

Grandma's House

Unforgettable days from my teenage years come back often to my mind.

I see myself there and the place is always my grandma's house. We lived on a large family court. My grandma's house being the largest, with a fragrant lilac-filled garden facing the street. There was an entry port with a large gate attached to allow horse and buggy deliveries to the stables for the cows. It was my grandma's domain: her daily chores, her business earning, and her

pride. Being a tiny woman, barely five feet tall, she was surprisingly swift and fearless. She was also a widow and lived with her youngest daughter who wasn't married. I loved to be with them, loved the smell of rich food and sweet aromas. It felt so good to be pampered, loved and cared for. My

Auntie Helen made a rule before school that I had to stop at their house to have my unruly, blonde hair combed because no one else could manage

it. My vanity was fulfilled.

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Grown up, I now realize the difference I felt towards my own home. I kept running away to her h-ouse to find happiness and escape. My mother's house was a very sad one, hardly any laughter or conversation. She would sit at her sewing machine, solumn, engrossed in her work. I t was her duty to support her children. I wish I had been smarter in that period to have helped her. To cheer her up and to have understood. Only as I was being deported

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to Auschwitz, leaving all of it behind, did I feel the reality and the tragedy of my wrong doing. Little did I know what awaited us on the train to Auschwitz.

She pulled me aside in the cattle wagon and in a low voice warned me and awakening me to who I really was. "Listen to me and listen carefully," she rushed. "We are being taken to Poland, not to Hungary as we were told by the Germans. I know this border station well. Your father and I used to travel the same tracks to visit his parents, yo.ur grandparents every year. She pleaded, " My request to you is very serious. Please obey me and every one around you. Hard times, very bad times are ahead. Please don't be a rebel as you were at home with me. You neglected me, never offered to help me, always gone. Today I beg you, promise me you will take care of yourself, use your brain.

Do as you're told until we can meet again until this is over and we can start a new life together. Promise me!" The remaining hours to Auschwitz

I started to understand who my mother really was. Her silence of

many years of loneliness missing her beloved husband, her empty life without him at such a young age (37). The hardship and fatigue of her daily

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work and the worry of bringing up her children alone. Now finally I understood the silence of my home, the lack of relation between us, but mainly and surely the present situation. She knew very well what was coming.

Arriving at the Auschwitz ramp we marched together hand in hand to be separated moments later by German guards. I was roughly pushed away from her to one side, and she was pushed to the other side. I watched helplessly as she held her youngest child’s hand and marched to

the unknown, marched to the gas chamber, never to be seen again.

I feel that I survived because of her asking me to do so, because of her words. I could not tell her, but I did what she asked me for the first time.

Finally I am at peace.

Lydia Lebovic