

WHY ME?

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Content

Prologue

Background of the People and Settings

What Mom Told Me

My First Childhood Memories

What Dad Told Me

Good Memories of My School Years at Hillelskolan

My Teen Years

My Chance of a Redress

Life After My Studies

When I Was Expecting a Child

Being Redeemed and What Came Next

Moving with My Baby

Finalizing My Divorce

Prologue

Thank you, Mom and Dad, for telling me about your experiences. I only wish that you had waited until I was older so I could have better processed your horrible experiences in concentration camps. As it was, I was terrified of the nights and was plagued by nightmares. I remember often looking under the bed to make sure there was no one hiding there who might hurt me. Hearing these things was deeply traumatizing for a small child.

Mom, you started telling me your story when I was four years old. As a four-year-old, I could not

process such horrific images, but you told me without a thought of how it would affect me. It was only about how difficult it had been for you. You just assumed I would understand. You put a heavy burden on your baby's shoulders. When I confronted you about this as an adult, you denied it. Why were you ashamed? Was it wise for you to save your soul over your child? How could you be so blunt?

Perhaps it was because you yourself were a child when these horrors happened to you, and you too did not have the opportunity to properly process what happened. But how could you not protect me from the same? For years, I have suffered with your pain. Because of it, I have been exposed to betrayal and mixed goodness with evil. You were not a good role model for me. You weren't there for my emotional needs and put your needs ahead of mine when I was a small child. You said it was because I was the oldest. Where did that come from? Yes, I was your oldest child, but I was only four years old, and only two and a half years older than your next child. How could that have made sense to you, Mom? Dad worked, and you had no other adults to talk to? You talked to my aunts who took care of their children.

You always compared your parental skills to theirs and thought that they handled their children worse than you. You criticized how one aunt pulled her child's hair and screamed. But you had no insight. You did the same. You screamed, swearing at me in Yiddish. How do you think that made me feel as a little girl?

I was traumatized when you scolded me, and there was no one to protect me from your physical and psychological outbursts. How could you do that? When I confronted you as an adult, you choked me by parasitizing the life energy that I needed for myself, and so it continued.

Throughout my childhood, you were a parasite that I wanted to release. I would have chosen another mother who cared about me and my needs, who could have guided me in a balanced way. So many times, I wanted to be adopted. You don't know that, but I really wanted not only a better mother but also a better dad.

If I said anything then you told Dad. I got many slaps from him, and he could get furious and hit me until I fainted and bled profusely from my nose or face. Today I have fibromyalgia, Mother. Where do you think it came from? Blows, cracks, and mental torture from both you and Dad, yes, but unfortunately also from others who continued to do the same things. I was beaten by teachers and students during my schooling and later experienced psychological abuse in workplaces, from friends, and from spouses.

Was it because you wanted me to grow up? The whole time you were jealous that I was growing up in a country without war. But, Mom, it was not my fault that you were involved in a war. I just happened to be born of you. You took all my life energy to cope with life. Shame on you. Sure, I understand that things were horrible for you, but if it was so bad, why did you have children? I did not want such a life. You told me that I was being suffocated during childbirth. I would rather have been suffocated by the umbilical cord than live this life. But, no, Dad made a fuss with a doctor so

that you and I both survived.

I might be better off if I let go of this, for my own sake, not for yours. I understand that. But now it's also about my right to a good life, Mom. You always prioritized your needs over mine.

You were a real bull, Mother. You baked, cooked, sewed, knitted, and cleaned. From the outside, you looked like a great mother. You offered neighbors and acquaintances advice, so everyone had something good to say about you. You were able to be kind to strangers but not to me.

Of course, you could switch from hostile one second to a playful mother the next, but it was very difficult to take it in. When you were nice, I liked to be close to you even though you thought I was too clumsy. I would rush to grab my shoes to accompany you when you went shopping, a poor little girl trying to get some love from you when you felt good because the opportunities were few and far between.

And you, Dad, who came home after not having been with us all day, you were tired and just sat in your armchair. As a little child, I brought you slippers like a puppy. You gave me sweets to show your appreciation, and I got too many cavities at an early age. I was treated like a dog that would come when called, wearing fine clothes and with well-brushed hair. I don't have many memories of you, Dad.

Once you told me that I went with you to the Skansen zoo where you taught me how to identify birds. Others were so interested in what you were saying that they followed after us to listen. I do not remember this, but I know enough different bird species, so you may have taught me the birds. I kept the Focus encyclopedia books that I looked at with you. I also remember the *One Thousand and One Nights*, which I also kept. But most of all, I remember how you beat me when Mom complained about how disobedient I had been. She lied. I tried to tell you when I was older. When I was a kid, you told me that you were sick and just wanted one child. I was enough for you. But then my mother wanted more children, and you went along with it but couldn't cope with them. You tried to tell me it was Mom who made the decisions at home and that you were addicted to her care.

