

Toward the New World



Gizella Boytar Franceschini

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Dedicated to my grandchildren,
Jennifer, Adam, and Candice
with Eternal Love

TOWARD THE NEW WORLD

1956 November—in Alag—a suburb of Budapest—in the cold autumn wind—three generations of women, a grandmother, a mother, and an eight year old little girl huddle together at twilight, looking at the smoke above the city, and the fire blazing from the mortar shells, hearing the sounds of gunfire, shells exploding, the sound of the Russian tanks invading the city.

Budapest was starting to rebuild and heal from its war wounds after the Second World War. Now the returning Russian tanks have come back once again to finish the destruction and quell the Revolution. How unbearable and cruel this regime had to be that a small nation of ten million Hungarians, revolted against the Communist regime and the Russian occupation. The Russians defeated them, although the Hungarian police, the borders guards, and the military all fought on the side of the people. Hopes ran high that the western countries would come and liberate us but alas, thousands more youth died in hopeful vain and nobody came. Only the tanks came. And they came on the road where our journey into freedom began.

Fears ran rampant in the country—people are hiding, planning to escape beyond the borders, fearful of being captured, fearful of revenge, fearful of confiscation and the ultimate punishment — death. Their only sin, if you can call it that is to be free and to live in freedom.

November 21, almost a month since the Revolution began, life has come to a paralyzing standstill. No transportation, so the stores are empty, most of them are closed. My mother-in-law, Mami had an idea that we should go down to the store next to the highway, whose owner is a good friend of hers. Perhaps she has some goods that we can buy because all our food at home is gone.

The weather was quite cold. I put on my brown lamb fur coat, my hat, and picked up my little purse. Ancikam had on her



warm training suit, a winter coat, her hat, and we started walking. We got to the store only to find it locked and bolted, nobody in sight. Only a small truck was parked in the front. I told Mami “if this truck driver would take us to Budapest, we would go with him to see my father.” I have not heard from him in over a month and would like to know that he is all right. I asked the driver if he would take us to Pest to which he replied—“If you have the money I will take you as far as the border.”

I turned to Mami “Here is the opportunity, we are going.” Poor Mami burst out protesting and reasoning that how can you go away with a little girl to the unknown by yourself? “I forbid you to do that” “If you want to go, then go by yourself and leave my granddaughter here with me.” She grabbed Anci to her and I pulled her back, out of her grandmother’s arms—“She is mine, if I go, she goes with me” “I will never leave her behind” The truck driver loudly hastened us to leave immediately due to the seven 7 pm curfew in the city. Mami still in disbelief removed her own yellow woolen shawl and draped it around Anci’s neck pouring all her tearful love into this sorrowful goodbye. The driver grabbed Anci, put her in the front seat and pushed me beside her. Mami and I looked at each other. Our tearful eyes met radiating with sorrow and love as we were leaving and never coming back.

We just made it into Budapest before the seven pm curfew. He could not drive any longer and had to leave the truck in a neighboring empty lot. He told us that if we want to go with him tomorrow morning we have to meet him in the Podmaniczki utca, street, at seven am. He was going to pick up three other families.

My father’s happiness was great when he saw us. He showed us with hugs and kisses. Veronka, my father’s life partner, served us dinner and put Ancika and herself to sleep. Two of us stayed in the kitchen, my father and I. I told him of our plans and where we were going. He got all choked up—— disagreeing with the decision.



“You cannot do that!” “You cannot risk your life and your child’s life. The AVH (Allamvedelmi hatóság) the secret police, like the Russian KGB, has taken over control of the border patrol, closing the borders, capturing escapees who want to leave the country, because they are presumed guilty for having taken part in the revolution. Think this over. The land close to the Austrian border is moorland and reed bank. Its marshy with drainage canals and deep ditches. Only the locals know the way to cross this wetland. You must realize that you cannot leave. It’s too dangerous.”

