

Chapter 1

The promise is for you and your children. Acts 2:39a

Anastasia giggled as she dropped the bills into her big sister's hand. She knew this wasn't the proper attitude for begging and that the aged ladies going into the Orthodox church would frown on her behavior, but she didn't care. This was more money than she had ever gotten before in her two and a half years, and she knew that when they had paper money they had always been able to buy a lot of bread. Maybe her sister could even buy a soup bone if Mama didn't find the money first and buy vodka with it. She danced around a little in front of her sister until Svetlana frowned at her and an old *babushka* hit her with her cane. Anastasia returned to the pious position that was acceptable for begging in the little Ukrainian village. Although her head was bent low, she kept glancing sideways at her sister and trying to catch the eye of the men in polished black shoes walking by in hope of getting another large gift. But no one had given her anything else before her sister grabbed her and ran into the church.

“The school truant officer. He is looking for me again. We have to hide. Anastasia, come now!”

They stayed in the church for a really long time, it seemed to Anastasia, then finally slipped out the side entrance and went to the market. As Svetlana bargained for the last two loaves of bread on the shelf, Anastasia played with a bit of string she had found on the

floor. Then they started home.

“Can’t we get a soup bone so we can have some soup?” she asked.

“Prices have gone up too much. I could barely get two loaves of bread.”

As they walked, Anastasia kicked at the crisp leaves of the October day. Finally they came around the corner near their little dirt floor hut.

Snijana was playing alone outside the hut. This morning, when Svetlana and Anastasia had left, Mikhail had been there and Mama had been asleep on the floor. They had expected her to sleep for a long time because there had been so many men last night. The men usually brought bottles that Mama drank out of, and then she slept for a long time in the morning.

As Svetlana and Anastasia approached, a big dog ran into the yard. He had a sausage in his mouth that he had probably stolen from somewhere in the village. Snijana saw it and got up, slowly moving closer to the dog. When the dog dropped the sausage, she grabbed it and started to bite it. Suddenly the dog lunged for her. One of its sharp teeth ripping through Snijana’s lip. She screamed and rolled over as the dog tried to grab the rest of the sausage. Its jaw locked on her arm and it shook her wildly. Snijana’s body went limp.

Svetlana and Anastasia screamed and ran to her, beating the dog with sticks. Neighbors heard the screams and came running. They beat the dog off the tiny girl, who lay in the dirt trembling, and called

the police. Police and ambulance soon arrived; finding the fourteen-month-old child unconscious and the other children unattended in a thatch-roofed hut with a dirt floor that contained no food or furniture, only straw-filled pallets and some worn, dirty clothes. Calls had been made about this family before and the policemen knew the reputation of the mother, but things had never been this bad. They called the Education Inspector, who was responsible for the welfare of children in the district. He started proceedings to get all four of the children out of this home. But the first order of business was to get the baby to the hospital.

Mikhail came tearing home from school just as the paramedics loaded Snijana into the ambulance.

“That big dog from down the street attacked Snijana. They are taking her to the hospital. But the ambulance people have called the school truant officer and some other officials. I think they are going to take us away,” explained Svetlana. “Why weren’t you here? Where is Mama?”

“She got up early this morning. She said she had to go to the clinic. The truant officer came for me right after she left. Snijana was inside, sleeping under a pile of dirty laundry when I left.”

“Well she must have come outside after that. Why didn’t you lock her in? Mama says to always lock the little ones in when we leave.”

“The man wouldn’t let me. He was in a hurry, and I couldn’t tell him that I had to lock the door because my baby sister was in there, could I?”

Anastasia looked at her brother and sister. Svetlana and Mikhail were the only security she had known in her short life, and they looked worried. That worried Anastasia, too. One of the men told the three of them to get into the car. The three children sat in the back of the car and waited. After a while two men in suits got in the front seat and drove them away. They drove for a long time through the countryside until they came to a city bigger than Anastasia had ever seen. Finally the car pulled into the yard of a big, grey building where several children were doing calisthenics.