Did Mom force you to beat me? Or was that your idea? I don't know. I just received blows, kicks, and had hair pulled out of my scalp. You also didn't like being interrupted, and we had to sit on needles for hours to listen to you talk. We never interrupted. If we children did, then you beat us. You even hit me in front of guests. We had a nice guest who often visited us on Friday nights. I served the guest soup. He did not want soup. You intentionally humiliated me.

Was I your house slave? It seemed that way. I had to help with labor-intensive chores like pulling heavy wagons filled with bags of potatoes, onions, and other produce when we went shopping. I had to carry heavy bags of dirty clothes and wash them in the smelly laundry room. I had to cook with Mom and keep an eye on the meat for hours. I beat the carpets, vacuumed, dusted, scrubbed

pans, and cleaned kitchen cabinets and benches. Homework I would struggle through when the household chores were completed. Early on, you said that you could only help with housing, food, and necessary clothing. If I wanted anything else, I would have to start working. I did that too and tried working for a neighbor in a filthy garage with old men who hung smut pictures on the walls. What happened there?

Later, I got a job at the post office for five kronor an hour, which I saved. When I was fourteen, we children would all help by dragging home things you bought like heavy furniture, crystal, and paintings. You thought you were getting a bargain and were happy about it. Without asking, you took the small savings I had in my bank account, and did the same with my siblings' savings, to buy more things.

But I'd kept my pennies at the post office and traveled to Hungary with Mom. It was my first trip abroad. We traveled by train for over a day and a half, heading towards Yugoslavia. It was dirty and crowded, and my mother was afraid at every border station that she would be held. Memories of the war appeared to still be strongly with her. We had barely any money in Hungary and stayed with your cousin who was a real bitch that milked Mom for things like coffee and clothes. She complained that we only had brewed coffee with us. She had wanted Nescafé.

Then you had a plan, Dad, that I would marry a man ten years older, so he could live in Sweden and work as a doctor. I was seventeen years old and thought he was an old man. He wanted five kids with me, and I ran from there. You treated me like an asset. You wanted to sell me so that you would have a doctor in the family, but you didn't get the chance. It was so primitive, just like the Arabic families do with their daughters when they come to Sweden, which disgusts everyone. Yet it was my reality when I grew up in a Jewish family. Why?

Not many of my companions were treated as badly by their parents as I was. Then you had delusions when I wanted to accompany my best friend on vacation. Her dad worked at Scandinavian Airlines, so I would have been able to go with them for free. I would have gladly followed along to get to go to New Jersey and other places. But, no, it did not work out.

According to your twisted head, her father might rape me. You thought that about all men. Why? It was so important to you that I marry an Orthodox Jewish man, so I just married a man like you in the hopes of finding peace and quiet, but he destroyed my life. I say I chose him, but my choices were limited. I did not choose for myself and absolutely not for joy. Then you declared me dead. You had given away my rights as a daughter.

I was terrified of being condemned and left alone. But I was still alone with all the obscurity that came from being married to the man who destroyed my life. This you understood later, but by then it was already too late. When I needed to disengage myself from that relationship, I had a friend whose husband helped me. It took three years. Not even then could you help me. Only when it was

over were you glad I was divorced.

Did you want me to live as a divorced woman with an autistic child? Was that your dream for me? Was that why I came as a child to you, Dad? What have you done?

I had to cope with everything myself, for neither Mom nor you managed to accept that my son was autistic. It would go away. Is that what you thought? And what did you do to arrange specialists to help him? As usual, nothing. I have always been an orphan, forced to be my own mother and father. I regret that I did not leave the family. If I had not been your daughter, maybe I would have had a better life.

Despite everything, I have forgiven both Mother and you because of your shortcomings. I have also tried to forgive myself for the scars you caused me, so I can be free. It has taken my whole life, forged by various efforts from all over the world. I hope now in my sixties to find peace, to come out as the person I truly am, and succeed with my gifts to achieve what I really deserve. Thank you, my son, for daring to become my child even though you struggled with me as a single mother. There was no dad to help you, and your grandparents would take you only when they were happy. Unfortunately, you had no contact with your other grandparents because they were ten times crazier. You had some contact with my siblings when they were able to, and of course, with me.

