her. Lena was supposed to sleep in the middle with me on the top but she said she was scared and made me sleep with her just like we did at home. Little sisters can be like pests!

At first the journey was exciting with new places to explore. I was told more than once that steerage-passengers could not go here or there. Once I caught a glimpse of a fancy dining room with linen table cloths, silver dishes and a big shining light hanging down from the ceiling. It was even bigger than the light that hung from the rafters of our Church. We ate in a big dining room too but it was plain with long wooden tables and benches.

Then the storms came. Mamma tied a string threaded with cloves of garlic around our necks to keep the seasickness away. At dinner time the dishes all slid off the tables. The benches were turned over and the tables began to slide to one side of the room. As we ran back to our room many people were gagging and holding their stomachs. Later Mamma could not get out of bed. She and Lena threw up and were dizzy. I felt sick too but not as bad as they did. The whole of steerage smelled really bad. I was glad to go up on the deck and breathe fresh air

but Mamma said that a stranger might snatch me and maybe even throw me overboard to be food for the fish. After that I stayed close to the beds. The ship's doctor came to give us all a shot. The needle hurt and Lena cried and cried but after awhile I felt better.

When we finally got to Kanada Mamma and Lena were still sick so they carried us all of us off the ship on stretchers. Nurses put cool cloths on our heads and gave us clear soup to drink. Mamma was frantic that someone would steal our luggage with all our treasures from home but surprisingly it made it to the room where we were waiting to get better. The doctor said that our seasickness was not a permanent disease and Daddy was waiting for us with a job so the Immigration Officer said, "Welcome to Kanada." Maybe this would be a good place after all!

Then we took the second long train ride of the trip. Sault Ste. Marie was very far away and we never saw so many trees when we looked out of the windows. They went on forever and ever. But at least the train did not make us sick and Daddy was waiting. Would he know me after so long? Would I know him? I could hardly remember and I felt shy. But I should not have worried; he was still so tall and he lifted me up to the sky when he saw me. We were all so happy----even Lena.

Sault Ste. Marie was bigger than our village. Daddy said it was named after the Mother of God just like the river beside it. That made it not so strange to me. The

people did not speak our language and they dressed differently. The ladies wore woollen coats and hats not shawls over their dresses and heads. There were wooden planks on the streets so you would not get your new boots covered with mud. We had so many things to learn. For awhile we lived with another Ukrainian family so my mother could learn the ways of Kanada. Later we learned it was a boarding house and while the lady helped us we helped her by paying money that she sent back to her family in the Old Country.

Soon Daddy found us a small house to live in by ourselves. It was more like the house back in our village. It was small and cozy and close to his work at the Steel Plant. Not far away there was a factory where paper was made. We could see the logs that would be turned into paper floating on the river of St. Mary that was across the field from our house. The river was very fast and noisy as it went over the falls not like the quiet gentle creek that flowed next to our house in the Old Country. Mamma was not happy about the river and said if we fell in we would drown and she made us promise we would never go there.

Soon it was time to go to school. When I turned seven I was supposed to start school in the Old Country but we left so school---and in English too-----was new to me. "A, B, C " "1 2 3", "c-a-t spells cat", "red, yellow, blue, green." but my favourite was black because that was the translation of my name into English. It

was all so exciting that I forgot to be afraid! And best of all Lena got to stay home with Mamma.

My schoolmates were learning English like me but many of them were from Italy and spoke Italian at home. At recess and after school we played and soon I was learning Italian too----spaghetti, pepperoni, parmesan. Mmmmmmm their food was good!

Mamma stayed home washing clothes, cooking and cleaning. Then baby Maria arrived so Lena had someone to play with. But Mamma was not learning English at all. I had to say everything in English for her when she left the house. I had to go everywhere with her even when I would rather play with my friends. She was happiest when we would go to the Ukrainian Hall in another neighbourhood where she could talk with other Ukrainian women.

Soon hard times came. We would never save enough money for our farm! Daddy was getting only a few days of work each week. He said that many workers were being laid off. He said that only non-foreigners had steady work. People were not friendly to foreigners because a war was starting in the Old Country. Even though we were Ukrainian people called us Austrian and real Austrians were “the enemy”.

