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St. Matrona, circa 1950.

ANSWERED PRAYERS AT ST. MATRONA'S

I. In 1994, M. Shilauskene, a young woman from Klaipeda, Lithuania, successfully passed her exams to enter Moscow's St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, but still did not have a place to live. Housing is extraordinarily difficult to find in Moscow, one room averaging \$500 a month – well beyond the budget of a Russian student. She did her best to solve the problem through the Institute's administration, through contacts with friends, and by asking a local priest for help, but her efforts were fruitless. Finally, a friend encouraged her to visit Matrona's grave at Danilov cemetery to ask for her prayers. She did so, begging: "Matushka, please help me!" The following day after attending liturgy at the Church of All Saints near the Sokol metro, the priest suddenly appeared saying, "Here, you will live at her place – Matrona's," and he introduced her to an old woman named Matrona. How could she help thinking it was a miracle? The coincidence of the names was amazing – Matrona is an extremely rare name even in Russia.

II. Elena and George lived together happily, but unwedded, for six years. Their relationship seemed successful, but they were not able to have the children they wanted. Friends advised them to pray to Blessed Matrona. After visiting her grave, their lives became less harried and they began to start and end the day with prayer. In a few months, they were married in church and within weeks of their marriage, the Lord sent them a son. Nine months later they had a healthy little boy, who, they believe, was God's blessing through St. Matrona's prayers.

III. My name is Tatiana Kolbina. I am from Stary Oskol. I was praying at Blessed Matrona's grave with the accountant of our Church of the Holy Ascension at the moment my son and his entire family were in a terrifying car accident. I found out about it only when I arrived home. There were six

people in the car. The car itself was horribly smashed, completely destroyed, but none of the family was injured in the slightest. The accident occurred at 12:15 p.m., the very moment we were leaving the grave. I am convinced that this was because of St. Matrona's intervention.

IV. Our last name is Matveyev, we are World War II veterans and Muscovites. During the Soviet era, we waited for nine years to get a flat from the state. Time passed, and although we remained on the list to receive housing, we grew older and older with our living problem still unsolved. A neighbor told us to visit Blessed Matrona's grave. We were believers and already baptized, so we went willingly. The same day, just a few hours after we returned home from the cemetery, we received a phone call from our district housing department and were told that the housing officials had just signed the papers to give us a two-room flat!

V. Evgenia's parents were communists, sincerely believing in the "bright Communist future," and her family had a rule: never to be satisfied with what has been achieved, but to always push forward. Evgenia studied for many years, first at the Moscow Aviation Institute, and then at the Institute of Radiotechnology and Electronics. After graduating, she worked as an engineer on secret state projects. She ended her career with forty years of work experience, and was honored as a veteran of labour. She had always been an atheist and was completely self-reliant. Her own strength and abilities seemed boundless. When she was still young, she had done all she wanted, except having children. But that too, she accomplished. Her son Oleg was born when she was 36. She raised him alone, without a husband, but with her blind love she turned her dear boy into a heartless, selfish man.

Now she was retired, but her son was like a stranger to her. He married suddenly and brought his wife, Tatiana, home and things went from bad to worse. About to graduate from college, Oleg unexpectedly stopped his studies, and neither of the young people worked. They just lived in the flat eating and drinking whatever the mother gave them, with barely a word to her. She seemed to live in a silent sepulcher, but no, not even that: how could one call it silent with music thundering from their room from morning until night. Once, when her son was away, she argued with his wife, "I won't have you here, I'll drive you out! You are idle yourself and you allow him to sponge on his mother who is a pensioner. He doesn't even study." Tatiana

replied rudely: "I'm not living with you, but with my husband. It was you who brought him up like this." They hurled abuse and curses at each other, and that night her son said, "If you scold Tanya again, know that you no longer have a son." Evgenia was bitter.

A friend suggested that she visit Blessed Matrona's grave. For a very long time she didn't go, but finally, in desperation, she set out. It took half a day to get there: at first she was on the wrong tram, and when she found the right one, it broke down. At the cemetery, people showed her the path to Matrona, but she followed it to the end without finding the grave. A second path led to another dead end, and she wondered if Blessed Matrona wasn't allowing her to come to her grave: she knew she wasn't properly dressed – she was wearing pants, lipstick, her fingernails were brightly painted, and she wasn't wearing a cross. But when she finally approached the grave, she felt enfolded in an otherworldly warmth. She was drawn to the grave as if by a magnet. There was a lump in her throat; tears stood in her eyes... And then, as if she knew all about her, the woman who cared for the grave gave her a little cross saying: "Wear it. Never take it off." Evgenia went home as if on wings.