Then when you grew up, others took care of you, like where you now live. I have tried to help you in every way I can. But I did not choose this. I hope I have been a good mother. I have been pressured to be both a mother and father in all situations. It was not easy. It was particularly difficult on the nights when you could not sleep, and I had to go to work unreasonably early to support us. There was no other option. I spent a lot of time at home with you since the school could not manage the difficulties you had. We have nevertheless done some fun things and traveled a lot both in Sweden and abroad, something I never got to do with my parents. I have tried to give you the best possible living conditions within your disability and to help you find interests.

We have had twenty-five art exhibitions that mean a lot to both you and me. Art is your lifeblood. You are a good artist, and others appreciate it now. Perhaps not as an artist in some circles, but you are well on your way. Your dad was away for over ten years and suddenly appeared when you moved away from home. He claimed that I prevented him from meeting you, which is a lie. When no one wanted to form a family with him, he decided it would be good to come back and try to play daddy to you. Now every week, he calls the day before to check that he can come. Because he has let you down, you want to avoid many of his gifts. Despite that, he betrays you. He greets you on his terms because he is invited for dinner and coffee. Now I have asked him to pay the costs when he is with you because you do not receive any salary, only habilitation compensation during the days. He doesn't understand better.

I hope you will have as well of a life as possible, but I must also have a better life. You understand I have had to make such big sacrifices, so I have not reached where I want to be. People around you have not always done what we agreed on, so I have had to keep hold of the reins for a very long time and do things you do not understand but need. Otherwise, everything would have completely fallen apart, dear child.

I thank God and all the positive angels who made it possible for my son and me to move on.

## Background of the People and Settings

Page 1-10

My grandparents on my mom's side lived in Mukachevo with the Munkacs Jewish community.

So did my grandparents on my dad's side.

Shreigel is my mom's father, and Perl is my mom's mother. I never met either of them. Aunt Elsa is my mom's aunt. Hersh-Leib is my mom's oldest brother, Shoshi is her third oldest brother, and Abraham is her youngest brother, none of whom I have met. Magda is my mom's sister, and Jölan is her oldest sister. I have met both of them.

Dr. Mengele was a Nazi and a mass murderer. He experimented on people in a monstrous way.

Stürmführer Adolf Eismann a Nazi and a mass murderer.

Magda and Jölan are my aunts.

Magda's son's name is Tommy. I met him. Jölan's son is Bill (fictive name).

Malvina is my mom's name.

Ludvig is my dad's name

11-

Byk Family – a Jewish orthodox family that helped my parents get married in Stockholm

Klippgatan – a Jewish community houses for concentration camp survivors in Stockholm

Vitabergsparken – the name of a park near to Klippgatan

Kungsträdgården – a park in the middle of the city

EPA – a well-known warehouse

Van der Nootska – a well-known palace in south Stockholm close to the synagogue

14 -

Grandmother – my dad’s mom, who I never met; she moved to the United States  
Grandmother Perl I am named after died at the concentrationcamp with Abraham -my uncle.  
Danny – my bother (fictive name)  
Vera- my sister (fictive name)  
Pelle Svanslös – a well-known cartoon character and also a candy  
Getfotsvägen – the street my family lived on from the late fifties to the mid-sixties  
Saint Lucia – a Swedish holiday celebration that takes place on December 13  
18 -  
Silva – my first school teacher, an older woman from Germany  
Gubbängstorget – a square in Stockholm close to the school I was attending at the time  
Helen – one of my chubby friends  
22 -  
Raul Wallenberg – a well-known Swede that helped Jews escape from the Nazis in Budapest; he was deported to Russia  
24 -  
Södersjukhuset – the hospital where I was born in 1957  
26 -  
Djurgården – a well-known recreation area in the middle of town with a lot of natural areas, amusement parks, museums, and restaurants  
Norrmalmstorg – in the middle of town in Stockholm  
Dov Dinur – a professor of history who specialized in the life of concentration camp survivors in Sweden, and a close friend of my dad’s from Mukachevo  
Anna – fiction name for my best friend in Hillelskolan (the Jewish school)  
Jan – Anna’s father (fictive name)  
27-  
Björksätraskolan – a school near where I lived

St. Paul's Street – a street in SoFo in Stockholm  
Hökarängen – a fictive name for a suburb  
Gunnar – my basketball coach in school (fictive name)  
Sten – a classmate (fictive name)  
Sara – a classmate (fictive name)  
Sarah – a classmate and friend (fictive name)  
Zara – a high school classmate who was evil to me (fictive name)  
Säbel – a school teacher  
Lars – a classmate's fictive name  
Alice – a teacher's daughter (fictive name)  
Bettan – a classmate and friend (fictive name)  
Kent – a classmate from Hillelskolan (fictive name)  
Erik-a classmate from Hillelskolan (fictive name)  
Marita Pajajusis – my teacher at Hillelskolan  
35 -  
Leif – a classmate at high school (fictive name)  
Palmgrenska – co-educational half-private school where some classmates from Hillelskolan went to high school  
Whitlockska- co-educational half-private school where I was sewing.  
Madame Rochas – a perfume  
Harry – a classmate who went to Palmgrenska as well (fictive name)  
Avraham Rechelbach – a Hebrew teacher  
Miss Uhr – a teacher at Palmgrenska  
Mr. Müller – a classmate at Palmgrenska  
Urban – a classmate at Plamgrenska (fictive name)