Mamma and Daddy had to report to the Mounted Police because they were part of “the enemy”. Every week they had to go to the government building where the post office was to report to the police. They had to promise to be peaceful and come every week.

Daddy got a new job cutting trees in the big bush north of the city. He had to take the train with the other men to get there. He was happy to have steady work again even if it meant that he would be gone for awhile. Mamma was happy too but another new baby named Anne meant another mouth to feed.

On Fridays I went with her to report to the Police. I told them why daddy could not report but they were not happy. They said he had to report there once every week and how did they know he had not returned to Austria to fight for “the enemy”? Daddy did not even like Austria because they had occupied Ukraine and split it in half with Russia; why did they think he would fight FOR them?

I was afraid for Daddy to come back from the bush but I really missed him. When he did come he gave my mother his pay and said he had to go to the Ukrainian Hall with his friends for important business. The police came to the door in their red coats and tall brown leather boots that went up to their knees. They were looking for Daddy. They knew he had come home and where was he now?

Mamma pretended she could not understand English and for the first time did not make me talk for her.

Daddy did not come home that night and we heard that the police took him to jail with a few of his friends. I went with Mamma to the government building where she had reported every week. The jail was in that building too. She had to show her papers and they let us see Daddy for a few minutes. He told us that not reporting for many weeks was a serious crime even if you were far away working to support your family. Now he had to stay in jail for the rest of the war. No one knew how long that would be.

When we got home Mamma cried and cried. So did the babies. Lena and I tried to help. Mamma stayed in bed for many days. I even tried to do the washing; it was hard. The nuns came to see why I was not at school. After they left things returned to normal for awhile. We still had Daddy's pay for rent and groceries. I went back to school and played afterwards with my friends. The Italians did not go to jail so life was the same for them.

Then one day I came home to find Mamma crying again. We had no food, no money and next month we would have to pay the rent again. I remembered that I had promised Mamma never to go to the river but I had watched my older friends go out onto the log booms near the Paper Mill to catch whitefish when

they came to the surface between the logs. All they had to do was hit the fish on the head with a board and then grab them and run on the logs to the shore where the fish would die without water. Their mothers would cook those big fat fish for supper and I knew that they were good.

The first time on the log booms I was so afraid. I thought I would slip off the logs, fall in and drown. My friends went with me and showed me how to fish and NOT drown.

“Who brought the fish?” asked Mamma. “Katy did”, said Lena before I could stop her. At first Mamma was mad but after she cooked it and we all had lots to eat she not only forgave me but soon she was sending me out to the river.

Mamma said that if I could be so brave then she would be brave too. We all moved into one bedroom and she took in two boarders. They were working when they could and saving money to send to their families in Ukraine after the war. They said that the fish I caught made ours the best boarding house they ever stayed at.

Every once in awhile we had extra fish and Mamma made extra pyrohy. I was able to bring Daddy a meal because the police had moved the prisoners onto Whitefish Island in the river not too far from where we lived. When the guards asked who got the fish Lena always said proudly “Katy did!” With the money from

the boarders and my fish we were able to pay the rent and survive until Daddy got out of jail.

But our life never did return to normal. When I remembered our beautiful farm in Ukraine it did not seem to be home to me anymore. I did not even know how to read the letters that come from the Old Country because the alphabet is very different. Kanada did not feel like home any more either. We were afraid of being called enemies again; people were suspicious of us even after the war. Daddy changed our name to an English one to help us fit in. So now I was Katy Black.

Sometimes I wondered who I was and where I belonged. But I did feel at home when I went fishing with my friends.

AUTHOUR'S NOTE: In the winter of 1910-11 when she had just turned seven years old my Baba (grandmother) Katy came by ship with her mother and sister Lena to join her father in Canada. Many of the events here are from her stories and what a storyteller she was! Her father was held in an internment camp that was eventually located on Whitefish Island in the St. Mary's River. She did bring him food. The prisoners worked at the Sault locks widening and deepening them. Sometimes they worked at the steel mill or the paper mill. Their families were left to fend for themselves. They were promised pay at the end of the war but most were too frightened to collect it.

