

A Story About Typical Russian Children – as read by Lena Hamm

This is a story about a boy & a girl your age that live in Russia.

When they were born they were given names that had been popular in Russia for over a hundred years: Alexander and Maria. But they are almost never called by those names; rather they were called by their nicknames, Sasha & Masha. Their parents didn't have to think of middle names for them; each child gets their father's name as a second name. Sasha & Masha's father's name is Sergey, so Sasha's full name is Alexander Sergeyivich, and Masha's is Maria Sergeyivna.

Sasha & Masha live in an apartment along with their parents and grandparents. Because the cities are often very crowded, there are no houses in the city, only large apartment buildings, factories and other buildings. Sasha & Masha have to share a room with their parents—their apartment has only four rooms: a kitchen, a bathroom and two other rooms. One of the rooms is for their family of four, and the other is where Sasha & Masha's grandparents live. During the day, their grandparents' room becomes the living room. This is where they have their TV, bookshelves and a desk.

When Sasha & Masha turned two years old, they were taken to kindergarten for part of the day. Because both their mom & dad work, it was easier for them to be with other children in the kindergarten. At kindergarten they would have breakfast and play with the other children. Sasha & Masha usually were served porridge for breakfast; along with bread with butter and cheese (people in Russia think that children should eat lots of butter). At about two o'clock Sasha & Masha's mother would come and pick them up and take them home for lunch.

People in Russia usually eat their lunch after two o'clock. Lunch is usually the biggest meal of the day, with soup (beet or cabbage soup is the most popular), buckwheat or potatoes, a small meat patty and lots of bread. Bread is eaten with every meal in Russia, and the bread is very dark and heavy (not white & fluffy like here!).

In the afternoon Sasha & Masha would often play in front of their building with other children or go to the nearest playground with their grandmother. Because no one has a yard to play in, children in Russia play on back alleys or in any area they can find. The games that Sasha & Masha play are usually simple games—they have just a rubber ball to play with—no bicycles (no place to put them in a small apartment) or swings or tree houses (no yard of their own!).

On Sunday most everyone in Russia enjoys a day off. But Sasha & Masha attend church with their mother each Sunday morning. Their father and grandfather want nothing to do with church, and their grandmother only attends a traditional Russian church. To go to church Sasha & Masha and their mother must get up very early so that they can take the subway (which is an underground train) to where the church service will be. After traveling for about 45 minutes, they then have to take a bus for 10 minutes or walk for about 25 minutes to get to church. Each week church is held at a rented theatre—they have no church building of their own. Most of the people at church are grandmothers & mothers with children—very few men attend church in Russia. They have no Sunday school program at church, only a children's church time for all the kids.

When Sasha & Masha reach age 7, then it is time for them to go to school. School starts on September 1 every year and is a very special day for the teachers. Sasha & Masha (along with all the other students) will bring flowers to their teacher! Many schools have special uniforms for the children to wear, such as a burgundy or black jacket to wear over their clothes. Students attend school six days a week—that's right, they even have school on Saturdays! However, unlike here, in Russia students graduate after Grade 11.

Life is very different for children in Russia, but just like here, there are many children who love Jesus and want others to know him too. Please pray for children like Sasha & Masha—there are very few Christian children in Russia. Thank God that there are churches and Christian camps in Russia. Please pray that more children will be able to attend churches and camps and learn about Jesus.