

Afternoon Tea in Moldova

I'm sitting in my window sill with a mug of sweet tea in one hand. The family next door has been building a new front fence this week, and the workers have Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" blasting on the radio. This free musical entertainment is a pretty regular occurrence with a mixture of 90's or contemporary American music and Romanian pop songs. Occasionally, when my host mom is out, we (my host sisters and I) have a rock music competition to see who can play their music loudest, (us or the guys next door) we win every time, and in my opinion definitely have the hippest music selection. Irina, my middle host sister is very up on current Russian and Romanian music and is helping me study Russian by having me sing along to new songs. Even though she swears I'm saying things correctly, I'm a little self-conscious. At least I know the latest songs even if the Russian is a little poor.

The heavy metal gates out front keep clanging open and closed as my youngest host sister Sonya races around with our neighbor's daughter, Magdalena. Sonya is a recent 7 years old (her birthday was last week) and speaks some Russian, while Magdalena is about 4 and only speaks Romanian. My Romania is tapped with Bună Ziua (Good Day), so most of the time I just pick her up and make her fly around like an airplane. My host brother Gareman recently got a bike and is chasing the other boys back and forth down the street. It rained early this morning and our dirt road never completely dried so the boys are quickly getting covered in mud. I'm just waiting for my host mom to notice, because that will be an "interesting" conversation. My elder host sisters, Luda and Irina ate dinner with me half an hour ago and are now watching their favorite TV program across the hall. Even here in Moldova we have Mexican TV, which my host sisters watch almost every night. I managed to make it through 50 minutes before giving up for good last week. Spanish TV with Romanian subtitles was a little more than my head could handle late in the evening after a day of Russian lessons.

Oh no, one of the boys just ran over Magdalena's foot with his bicycle. Oh the screaming, in about 30 seconds four of the neighborhood mother's were out in the street ripping that boy to shreds. Poor kid. I'm sure he didn't mean to, but he did make quite the kind apology to Magdalena. Giving her a big hug and holding her hand as he walked her home to explain what he'd done to her mother.

I like living on a street with a lot of young children, there is always noise and endless amusement from every window of the house.

My host mother is downstairs preparing dinner for the younger kids. Tonight's dinner was beef ribs with sauce, steamed buckwheat (which I love), and salad (Moldovan salads in the summer, at least in my house, consist of tomatoes, cucumbers and onions). My host dad (who returned from working in Russia two days ago) was visiting old friends from his days as a police officer earlier today and picked a bunch of apples and peaches for tonight's dessert. When he came back from Russia the other day he brought two huge bags full of Russian and Ukrainian candy. It was explained to me that its traditional in Moldova to bring

sweets when returning from abroad, which makes sense since many bring boxes of chocolates as gifts when they visit people. We've been eating the hug bags of candy all the time ever since, so sitting next to me here on the window sill is a pile of toffee wrapped in yellow and gold foil along with chocolate tubes that remind me of a Kit Kat Bar. Every time I go down stairs my host dad hands me more candy and jokingly tells me I don't eat enough.

The light is starting to fade and tea and biscuits will be ready at 10PM. I've got a little light left to finish cleaning up my room before Chai, biscuits and bed.