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'Desiree's Diary' Cont. from Page 9

and hold one kid, the others are hitting us, pulling my hair, biting me, or trying to pile on top. Even though the kids range from 4 to 7, I have found that they like to be cradled like a baby, or my like scrunched in my arms. If the other kids retreat, I just rock back and forth with the one in my arms and recite the only Russian nursery rhyme I have committed to memory. They all seem to enjoy this special time.

I went to the other section and there too was allowed to give out bananas and cookies. The kids asked me to stay and play and soon we were in a make-believe world that I could never have imagined. These kids began play-acting and used me as their prop. They told me to sit, so I sat. They told me to sleep, so I slept. I woke up and they arrested me and sent me to jail. When I said I was afraid to go to jail, they gave me a shot and told me to behave. They dragged me around the room and told me to eat. I said the food was too spicy, so they sent

me back to jail, where I quickly said I was sorry rather than endure another shot.

They took me to get ice cream and Marat, who has no use of his hands or legs, demanded that I hold his hand as he lifted his shoulder to pay for the treat. He, with the others who were playing along, then took me to a concert and as soon as I was forced to sit they quickly said it was time to go. At risk of being incarcerated, I complained that there was no singing or dancing and they hurriedly began to sing into ethereal microphones and dance the native style. We had great fun!

It was a gift for me to see them act in such a way. The adults wondered what prompted such an unusual display and they were all in disbelief. The day before, these same kids had asked me to bring

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