38 -

Putte – a classmate from Hillelskolan (fictive name)

Nicklas – fictive name for a classmate at Hillelskolan

Gunnar – a classmate from Hillelskolan (fictive name)

40 -

Anders – a man ten years older than me who admired me (fictive name)

Zoltan – a dance teacher (fictive name)

Le Chat – a French soap

Frans Schartaus – a high school gymnasium

Bo- a classmate from Frans Schartaus high school

Iza-My dad's cousin in Budapest

43 -

Robbi – my second cousin. Itza's son

Kia – a classmate from Frans Schartau (fictive name)

Bert Zaras – a boyfriend (fictive name)

Jörgen – a classmate at Frans Schartau (fictive name)

Mia – fictive name of a classmate from Frans Schartau

45 -

Tor Wertsus, Totte – my main teacher in Frans Schartau

Sune Eklund – a fictive name for a law teacher and coach at Frans Schartau, an evil man

49 -

Valborg – a Swedish holiday, April 30

Östermalmstorg – an upper-class area of Stockholm, like Manhattan in New York.

52 -

Inger – a twenty-year-old student at the university, very left-oriented

Bill – my cousin (fictive name), Jölan's son.  
Malvina – my mom  
Ida – a fictive name of a student from the university  
Pia – my name  
Arvika – a smaller town in northern Sweden  
Rådmansgatan – a street in the city of Stockholm  
54- Jay- aman I met in the Golan hights in Israel and later in New York.  
56 -  
Nelly – my dad's cousin in Jerusalem  
Jay – a man I dated in New York  
59 -  
Dana – my second cousin in New York (fictive name)  
Philip – fictive name of my son  
David – fictive name of my ex-husband  
62 -  
Johanna – David's mom  
Kurt – fictive name for David's dad  
Carina – fictive name for David's cousin  
Rabbi Smalts – a fictive name of a rabbi I didn't like  
Patch family- a fictive name of the family I married in to  
Dov Feinstein – a fictive name of a cantor  
Stallmästaregården- A place was our wedding settled.  
64 -  
Gunilla – a fictive name for one of my best friends  
Tallkrogen at Svanbacken – a fictive address we lived at when David married me.

Philip- a fictive name of my son

Gubbängen a fictive place my parents lived.

72 -

Tallkrogen – a fictive suburb

Silbersky – a well-known lawyer

Billner – my lawyer

74 -

Rabbi Emil – one of David’s grandfathers, a chief rabbi of the fictive city Bologna (fictive name)

Konsum – a food store

76 -

Alma – a friend of mine (fictive name)

76 Sanna- a friend of mine, Married to Bengt (fictive name)

Bengt helped me with the orthodox jewish divorce

78 -

Olga – a fictive name for Phillip’s preschool teacher

79 -

Bengt – husband to a friend of mine (fictive name)

.1.

## **What Mom Told Me**

I will start by telling you about how my mother had been before her father died.

My mom’s family lived in the then Czech Republic in a town called Munkacs or Mukacevo. Their pink two-story house was in the stone pits that Grandfather owned. Mother lived there with six other siblings. Grandma and Grandfather had a grocery store with a large assortment of merchandise, and they owned properties.

Grandma had gray-green eyes and a common appearance. She always wore a headscarf and

long-sleeved dresses. She had a good heart and a great deal of integrity. They helped people who couldn't pay with housing and food. Grandma came from the country. Mom told me that they had to ride a bus for a whole day to get there.

Grandpa had a beautifully open face with soulful, intense blue eyes, a straight nose, and shapely lips. He was a righteous person known for his good heart, a tzaddik. His Jewish first name was Shreigel, and his given name was Stern. His grandparents came from Vienna. Mom looked a lot like him. Mom was the apple of grandfather's eye. She was beautiful as a child with tight curls, big blue-gray eyes, and an open face with beautifully shaped lips. People told her she was as pretty as a gypsy, who were thought to have particularly beautiful children.

They lived in an idyllic small town below the Carpathians with a large Jewish population. I watched videos and looked at pictures of the area so that I could imagine what it might have been like to live there. The scenic area had mountains, lots of coniferous forests, fields, and streams. In the video, I saw men fishing for carp and then taking a dip. Mom thought it was beautiful too, but she probably hadn't seen any fish.

