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It was late. Maybe 11:30 at night. I was in the back seat of a taxi, squeezed between my host mother and sister. Our arms were linked, and the three of us giggled as we tried to fit our hips in the snug back seat. I couldn't tell you what was so funny about the moment, but I vividly remember feeling very girlish, giggling in the back seat of a car.

No more than 30 seconds into the drive, the music was thumping about two notches from maximum volume. The driver aimlessly flipped through stations as he sped down the virtually empty road; the music consisting of the average techno and folk to which I had quickly grown accustomed during my 2 weeks in Ukraine. But my surprise was audible when he flipped to an English song.

Because it wasn't just *any* English song.

It was Diana Ross and the Supremes' "I Will Survive."

I don't know at what point in my life it happened, but I somehow know every word to that song. It's probably my favorite shower time, sing-into-the-hairbrush-and-hope-no-one-hears-you song. The words jumped out of my mouth before I even realized I was singing: "At first I was afraid, I was petrified...."

I immediately stopped, painfully aware of my off-key singing voice. This was the first time my host family had ever heard me sing, and to be honest, there are people back home I've known for years who have yet to experience this non-talent of mine. One thought flashed through my head: "Am I really this comfortable with them already?"

My host mother, always quick to catch my non-verbal signs of happiness or dissatisfaction, saw me mouth the first few words. Within those few seconds, the driver had changed the station about two more times.

But my host mother wasn't having any of that.

"Jessica likes that song! Go back!" she said. Or at least, I imagine she said something like that. Remember, I had only been learning Russian for 2 weeks.

The driver obediently flipped back to my song, which was at this point building up to the ever-so-catchy "Go on now go, walk out the door" line. My host mother grabbed my arm, and smiling at me, she started to sing with every bit of the saucy attitude this song requires:

"Just turn around now, 'cuse you're not welcome any more...."

The next 2 minutes were sheer delight. My host mother with her thick Ukrainian accent and me with my off-key pitch—we butchered that song, but not without cause. My host father and the taxi driver exchanged glances, but by that point we were singing as loud as the music, holding nothing back, encouraging my host sister to join in.

I had known I liked my host family before this night, but singing "I Will Survive" as loud as I possibly could with my host mother pushed me right into the realm of truly feeling a part of the family. For the next three months, my host mother cared for me with the sincere affection that a mother can give. She taught me the Russian numbers before I learned them in class. She had my breakfast on the table every morning before I walked out of my room. She made me walk back inside to put on a hat every morning I tried to walk out of the house without one. The list goes on....

It's been difficult to be so far from my family in the States, but I am incredibly grateful for the family I have in Ukraine. My host mother has played an integral role in my ability to transition to life in this country, and I will always consider her a second mother.