Edesapam—my dear father:
“I have to go” “Hear me out”

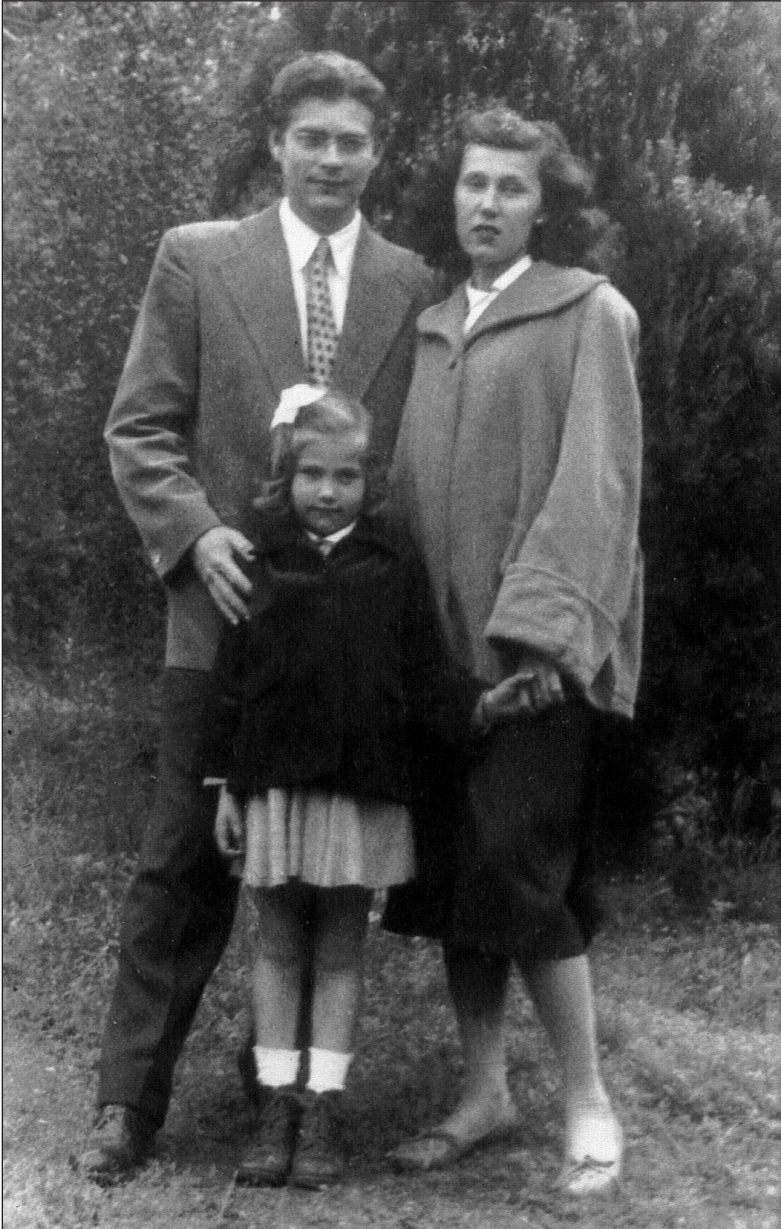


I would like to tell you truthfully my life’s greatest tragedy and my husbands’ family’s biggest secret

About seven years ago my husband got sick. Anci was just a year old. The neurology clinic diagnosed him to have a schizophreniform disorder and an obsessive-compulsive disorder. After about two month’s treatment and hospitalization, he became symptom free and after which he took his medical boards again and passed and he was returned to his job. The symptoms reoccurred once a year around the fall with different behavioral symptoms, like someone was trying to steal information, knowledge from his brain. They intensified and got worse every year. When this would happen, we had to call the ambulance to take him to the hospital for treatments, and we paid them to come in the darkness so that the neighbors would not see them. We had to keep it a secret because of the shame surrounding such an illness. People were afraid of those families and would shun them socially. This went on for years. One or two month’s hospitalization and then he continued with his medical practice. The end of summer always brought anxiety to the family for future fears. I recognized the increasing intensity of the illness as it progressed into paranoia. I was the target. His gaze was hateful and hurt-