The video showed other views and then a car struggling to drive across the difficult terrain. The street was not paved, and the houses looked dilapidated with gates reminiscent of the yellowing black and white photo I have of Grandpa's house. Could it be where they once lived? I have no idea. I looked at the street names on a map, but the big one I found was in Russian. I can only read a few Cyrillic letters that my dad tried to teach me once. I got annoyed and finally found a map that I could read the names on, but I still couldn't find Kochot Uza. I think the name must have been changed. I saved all the video clips to watch later.

.2.

Mom was born in 1929 in Czechoslovakia, as it was then called, where the Jews lived very religiously. They spoke Czech, but Mom learned to speak and write Hungarian. She was the second youngest child and often played with her youngest brother, Abraham.

Jölan was the oldest girl and learned to sew early on. They planned for her to marry young, and she needed to learn a profession to be attractive as a bride because she was not especially beautiful. One of the middle sisters, Magda, got to learn a little too but not as much. One day, a gypsy grabbed her sack and wanted to rob her. She screamed so loudly that a passerby heard and cut the sack to rescue her. I don't know how old my mother was at the time.

I have some photos of the house and the surrounding area where Mother grew up, and it looked like a midsize city. The house had a plastered façade, and there was a backyard with a fence that separated the yard from the street. There were walking paths to a park, and a market where fruits and vegetables were sold by Russian-looking vendors wearing shawls and aprons over their skirts. The market must have been where Mom bought a big melon that rolled away from her. I think

there are watermelons in some of the stands in the black and white photos, which fits with the snippets of what my mother told me.

Grandma and grandfather struggled to run their little grocery store and support seven children. Mom grew up with different aunts and nannies who took care of her. She hardly ever had a chance to talk with her mother.

Grandpa had a brother who was an engineer and drove a car, which was unusual in the late 1920s. He was as handsome as Grandpa with a similar appearance. He was married to a beautiful woman whose mother was named Elsa Ninni, Aunt Elsa.

Mom remembered Aunt Elsa combing her hair, and Mom dared to replicate the same hairstyle. Aunt Elsa kept red lipstick and other makeup in a nightstand. One day, Mom took the opportunity to dress in some fashionable clothes and put on high heels. She had made an extra effort to paint her mouth in red and put blush on her cheeks, trying to change her appearance. Grandma didn't like it, so Mom was reprimanded when Grandma came home. Mom also remembers listening to the radio with Aunt Elsa and talking to her when they drank afternoon tea and ate small cakes. Mom told me they had a Shabbos goy that kept the house heated and the food hot on Shabbat. They had several boiling vessels in an oven in the courtyard that was kept warm during the Shabbat and festivals. It was Mom's job to make sure that the food was there and that the Shabbos goy understood what was needed.

In 1933 the Hungarians invaded the city. The Hungarian Nazis, called the Arrow Cross Party, were horrible and aligned with the German Nazis.

.3.

In the film I watched, I saw a woman spinning. She sat wearing a headscarf and a long-sleeved dress. She spoke Yiddish with the same accent my parents had. The men in the 1930s wore fur hats called *shtreimel* and had payot (sidelocks). Often they wore dark coats.

The film showed a boy who came into a bookstore and bought a book for fifty korun (the currency in the Czech Republic). Small children wearing skirts, blouses, white knee socks, and combed hairstyles stood in a line proudly singing Israel's national anthem. A few years later, most of them were killed. At the end of the video, young people danced in a circle

Mom never returned to her hometown. She was afraid of being harassed by the Russians who had taken her father's house and possessions. Mom said her dad got hit in the head with a brick because he did not participate in transporting people to concentration camps. My grandpa died in mother's arms. Mom was nine years old and didn't really understand what happened. When Grandma realized this, she broke down. War became more and more common.

Older brother Hersh-Leib was responsible for the family and served in the military. By the time he

came home, he had contracted typhus. Grandmother cured him with fresh milk and easily digested food. The older sons had to contribute in every way to the family's livelihood. Mom's third brother, Soshi, worked as a peddler. He had a small rolling shop where he sold embroidered handkerchiefs, threads, needles, notepads, pencils, erasers, and other necessities.

Mom told me that as the Hungarians became more and more anti-Semitic, the children could be beaten because they had a little dirt under their nails. Mom helped all her classmates borrow clean napkins from Soshi. When the teachers inspected the children, they would slam their hands with a stick. The children could also get several lashes with a rattan cane while facing the class if they didn't have supplies like notepads, pencils, and erasers.

