

I, Katsiaryna, being duly sworn, depose and say:

1. I was born on February 11, 19.., in the city of Minsk, Belarus, and came to the United States on July 4, 2001, as a visitor. My application for political asylum is pending. My alien registration number is A..

2. I currently reside in the United States at West 15th St., Apt. .., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11214. My telephone number is 718/...-.....

3. I am making this statement in support of the application for permanent resident status of my friend Nataliya, More specifically, I am making this affidavit in support of the I-360 Petition that Nataliya is filing concurrently with this affidavit with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), as the self-petitioning spouse of an abusive U.S. citizen.

4. I first met Nataliya in August of 2001, at the Diner in the Sheepshead Bay area of Brooklyn. She was working as a waitress, and as I was a regular customer of the Diner, I became friendly with her. I usually came to the with my boyfriend, Kamal; Nataliya soon had her own boyfriend, a guy named Roberto, who later became her husband, and pretty soon we used to go out together socially, all four of us. However, Kamal and Roberto did not have much in common, aside from their being the boy friends of Russian girls, so after awhile, Nataliya and I used to go out mostly by ourselves, without our boyfriends. We got along well; we enjoyed communicating in our native Russian, and at the same time we enjoyed the fact that

we both had non-Russian boyfriends: both of us were romantic dreamers, and having boyfriends of other cultures provided a kind of international flavor to our lives.

5. At first Roberto was a really sweet guy. He never put Nataliya or me down for being from a different culture than his; on the contrary, he flattered us, saying that one day he wanted to go to Russia, where he would be surrounded by such beautiful girls as ourselves.

6. Nataliya and I often went out together, meeting at cafes for coffee or shopping at local stores for clothing and other necessities. At one such meeting, in September of 2001, Nataliya told me that Roberto had moved in with her, into the furnished room that Nataliya was renting in the home of a family on Brighton 8th Place in Brooklyn. I liked hearing that news, knowing how nice it is when you don't live alone, when you know someone's waiting for you to come home. Nataliya was very happy. She said that Roberto was her first real love. In the following month, Nataliya brought me additional good news: she had learned from Roberto's friend Max that Roberto was planning to propose to her. Sure enough, shortly after this Roberto did propose. Nataliya was giddy with joy when she told me, adding that they were planning to get married in mid-November, in a town in upstate New York called, because Roberto liked that town. Nataliya did not invite me to the wedding, because she knew I would be working that day and could not get away until the evening. Instead, she invited me to the traditional post-wedding party, to be held at a restaurant in Brooklyn on the evening of the wedding day. I did attend that restaurant party and it was a joyous celebration. I was thrilled for Nataliya and for Roberto. I was confident their marriage would be a

happy one. The fact that they came from different backgrounds did not discourage me, as my own experience, and the experiences of many of my friends, showed me that such differences are not necessarily obstacles, and can even be encouragements, adding to the spice of life.

7. Unfortunately, my unguarded optimism, which I shared with Nataliya, turned out to be misguided when it came to Roberto. Fairly soon after their marriage, he began to take Nataliya for granted, as if she were a piece of property that belonged to him, that he could control, instead of the loving partner that she was and that she wanted him to be. About a month after their marriage, Nataliya started to complain to me that Roberto had become possessive and jealous. He objected to all of her Russian-speaking friends, as if we were all part of some conspiracy of gossip about him. I continued to speak with Nataliya, but with less frequency, as I did not want to be the reason, the pretext, for Roberto to start a fight with her. To my great dismay, I saw that Nataliya was becoming like a trapped animal, dull and depressed. She would call me only when Roberto was away, so as not to anger him. She told me that he did not want her to take calls even from her family in Russia. Conforming to Roberto's wishes, Nataliya started wearing boyish clothes, and no make-up, so as not to draw attention to herself. I did not like what was happening, but what could I really do?

8. On January 8, 2002, a date I clearly remember because of the strange and momentous events that took place, Nataliya called me and told me that Roberto had not been home for two days. I was shocked, worried that maybe something had happened to him, but Nataliya explained that they had had a huge fight on January 6. I

invited Nataliya to my home right away because she sounded terrible. When she came over, she told me that she had not talked to me very much about the fighting that had been going on between Roberto and herself, because she found it embarrassing. She said she was disappointed that she was not as happy with Roberto as she had hoped to be, but that she still loved him and was praying that he would come back to his senses and not be so mean.