ful as if I was the enemy in his mind. We were taking a walk on the Danube banks late September when out of nowhere he





grabbed all my hair and dragged me into the cold water, tried to drown me and saying he is going to finish me before I suck out all the information from his brain. I wondered whom he thought he saw? He battered my head on a rock in the water. I don't know how but I got away. I ran as fast as I could to the nearest town, I think he tried to follow me but I never looked back. My sister-in-law's parents lived in this nearby town and I told them that I had a boating accident. They patched me up and gave me dry clothes and bandaged my bleeding head. I went home. I changed very quickly, grabbed Anci and took the train into Budapest to my father's house. (Later my brother-in-law came into Budapest to tell me that Frigyes came home, not knowing anything and wondered where we were. He had no memory of what happened).

Edesapam when I was here in September, I lied to you, I tried to make it nicer, I saw that you didn't believe everything, but you let it go and didn't really question me too much. Please forgive me! I will tell you everything now.

And I told him, and told him and told him seven years of my broken hearts suffering...

A side note for clarification: Other pertinent details of the abusive marriage might be too much for people to read. Enough to say that my mother-in-law and father-in-law, while they were divorced for many years, both advised me to leave the marriage to save my life so I was going to move to Szeged, to get far away from my husband, Dr. Frigyes Szauder. So I was leaving anyway. Now that the Revolution happened, here was my opportunity to leave the country. Better to be as far away from this situation as possible.

Today when we left Alag, my last memory of him, is that he was sitting by the dining room table, eating walnuts with honey. He stared at me with cold piercing detached cruel eyes. When he is sick— I become the embodiment of the person who is trying to steal his brain and from whom he must



be free. I cannot stay with him. This is one of the reasons why I have to flee. Most of the people are escaping because they are afraid of their lives from the Communists. I am afraid of my life from my husband.

The second reason: “Now fly back to the past with me when I was ten years old and you brought me the treasure of the world’s greatest literature. You explained the world’s maps to me, we traveled the world together. You brought alive the desire in me to travel to see, to learn, you said knowledge is power. Then came the Hitler regime. They occupied our country. They burned the books in the city squares, which was against their ideology of the super German race. Then came the Russians and they also burned the books of the dirty capitalists.”

Flames’ bursting sparks crying out; black smoke mourned over the ashes of the lost knowledge. “Apam, for years they isolated us from the West with the Iron Curtain, away from music, from literature, from technological advances. The bookstores are full of Marxist and Leninist ideologies. Before the Revolution there was an article in the newspaper that a man was arrested having an American Time magazine in his possession. He was punished for being a friend of the West and an enemy of the government. The school principle in Alag is Mami’s friend and he told her to take Anci out of the religion classes because he has to report these families to the party as having clerical affiliations. Only those children from the peasant and trade families will be able to go to the university. Anci’s grandfather had a steel business, with about 40 employees, her father is a doctor, and I also went to medical university, you are a professor in a trade school of interior furnishings, sooner or later they will find out that your mother was a countess—my little girl will never be able to get into a school of higher learning with this family background. Edesapam what can I give to my daughter in a country like this which is repressed from the rest of the world?”