But at home things did not improve; they became even worse. Finally, she went to Blessed Matrona's grave again, simply because she had nowhere else to go and begged with tears: "Matronushka, pray for me, ask God to change something, it cannot stay as it is!" When she returned home, she found a lab report on her son's desk, confirming that her daughter-in-law was pregnant. She thought bitterly, "There have been two parasites living off me and now there will be a third, their child!"

A few days passed, and one afternoon, to her great surprise, the young people cooked dinner and, for the first time, invited her to eat with them. They said: "We have lived for such a long time at your expense, please forgive us and be patient for just a little longer." They told her about the baby, and that her son had re-entered his college, passed the graduation exams, and only needed to write his final paper. After this he would find a job. "Forgive us, we do love you and we are grateful for your endurance and patience with us."

Oleg found a job and Tanya gave birth to a healthy boy. The young family went to live with Tanya's relatives, but Oleg called his mother each evening after work to ask how she was and if she needed anything. Every Sunday they gathered at Evgenia's flat for dinner.

And so life went on. Only one thing was lacking: Oleg wanted to enter the university for post-graduate training, but after three years of being out of school, he was no longer able to pass the highly competitive entrance exams. Again Evgenia went to Blessed Matrona begging her to pray that God would help. Oleg passed the exams and entered the university, as Evgenia believes, through the prayers of Blessed Matrona.

VI. From Sonia Hulbert, Moscow: In 1994, I worked at St. John the Theologian Church near Pushkin Square. At that time our church was seriously understaffed: I cooked the workers' meal, cleaned the church, took care of the candle and book desk and, during services, had to find a parishioner willing to sell candles so that I could sing in the choir. The Church needed major repairs and we had no money to pay for more help. One day, the priest, Fr. Andrei, hesitantly asked Elena M., one of our regular parishioners, if she would think of coming to work in the church. He did not know how he would pay her; it would not be much at all, but he believed that God would help. Elena was a well-educated, serious and professional administrator with a very adequate income, who worked in one of the government ministries. To quit her job would mean not only a huge drop in income, but much harder physical work. The idea seemed absurd, but rather than simply saying no, she decided to go to Blessed Matrona's grave. She went to Danilovsky Cemetery and alone, over the grave, made her prayer. Suddenly, out of nowhere, she heard the voice of an old village woman, saying "Go, go, go!" There was no one there, but the voice was unmistakable. Believing that she had received her answer, Elena gave up her job and came to work with us. She began by scrubbing floors, and now, after a dozen years, is the *starosta* (warden) of the church.

VII. From Ekaterina G., Moscow: In 1999, a European Orthodox convert, who had lived and worked in Moscow for a number of years, decided to leave. Not only was life in Russia hard, but difficult encounters with Orthodox at two different churches had left her bitter and frustrated with the Church. I understood that talking was useless, but I begged her to go with me to St. Matrona, whose relics had been enshrined in the Protection of the Mother of God Monastery. She had not heard of Matrona before and did not want to go, but finally yielded to my request. We went in silence. In the monastery church we stood in the corner, a short distance from the

relics. I prayed to Matrona, hoping against hope, while my friend stared straight ahead, her features set. After fifteen minutes, I felt her move, and glancing over, saw her eyes brimming with tears. She turned to me and said, "I've found my spiritual mother." She returned to the Church and St. Matrona has been her guide and guardian ever since.

VIII. From Tatiana G., Moscow: I can't say that this was a miracle. I do not believe in dreams, and it could well have been my imagination, but at the time, it was so real that I felt that it was something more. Only God knows, but I feel I have to tell this.

In 2002, when Chechen rebels captured over 900 people as hostages in Moscow's House of Culture Theater as they were watching the musical, "Nord Ost," we were all horrified. The terrorists had a huge cache of bombs, and had piled them everywhere, determined to blow up themselves and the theater. Orthodox Christians prayed throughout Russia, molebens were served, and because the theatre was not far from Metro Taganskaya, where St. Matrona's relics rest in the Monastery of the Protection of the Mother of God, old Russian babushkas kept vigil at the theatre barricades, many holding large paper icons of St. Matrona. Although neither I nor my friends knew anyone in the theatre, we all felt deeply for the captives and prayed for them many times a day. On Friday night, Oct. 25, three days after they had been captured, I had the dream. It was as if I could see inside the theatre, and close to the roof I saw St. Matrona with her arms outstretched in protection, accompanied by all of those who were praying for the captives' release. I awoke in the night with a great sense of relief that St. Matrona was there, and that God would help, until I suddenly realized that it had only been a dream. But the almost tangible relief remained with me, and a few hours later I turned on the television to find out that, before dawn, special Russian troops had stormed the theater, and that truly miraculously, 750 people had been saved. ✦