Despite all these horrible things, in 1939, Mom and Aunt Magda got to perform traditional dances in the Hungarian theater while wearing red leather boots with the typical national costumes.

Mother's native language was Czech, and she appreciated being able to represent her heritage even after the Hungarians had invaded the the Czech Republic.

.4.

Mom told me about the war and how she rode a crowded train back and forth in cattle cars. She did not fit and had to squeeze between other children and adults with her mother and brother. Mother's brother, Abraham, was thirteen years old. Mother was fourteen, and Grandmother was forty.

They arrived at a final station, and mom held Grandma's right hand tightly as they stepped off the train. They saw black-dressed men in mid-length coats roaring in German as they held German shepherds on leashes. Mom often told me how she, her little brother, and Grandmother got off the train at Auschwitz and were forced to stand at different stations where the people were divided into groups based off whether they were elderly, adult, or children. The Germans counted one, two, three, four, five left. One, two, three, four, five right. Five by five were counted from morning through the evening. It was called appeal. This frenetic chaos was the count of the slaves five by five.

I read in a report that it was über sturmführer Adolf Eismann who loaded the Jews from Mukacevo into the wagons and that they traveled for about four days to different places before they ended up in Auschwitz. Über sturmführer Mengele asked the arriving children and young people how old they were. It could happen several times every day.

Mom told me that when she came with her mother and little brother, a Nazi asked her how old she was. Grandma had instructed her to give a younger age so that she could be with the other children. But, like a flash from clear sky, my mother tugged at her cheeks and said she was older instead. Mom said she was seventeen, and Grandmother shook her arm, shouting.

Mom was in shock and ran and ran into the forest. (1) (2) See Inanna's journey and the description

of the myth for an understanding of the descent into the underworld and all the difficulties she faces. My mother was forced as a child into this descent, unaware what horrors would happen to her during the war. She survived, but her phases got stuck. She didn't make it all the way out of the descent. The child was deprived of her innocence and trust. A large piece of my mother's soul died in the concentration camp's descent. She tried to heal by telling me about her trauma, but I was only four years old.

My mother grabbed onto me by telling me about these horrors. She unknowingly tried to get out of the cave of suffering she had been stuck in. In the myth, Inanna is in a chaotic situation filled with fear. For Mom, it was always monstrous and paralyzing, depriving mother of her defense and security.

The Nazi broke her grip from her Grandmother and screamed that she would run from there.

Grandma and Uncle were trapped in a queue. Mom wandered around in the chaos, and later in the evening, she caught hold of a woman who told her that Grandma and Mom's little brother were in the smoke that came from the gas chamber.

Footnote (1) Inna's journey by Sylvia Brinton Perera

Footnote (2) Anita Goldman, *The Love Course* (page 92-94)

.5.

Mom felt like Inanna in the myth. "In the end, she walks completely naked and bent forward to her sister who hurls the scream of guilt." Descent. "It is Inanna, the queen of the earth and heaven in the ancient Sumer, descending into the underworld, to the great unknown." She must leave all her belongings and go down to the underworld where her sister Ereshkigal lives. She tells her servant woman that, if she does not return, to seek out Father Enki, the god of wisdom. He will save her.

Ereshkigal ensures that Inanna makes her entry into the underworld deeply bent. At every post on the road, she has to take something off, be deprived of something. At the first its shugurra, a crown of the steppe, at the second a small lapis necklace, and at the third a double strand of beads. Every time she protests, she gets the answer: "Quiet Inanna, the ways of the underworld are perfect." Ereshkigal put the eye of death on her. She strikes Inanna, turning her into a piece of rotting meat, and hanging her on a hook in the wall.

Three days and nights elapse, but Inanna does not return. The servant tears his body in grief, goes to one god after another, but everyone responds that the person who is drawn to the Great Ned must blame himself. Everyone except Father Enki, who reacts differently. "I'm worried," he tells the servant (2). From the dirt under his fingernail, he creates two creatures. To one he gives the food of life and to the other the water of life. He instructs them to go down into the underworld, transforming into flies.

After descending into the world that belongs to Ereshigal, they hear the moans, "Oh, oh, my back.

Oh, my heart... Oh, my liver." The two visitors complain to her, repeating her every word. This is what she wants (2), to be heard in her pain. Now she wants to give them a gift as a thank you. But they do not want either the water or the other gifts offered to them. They just want the meat that Inanna has become that hangs from the hook. Inanna's body is handed over to them, and they sprinkle the food and water of life on her. Inanna is resurrected. Enki, the god of wisdom, had saved her (2).