“I know you are afraid for me and you don’t want to let me go. But deep down in your heart you now that I am right. Let me



go! Let your soul be my guide on this long journey. Then I will be strong and brave if I know that you are with me. “I looked into his eyes waiting for his answer—he stroked my head and said—“Soon it will be dawn and you have a few hours left to sleep. Rest assuredly; I will wake you up in time.” This is how it happened. In the morning, he got all his money together, stuffed it into my purse for the road ahead. In a sepia darkness of the morning dawn, streets still empty, we walked quickly and quietly toward the meeting point. The truck was waiting. Under the gas lamp in a street corner came our painful and last goodbyes. How can I express my feelings of that dawn as my father’s arms enveloped us? My eternal love for him, my humble gratitude, and the pain of our parting. Leaving his caressing arms we sat in the front of the truck next to the young driver. As long as I live I will remember that scene when he took off his hat and the faint light of the dawn, and the light from the gas lamp sparked his silvery grey hair and falling tears.

The journey began.

During the ensuing trip we made three stops to pick up more people along the highway. The truck was like a small army open back truck with a heavy green tarp enclosure. People fit in the back and could crouch down. We hardly left Budapest when we saw the Russian tanks, cars and soldiers along the road. Our driver called out to be really quiet. The soldiers were yelling and waving their guns for us to stop—Stop! I pulled my fur coat collar over my head. I peered out from the corners of my eyes. I pulled Anci under my fur coat and she was really scared by now. The driver stopped the truck. He spoke Russian; he was showing papers; it appeared that they were not sufficient; because the soldier got loud. He was starting to go to the back of the truck to inspect the contents when the driver picked up a liter of Vodka and showed it to him. He grabbed the Vodka at lightening speed, looking around to make sure no one saw his treasure, hiding it in his coat pocket. He was not going to share. His stern face changed into a wide smile, “charaso –tovarish” Davaj—go go!! And he sig-



naled the solders to let us pass. A big weight fell off my heart that we survived this inspection so luckily. Our driver said, don't worry; because I have lots of Vodka, with what you can always bribe the Russian soldiers. So without further problems, we traveled the Gyor highway about four hours—then he pulled over and stopped. I paid him half of my money, asking, "Where is the border?" "Just go left on that road until you reach Lebeny and the border is right there." The rest of the people were jumping off the truck and paying him as we all started our walk to the" nearby "Lebeny.

We have been walking for about half an hour, it was sunny and about early afternoon. A horse drawn hay carriage with an old farmer and his wife stopped to talk to us."Where are you going with that little child? 'Lebenybe" To Lebeny I said. "Oh!" Said his wife" why don't you climb up and come with us, Lebeny is still ten kilometers, six miles, away from here!!" We arrived into the main square of Lebeny, a small rural town where we parted with God's blessings toward each other. I found the Apothecka and we went in to talk to the pharmacist. I introduced myself to the pharmacist as a doctor's wife and I confided my plans to him of leaving the country. I found out that the border is far away. It is a full days walk from here. But it is a marshy, moorland, reed bank, and full of canal ditches for drainage and without a guide it is impossible to trespass. He told me the name and address of the man who lives at the end of town that could be guiding us. We received aspirin and a few vitamin tablets for the road. We left thanking him for his help. We found the guide's house at the edge of town and already some people were gathering in his barn, having had the same information. His wife sold us some bread and some meat, which we ate hungrily right away as we only had a few apples left by this time. The guide agreed to help us through the marshland but we had to wait until it was dark—sunset. We left before five. He said he would be in the front and we follow him within eyesight of each other. So we started our walk. We walked and walked quietly. Every so often I tried to carry Anci in my arms but that did not last long. She was



heavy.

