



Judy Bahar Holocaust Survivor

I don't remember when the soldiers took my father away. But a few years ago, when I went with my mother back to Debrecen, the town where I was born, she took me to the building where we lived, and pointed to the corner balcony on the first floor. She said that was where she stood, with me in her arms, when my father, flanked by the uniformed boys, turned around, waved to us, and walked through the vaulted entrance to disappear forever. *I was five months old.*

I don't remember the journey in the cattle wagon. But I have been told that I was fed biscuit crumbs which my mother grabbed in the last minute as we were leaving the ghetto. Although I can't remember, I can see in my mind's eye how my mother looked then, young, fit, healthy, dressed in a sensible ski suit, with a stuffed rucksack on her back, from which dangled a glass potty. My practical mother with that incongruous glass vessel. *I was eight months old.*

I don't remember, when my mother, risking her life, crossed that foreign town to get to the hospital, while the other women back in the labour camp covered for her absence. I don't remember her bursting into tears at the sight of me, a dying emaciated child with the hollow face dominated by the huge eyes of the malnourished. I don't remember her stealing me from the hospital, back to the camp, from where next day all inmates were sent on a death march. I don't remember all the "kind" souls trying to get my mother to see the pointlessness of carrying that dying child. *I was sixteen months old.*

I don't remember the old couple who gave us shelter in their house in that foreign land, after my mother escaped one night into the forest from the thinning line of marchers which left corpses in its wake like a nightmare version of the Hansen and Gretel pebbles. I don't remember how the other villagers brought scraps of food "for the baby". I don't remember greeting the liberators in my mother's arm. *I was still barely a year and a half.*

I don't remember. But I do. I see every one of those scenes, vividly, embroidering details, being in awe of what my mother went through, being overwhelmed by the miracle of survival.