Svetlana, Mikhail, and Anastasia followed the man into the building where he talked with a tall woman for a while, then left them. The woman called two other women. One took Mikhail off in one direction, and the other led Anastasia and Svetlana in another. The woman began to comb the girls' hair, carefully inspecting their scalps as she did. Svetlana's was thick, long, and brown and had not been combed in a few days. When the woman was finally through, she led Svetlana out of the room.

Anastasia still had the baby fine hair of a toddler so combing and searching her hair for lice went much faster. Then the woman stripped Anastasia and took her clothes away. She told Anastasia to stand in a dishpan while she poured water over her, then scrubbed her with a soapy washcloth and washed her hair with some bad smelling shampoo that made her eyes sting. Finally the woman poured more water over her, dried her on a rough towel and dressed her in tights, a white undershirt, wool sweater, and flannel skirt.

After her long day, Anastasia was almost asleep. The woman

picked her up and carried her into a room where ten other children about her age were sitting around little tables. She put Anastasia down and told her to sit in the chair. Anastasia joined two girls and a boy at one little table. One of the girls kicked her under the table, and she kicked back, glaring at the girl. Then someone poured broth into the teacup in front of her. They ladled in a quarter of a potato. So, she would get soup after all tonight. She wondered where Svetlana and Mikhail were, but not for long. She was soon totally absorbed in eating her soup and the thick slice of bread they had given her.

After the meal, the brown-eyed woman who had served them took the plates, cups, and spoons away and turned the television on. Anastasia had never seen television before. Someone was inside the little box, singing a song. “How could anyone fit in that little box?” Anastasia asked the woman who had served her meal. The woman said “Shhh.” When she turned to the other children, they looked at her with frightened eyes and shook their heads. She settled back on the floor and was soon asleep.

Someone shook Anastasia awake. At first she was disoriented. Then, as a woman put her on her feet and led her to the bathroom, she remembered where she was and what had happened today. In the bathroom everyone sat on little pots until they had gone to the bathroom. Then they went back to the eating room, picked up their chairs and were led to another room with beds lined up all in a row. Anastasia copied the girl who had kicked her. The woman showed Anastasia how to lay her clothes on the chair at the foot of her bed.

She put on the pajamas she found under her pillow and climbed into bed. But when the lights were turned out she could not go to sleep. She lay awake, feeling lonely and frightened, wondering where her sisters and brother were. She had never slept in a bed or by herself before. Finally she fell into a deep sleep and woke the next day to rain drumming on the windows and a woman loudly ordering everyone out of bed.

After a trip to the bathroom Anastasia had to dress herself and comb her own hair. This was the first time she had ever combed her own hair, and she got the comb tangled in it. Finally one of the women came to help and braided her hair in two braids. Anastasia looked at herself in the mirror as she was leaving the room. The braids looked really cute. She would ask them to braid her hair every day. She skipped into the other room, just like Svetlana had been trying to teach her.

Snijana lay in the hospital bed shaking with fright as the men looked at her face. At fourteen months all she knew was that she hurt, she was afraid, and Anastasia and Mikhail, who always protected her, were not there. They put a mask over her face, and she began to smell a suffocating smell. She struggled but was soon asleep. When she woke, she started to cry but her lip hurt so much she couldn't. Her upper lip was so swollen that she couldn't eat, and it was difficult to sip the broth they fed her. Her arm hurt, too. Kind ladies came in often to check on her and a very gentle doctor examined her. They fed her broth, and when she could eat it,

mashed potatoes, then bread. Between visits she lay huddled in the corner of the hospital crib trying not to cry because it would hurt her lip.

Snijana was beginning to feel comfortable with the hospital routine and the nice ladies who helped her there. Then another woman in a grey dress came and took her to a little room where they washed her and dressed her in warm clothes. The nice ladies at the hospital hugged her and said good-bye as the woman in the grey dress carried her out. The woman put her in the back of the car and told her to stay there while she went back in to get some papers. Snijana sat there for a long time shivering before the lady came back with the papers and started the car. They drove to a long yellow brick building and the lady took her to a room full of children. There was Anastasia! They held each other, so glad to see each other after the first separation of their lives.