People appeared next to us in the darkness and then they were behind us. Next time we lagged behind and they were in front of us. In the pitch black starless night I just followed whatever dark moving thing was in front of me. The autumn fields, which are deeply plowed with ruts of stalks sticking out, now are frozen into hard rocks. It was an endless struggle to walk on this terrain. My ankle was hurting from the impossible navigation. Ancikams feet were small and could fit into the ditches better than mine. I know it was hard for her but she never complained and seemed to make a game out of it. Around eleven pm we arrived at a three-sided lean to barn, which was filled with strewn hay. Happily we threw ourselves into the hay and rested. I gave Ancikam the last apple, but after the first bite she fell into slumber land and slept. While she slept and I rested in a corner of the barn, I heard noises from the other side. I went over there and was stunned to see over eighty people had gathered already from other groups. Looking around, the youngest person was about sixteen years old. Anci was the only child. I eavesdropped on different conversations. This boy's mother was bragging about her son's soccer career and what a great future awaits him. When her husband quietly interrupted, "He should study instead, since he is so stupid". The wife told him to shut up because he doesn't know anything. I walked past the family dispute and saw our guide happily singing and drinking. By this time he was pretty drunk. I went over to listen to the other group's guide who was not so drunk, explaining that close by is a narrow but very deep canal. We have to cross over to the other side. There is only one way to do this. We have to stay on this side of the canal for four or five hours. When the canal widens and you see a bridge that is where you have to cross. The Andau Bridge is in Hungary and it lead to the town of Andau, which is in Austria. It is still a walk to the town from the bridge. The people were relieved, full of hope for their future. Hugging each other that soon we will be out of here and free. I went back to Anci, sleeping. A young blond woman was sobbing



over her. How old is she? Eight years old I said. She was crying that she left behind her child "I wish I would have brought her. A man came up and consoled her" You did the right thing by leaving her. She was too young and weak to travel, what would we have done with her on such a long journey. When we establish our new life then you can bring her out." This man wasn't her real father. The real father would have carried the frail little child in his arms and not left her behind.

The loudness and the preparations and the excitement increased as the people were gathering for the next phase of the journey. To this day I still cannot explain the unusual feeling that overcame me and persistently strengthened in me. I gazed at my sleeping daughter and I knew that I had to do something else. We cannot go with that loud group of people! The message was strong. I walked over to a young man who carried a doctor's bag with him. Next to him was another 20 something year old youth. I gathered all my wits about me and convinced them that I had information (which my father told me before we left Budapest) that the AVH border patrol regiments are active again. They ran away during the revolution so people could escape. But now the Party organized them and sent them back to their border posts. Such a large, loud group of people will be spotted very easily and captured. We should not let ourselves become so vulnerable in a dangerous situation since we got this far. A 50-year-old woman proud that she could make it so far considering her age and her small stature also agreed with me. I went to look for our guide who was half asleep and very drunk. I brought him to our little group and implored him to help us. He said he would take us to the canal, but we could not cross it because it is deep. He said we should follow the canal on this side and go with the original plan towards the bridge road. The Andau bridge road. This was out of the question. I was not going to do that. A strong inner guiding voice and conviction said NO NO NO. But then what should I do? In the dark night as I looked around I saw a pole like shadow sticking out in the



hay. I inspected it closer and a partially toothless long, hand crafted, old-fashioned ladder peeped its head at me. This is the Answer. I know what to-do now. A blissful warm flush came over me signaling that this was our solution. Thank you. Thank you. I think my gratitude found a warm heart that was guiding me tonight. I convinced the rest of our small group, the two young men, and the 50-year-old woman to carry the ladder. Our guide did not want to come. My money was gone, so I offered my wristwatch. In those times a wristwatch was a big value. The young man with the doctors' bag, opened his case and inside was a small musical horn instrument and loaded with money. He said he was a musician. He paid off our guide handsomely, just to please come with us and show us the way. This way I got to keep my watch. It was way past midnight when I woke up Ancika and we began our journey with the two men, the older woman, the guide and the ladder, which we all carried together. It was very heavy and definitely homemade from a hard thick wood. After about a good half an hour walk we arrived at the canal. It was definitely deep but luckily here the crossing was narrow. Also we were lucky. The sides of the canal were frozen and hard on which the ladder was going to rest horizontally. It took along time for the three men to place the ladder across the canal. But finally they got it.

