



Chess Friendship

How could they play if they didn't understand each other?

By Olivia Kitterman
(Based on a true story)

This story happened in Germany.

“There is sunshine in my soul today!”* Matvii sang. His mom and brother, Tymofii, sang with him. It was dark outside the car window. But the song helped everything feel a little brighter.

It was a scary time for Matvii and his family. They were moving to Germany because their home wasn't safe anymore. They had traveled for two days, and now they were almost there. A bishop here in Germany was driving them to a place to stay.

Matvii was glad Heavenly Father helped them get to Germany safely. But he missed Dad. He had to stay behind in their country because of a war. Matvii worried about him a lot.

The bishop parked the car outside a house. “Welcome to my home.”

Matvii grabbed his bag and followed his family inside. It was quiet. The bishop's family must have gone to bed already.

“You can stay in Mats's and Lore's rooms while you're here,” the bishop said.

“Wait,” said Mom. “They don't have to give us their rooms.”

The bishop smiled. “They are happy to do it. We want you to feel comfortable.”

Mom nodded. “Thank you.”

In the morning, Matvii and Tymofii went to the kitchen for breakfast. The bishop sat at the table with a boy and girl. They didn't look much older than Matvii.

“These are my kids Mats and Lore,” the bishop said.

“Nice to meet you,” said Tymofii.

Mats and Lore looked a little confused.

“They don't speak your language,” the bishop said.

“But I'm sure you'll be good friends.”

Matvii frowned. How could they be friends if they couldn't talk to each other? He felt like the sunshine he had been singing about last night was gone.

After they ate, Mats and Lore showed them a playroom. Two younger children were playing with some toys. Matvii guessed they were Mats and Lore's younger siblings.

Mats said something. It sounded like a question, but Matvii didn't know what he said. Mats sat down and opened a box of cards. He sorted them into piles. Then he and Lore picked up their cards. Matvii wanted to play. But he didn't know how!

Mats laid down a card and looked at Matvii. He said something again.

Matvii wanted to cry. He didn't want to live in Germany if he couldn't understand anyone.

Lore said something to Mats, then ran off to the closet. She came back and set a new game on the floor.

Matvii knew this game. The wooden pieces looked like the ones he had at home. It was chess! He had played chess with Dad for hours. Matvii nodded happily. He knew how to play this one.

Lore smiled big and began to set up the pieces.

Matvii moved his pawn two squares and watched as Lore moved her knight. Then Matvii moved his bishop to Lore's knight. He and Tymofii cheered. Lore made a frustrated sound, but she was smiling.

They played for a long time. Soon they were laughing. They didn't understand each other's words, but they still had fun.

Over the next few weeks, they found other games they all knew. They played football outside with other German kids. Matvii learned a few words in German too. Sometimes he made mistakes, but he kept trying.

Matvii missed his dad and his home. But he was grateful Heavenly Father had helped him make new friends. ●



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