“Where have you been?” Anastasia asked.

“Hothpito,” said Snijana.

“I don’t know where Svetlana and Mikhail are,” Anastasia whispered. “They led them away and I haven’t seen them since.”

The woman in charge of the room called them to come eat. Lunch was a bowl full of soup with a potato in it. Snijana really liked having a full bowl of soup and a potato. She smiled at the lady, but the lady didn’t smile back. It still hurt a little to smile.

Soon, life in this place with the other kids and all the different women who came to take care of them seemed normal. There were lots of rules and a very strict routine. Anastasia told Snijana she had to smile to get what she wanted. When Snijana smiled, it was as though the sun had come out. And when she smiled, the women were very nice to Snijana, and she felt safe. And if that didn't work, Mikhail and Svetlana had taught her long ago how to take things she wanted when no one was looking. Then one day, a woman in a white coat came, put them into a car and drove them away. They drove for hours along snowy roads with forests and fields on either side. The car seemed to rock back and forth, making Snijana feel a little sick. Trees flew by, making her feel even worse. The woman drove awfully fast, and while she drove she waved her hands around and told them stories of witches and wolves, who lived in the forest. Snijana was so frightened tears began to slip down her cheeks, but she had already learned that she could be hit if she cried out loud, so she cried silently.

After their long drive, they came to another big building, but this one was nicer than the one where they had been living for the past two months. They walked in behind the lady, Anastasia holding Snijana's hand protectively. The woman left them in a room just inside the door. Another woman, with funny orange hair, told them to take off all their clothes. The lady who had brought them took the clothes and left. Again they were inspected for lice. Snijana's mind kept seeing wolves with big yellow teeth come toward her out of the forest the whole time the woman was washing her. Then the woman

got out a needle and syringe and gave them each three shots. Anastasia pinched herself to keep from crying out. Tears came to Snijana's eyes but she did not cry. They slipped into the underwear and undershirts the new orphanage provided and the nice lady helped them put on tights, skirts, and sweaters. Snijana smiled at her, and the woman smiled back. She liked that. At least one of the people in this place could smile.

When they were clean and dressed, the lady made some calls on the telephone. Two other women came. One took Anastasia away down the hall. Snijana tried to run after her, but the other woman held her back. Svetlana had been led away, and they had never seen her again. What if she didn't ever get to see Anastasia again?

We hope you enjoyed this excerpt from *Rainbows from Heaven*, by Lynn Ellen Doxon.

The complete book tells the dramatic story of Anastasia, Snijana, and their baby sister, Irena, as they struggle in the orphanage and how Lynn and her husband Robert fight to adopt these three beautiful girls.

Lynn and Robert's journey takes them halfway around the world to Ukraine, and lasts for two and a half years. In that time they learn lessons of perseverance, faith, love, hope and surrender to God's will. The laws and economy of Ukraine are unstable, the officials fearful and suspicious and the circumstances wearisome. At times it seems like the whole world is attempting to block the adoption.

Lynn describes how a couple grew in ways they never expected when they set out to adopt just one unwanted child, how three beautiful girls found their family, and how one region of Ukraine was opened up to foreign adoption despite fearsome opposition.

Rainbows from Heaven is available in hardback for \$24.95 or paperback for \$14.95. You can purchase the book from our website or at www.amazon.com. You may also purchase the book at your local bookstore. If they do not carry the book ask the to order the book for you. Bookstores can purchase the book from us or from our distributor, Baker & Taylor.

Title: Rainbows from Heaven

Author: Lynn Ellen Doxon

Categories: Family/Adoption

ISBN: 1-932926-98-4

ISBN: 1-932926-99-2

Format: Hardcover

Format: Paperback

Price: \$24.95

Price: \$14.95

Pages: 288 (plus 8 pages of color photos)

Trim: 5 ½ by 8 ½ inches.

Available from: Artemesia Publishing, LLC

P.O. Box 6508

Rocky Mount, NC 27802-6508

252-985-2877

www.artemesiapublishing.com