Mom had broken down but ran back that evening and asked if anyone had seen her mother. The experience gave Mom a dark feminine wisdom that she couldn't bear. Mom did not cope with the myth of Psyche where she used the knowledge to make Aphrodite beautiful and eternal "to keep Eros" (1). When Psyche is to fetch the source, it is a box of insomnia to make her fall asleep in the underworld so that evil Aphrodite can get her hands on Eros. But Eros comes to life and takes Psyche out of the underworld.

Mom was petrified and cold and misguided in what she thought was appropriate to tell me. Mom was not going to wait to tell these terrible things to me when I was older. She lacked the objectivity that would protect me. I needed to make Inanna's descent (1) with my mother. My mother clung to me like a child.

.6.

In an essay written for Lund University, "A Study in the Author Sanfrid Neander-Nilsson's View on 'Swedishness,'" I read that Neander-Nilsson studied the Jews in Mukacevo during the 1930s. The name of the city is spelled differently depending on whether it is written in Czech, Hungarian, or Russian. He thought they took over the city and did not consider the Christians. He was angry with how there could be a Jewish mayor in the city and that even the Czech bus system did not drive the bus on the Shabbat (Saturday). He thought the Jews threatened to take over. He had also studied at the Institute of Racial Biology in Uppsala, which conducted research on Jews. They did drawings showing what the Jewish skull and foot look like, implying that Jewish people had an inferior walking style.

The difference between Swedes and Swedish Jews was, according to Neander-Nilsson, that the Swedes always used the earth, and it was natural for them to be in the countryside. The Jews were greedy and engaged in money-making ventures. The Jews from the east were peddlers, and people should beware of them. Sweden strongly supported Nazism between 1930–1945, and the farmers were the true Arians who completely devoted themselves to nature. However, the author wrote that the Swedes were melancholy.

I wonder how much the author and his time in Sweden influenced the Nazi killing of my relatives in Mukacevo.

I became my mother's four-year-old mother. This happened to me against my will. The elder showed my mother a chimney with smoke. "There she is." Mom tells me this like a mantra, with an empty look in her eyes. She didn't want to think my grandmother and uncle were dead. At the time, she had run around looking and finally found her sisters. This stuck with me, and I dreamed as a child that I was involved in some way.

Mom didn't understand what gas chambers were. She was only fourteen years old. After she finally found her sisters, they tried to help each other through the war. Mom was the youngest and most beautiful. She was particularly vulnerable to her oldest and ugly sister who was envious. They were three of them, and Mother was closest to Magda, who was some years older.

I remember when she told me that a newly redeemed mother was forced to watch a Nazis throw her child into the latrine. Her baby suffocated in the feces as the Nazi roared with laughter.

Ereshkigal embodies one of the gods' prescribed facts that "death ceases all life" (1), that birth and life are intimately associated with a woman's history. She suffers from patient submission but endures. I read further that Dr. Mengele, as he was called, conducted cruel experiments on the Jews from his mother's hometown. He did special experiments with twins. Mom told me about this, but I also read about the various blood transfusions he performed between twins. He would inject mucus into people's hips and various soft tissues so they fell ill and died faster. He also injected people with typhoid and various forms of gases and toxins before they were tortured to death.

.7.

Dr. Mengele tortured people without anesthesia. On Jewish festivals such as the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah, and the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, he was extra cruel with his torture, especially of children, as a bonus to his tyranny.

Mom did not succumb as a teenager of this failure. She endured but could not move on. The visuals remained with her forever. Mom chose me as her fellow traveler, and then, in a terrible way, I became co-dependent, trying to help her out of the pain. I became Heavenly Aphrodite and Mother became the Underground Aphrodite that Sylvia Brinton Perera depicts in Inanna's journey (1). The upper part is the caring caregiver while the lower part displays impersonal, aggressive, and passionate energies. My grandmother couldn't help her, so I became a substitute for her. I resisted, as a four-year-old does. I put my hands over my ears and didn't want to listen.

I heard the eyewitnesses who recorded their stories (in Yad Vashem, a center dedicated to the Holocaust of Jews in Jerusalem) who lived in my parents' hometown about how they were trapped in crowded wagons that were for animals. How the worst stench of urine feces burned there nostrils. There was no toilet, and they did not open a window, instead wandering back and forth without knowing what they were supposed to do. Mom also told me about this as a child.

The first place they went was Krakov. Other small towns before Auschwitz played an orchestra that welcomed the prisoners at a sign that read *ARBEIT MACHT FREI*. When they arrived, a woman told them to change into striped pajamas and yelled at the young mothers not to hold their babies, telling them they should leave their children with their grandmothers. They tried to help them by screaming that no one should admit to having a twin. The new arrivals took nothing with them. Very quickly they realized from the warnings that they were to be used in various experiments.