9. I gave Nataliya some hot tea and some food and tried my best to cheer her up. A couple of hours later, Nataliya started complaining of severe pain in her stomach. I gave her some Tylenol, which I use whenever I have stomach cramps, but it did not help. She was feverish. I urged her to go the local hospital and called a car service to take us. I also called Roberto's cellphone, the number of which I got from Nataliya's cellphone. Nobody answered, so I left a message for Roberto. I remember thinking how pathetic the situation was, where Roberto was not available when Nataliya needed him the most. I accompanied Nataliya to the emergency room of Hospital and waited with her for hours until a doctor saw her. While waiting, Nataliya was in a lot of pain, and Roberto never called, which I could tell only added to Nataliya's suffering. I had to leave, but promised Nataliya I would check on her in the morning. I reached Nataliya the next morning, in her apartment. After treating her, the hospital had released her late in the night and she had returned home. Roberto came back in the middle of the night and, Nataliya told me, they had made up. I could tell Nataliya wanted to forgive Roberto all of his mistakes and give him a chance to change.

10. After this, there was a period of a couple of months when Nataliya and I met and spoke infrequently. Nataliya tried to assure me

that her relationship with Roberto had improved, but I still felt that something was terribly wrong. In early spring of 2002, she finally told me about her ongoing problems with Roberto. From time to time, he was still leaving their home for a couple of days, not showing up at night, and not explaining where he had been. Then he would come back and ask her to forgive him. Nataliya sounded very tired of this abuse. It seemed to me that she loved him much more than he loved her. In April of 2002, Nataliya and Roberto finally moved out of the furnished room and into their own apartment, which was nice and new. Nataliya was hoping that the greater comfort and privacy of this apartment would benefit their relationship. She worked hard to make their new home warm and beautiful.

11. Unfortunately, moving into a new apartment added to their material comfort but did not have the desired impact on Roberto's state of mind. At his urging, she quit her waitress job, but when she did not find a suitable job quickly enough, he complained bitterly about having to pay all the bills. When we spoke on the telephone, I could tell that she was stressed out; she did not want to burden me with a detailed accounting of her problems, but I could feel the weight of them. She was not just reserved; it seemed to be she had no confidence at all, and instead was filled with fear. I was worried that she could become quite sick, and urged her to get psychological counseling, but she told me that she could not afford it.

12. In the beginning of December, 2002, Nataliya told me that, in October of 2002, Roberto had completely abandoned her. He had not returned (except, perhaps, surreptitiously: see below) and had not called. Knowing what he had put her through, I did not think of this as bad news. What I did find disturbing was the second piece of news

that Nataliya conveyed to me. A short time after Roberto left, Nataliya's apartment was burglarized, on two successive days, and the circumstances were such as to make Roberto, or friends of his, the most likely suspects. Both robberies were accomplished by someone entering through a courtyard window that gave into Nataliya's apartment. The first burglary, the thief (or thieves) did not take much, and, Nataliya told me, she was frightened by the break-in, but the fear was not overwhelming. But then the thief (or thieves) returned the very next day. The second time they took a lot of valuables and, breaking into her apartment as they did two days in a row, they really frightened her. The police were called on both occasions, and they commented after the second burglary that only someone very familiar with Nataliya's habits, when she was likely to be home and when not, would be so bold as to rob her two days in a row. Before Roberto left, Nataliya had found a job as a dental technician, which took her out of her home from morning till evening, so Roberto fit the bill as far as knowing Nataliya's pattern of activities. Consistent with Roberto (and/or his friends) being the burglar(s) was the fact that Roberto had left behind certain musical compact discs, and these were stolen during the second burglary, while none of Nataliya's Russian-language compact discs were taken.

13. Nataliya told me that that the days immediately following these burglaries were some of the worst she ever lived through. She hardly slept for days, fearful that these burglars could break into her apartment when she was asleep. Also very disturbing to her was the knowledge that Roberto, the love of her life, might well have been the one behind this burglary. It is a sign of Nataliya's strength, but also of her weakness, that she did not turn to me for help at that time. I am one of the closest, if not the closest, friend she has, and I would have

gladly let her stay over with Kamal and me in our apartment, but rather than “burden” me (as she would put it) with her worries, she choose to struggle through them alone.

14. One very favorable development that I can report is that Nataliya finally took my advice and found a way to pay for, and is receiving, counseling and medicines to help her overcome the stressful experiences that she had with Roberto. So she is not struggling by herself anymore. For my part, I try very much to keep in touch with her regularly, to be a good friend and make sure she is taking good care of herself. Kamal and I go out with her often and, whenever possible, invite her to any parties and celebrations we attend. I know the importance of friendship. With faith in our friendship and confidence in the therapy she is receiving, my hope is that, in time, Nataliya will return to the happy person with the sunny disposition that I met just a few short years ago – years so filled with difficulties for Nataliya, unfortunately, that they must have felt to her like decades.

Katsiaryna

Sworn to before me this
day of February, 2004

Notary Public