I don't know if Mom saw any of the experiments that were performed on people. She didn't go into detail about that. However, she was terrified of being killed for the smallest thing. She told me how grateful she was for a bread crust and something to warm up with. She gave away her coat when her aunt froze. She thought that God would protect her and that she was doing well because of her youth.

Without warning, Mom's mood would shift, and she would ignore me no matter what I did. She had extreme mood swings, shifting at a moment's notice from being happy to breaking out into total hysteria and anger. She had also told me about the narrow bays in Auschwitz and how they lay there dirty with the lice crawling over them, and that at any time at night, they might have to stand up to be counted, five by five. Inanna is tethered, suspended on the hook. Ereshkigal wails. There is no hope, no way through work or will. This is the goddess's dark side. Mom was like a piece of meat suspended on a hook, left to rot in the underworld.

.8.

In a pure panic, Mom tried to take all the straws to save herself and was willing to sacrifice my well-being to do it. Did she ever consider that I might be terrified of these stories? That maybe I thought as a child that a Nazi would wake me up to shoot or torture me? I asked Mom to stop telling me, but she couldn't. She said she told me so I could tell others, but I was just a little girl. Mom didn't care about me. She was as helpless as in the situation she was subjected to, still stuck in the terrible tragedies she'd witnessed.

For me as a small child, it was extremely difficult, the unpredictability of feeling safe one moment then becoming insecure from being forced to grow up as I heard horrors that a small child could not sort. Mom had often asked the Nazis to shoot her when it was too difficult for her to endure what she was living through. They replied that she was not worth a bullet.

Mom struggled through the cold, starvation, and mental and physical torture for a year. She was forced to march for several miles at the end. I don't know for how long. Magda told me that she saved Mom, who fell down several times. Aunt Magda was the one who kept Mom alive. Jölan did better because she was the oldest. Every time Mom was close to giving up, Magda gave her the courage to gather herself and move on. Mom would never have been able to survive without Magda's encouragement. I know that Mom was saved from Ravenbrück and that she was so thin that she only weighed twenty-four kilograms when she took the boat over to Sweden. It was

primarily Folke Bernadotte who took Scandinavians sitting in concentration camps, and in the end, they took Jews in buses and transported them from Hamburg in a boat over to Malmö. This is how Mom came over with her sisters Jölan and Magda. Mom told me she thought it was angels who gave her porridge with thick cream and honey. She ate several plates. Many died like flies. They were buried close to each other the same day. After they showered and were disinfected, they got to quarantine. Mom only got the most vital necessities, and later went up to a camp school in Fjällgården, which was in Hälsingland. They had no idea what had happened to their other siblings. Several years later, Mom learned that her oldest brother, Hersh-Leib, had returned from the war and lived in Grandpa's apartment in Mukacevo. Even her second-oldest brother, Shlojmi, had survived the war and lived in one of Morphar's apartments in the city with his family. Her third oldest brother, Shoshi, was dead. But they didn't know how he was killed. Mom told me how she was forced to thin the turnips at Fjällgården and hardly got any food. She also told me that she got some sanitary towels but had to save her pocket money of fifty pennies a week in order to buy anything else. Somehow Mom learned to knit. It must have been Jölan who taught her. Mom sold baby outfits that she knitted to a yarn shop in Delsbo and got together money to buy yarn to knit a warm winter sweater for herself because she didn't have a coat.

.9.

Mom also told us that some girls went to the country store to buy eggs, sausages, and other things but that it was difficult for them to be understood. The Swedes could only speak Swedish, so the girls began to cackle like chickens to ask to buy eggs and pointed to their forearm that they wanted to buy something like that. The merchant took out a ham. Another time, they had a man who came with them to shop. They giggled and showed that they wanted to buy sausage by pointing to his fly. Finally, the merchant understood and they wanted to buy sausages. I don't know how long my mother was in Fjällgården, but they learned poor Swedish, little prayers, and mostly how to find relatives that they could move in with and how to find suitable men to marry. Those who had relatives, moved abroad. Those who had the opportunity to study with someone who guaranteed their financial security also did so.

Mom and her sisters had no one to help them, so they had to look for factory work in smaller towns. There was no talk of settling in larger cities. They were not welcome there. So the girls tried working in the rubber factory in Värnamo, which is now Gislaved, where they made sanitary napkins in Mölnlycke. The two oldest sisters quickly married, each their own Swedish. Her sisters called her whenever something chaotic happened. The oldest sister was terribly ugly and had a very poor radiance. She was like one of the king's stepsisters or the goddess Aphrodite after she had lost her beauty and wanted to steal it from Psyche.