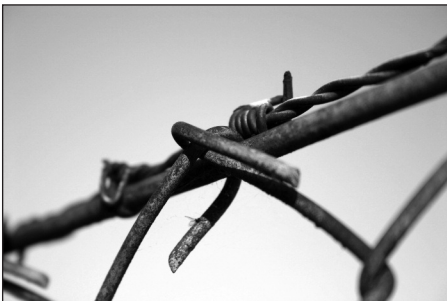
Here our guide in good spirits finally bade good-bye to us. With parting instructions—"Follow the canal on the other side, when it starts to widen out, look for another narrow ditch, canal and follow that. This will be the way to avoid the bridge. Although it is longer this way but it will be safer. " So we asked, "Where is the border?" "When you will see far-away light coming from Austria beyond the border that will be your direction. "

To cross over this toothless ladder is difficult for an adult, let alone an eight-year-old little child. We tried to discuss ahead how to do this and it was going to be dangerous. A dark deep ravine underneath us and an old ladder with rungs missing. Janos, the twenty year old, went first backwards and guided Anci's hands in the front. I was behind her and placed her



legs, knees and feet on the sides of the ladder and where ever a rung was. We all crawled this way slowly and carefully in the dark. This was extremely difficult. I don't know how Anci remembered this, did she have any fear? I just remember that she never spoke a peep but quietly methodically placed her little hands and feet where she was told.

So we all crossed to the other side and feeling relieved that this was over, we began to walk on the other side of the canal. Ancikam must have been very sleepy .Her head on her chest, her eyes closed, but her feet were moving but she frequently collapsed. I picked her up on my back. Her head on my shoulder bopped down and she was quietly snoozing in my ear. This continued for a while. The will is endless but the strength in limiting. I carried her until I almost collapsed. Janos came to help. We put her in between us, each one grabbing an arm, and slightly lifting her off the ground, she continued to sleepwalk. Sometimes we switched sides as our arms gave out. We walked for about three hours here on the frozen marshy terrain. I was exhausted. I was dehydrated, I was thirsty, and my lips were dry and cracked from stinging cold wind. We noticed that small canal that our guide had mentioned, but it appeared to be going backwards, from where we came. At least the moon would have appeared so that we knew direction, but it was a dark starless night. We felt lost. All of a sudden in the dark we saw a figure approaching us. A man. His happiness was overwhelming as he found



some living souls. He said he was not a fearful man. In his youth he was a boxer, but the darkness, the unknown, the marshlands, the endless silence and the aloneness, caused him to hallucinate.

He imagined the reeds to be soldiers moving in the wind and his fear and anxiety shook him. He gladly joined our little



group and we agreed to continue along the side of the canal. The boxer, the musician, the fifty-year-old woman, Janos, Anci and I. The fifty-year-old woman, whose name escapes me, collapsed in a fit. She threw herself on the ground, hysterically sobbing, that she cannot take another step. She is going to hide herself here in the reed or in a ditch and rest and “I don’t care if anything happens to me”. “Something is going to happen to you, I told her”. I tried to explain to her about muscle fatigue syndrome you are not going to be able to move from the pain, you will fall asleep and never wake up because you will freeze. We cannot leave you here because your life would be on our conscience. She just kept throwing herself in hysterical fits. I asked our boxer and our musician to grab her by the waist and put her arms around their shoulder and start to carry her until she can start to walk on her own. We were able to bring her to her senses. Thus we continued—all of us extremely fatigued. I also felt I could not go any further. It had to be about four am when a dogs barking, pretty close by, got our attention. We threw ourselves into a ditch to hide and fear fell across all of our souls. Quietly, we stretched our ears toward the barking direction which started to go further’ away from us. In the distance the outline of a huge tent appeared. We waited for a little while, not knowing what to do. Our musician friends said “I am going to take a look around; I have lots of money and vodka. If I don’t return in ten, fifteen minutes, — then flee” “I swear I won’t give you up” With our heart beating loud we all hugged each other on the frozen ground. A few minutes passed by and our musician returned whistling quietly and with hurrying arm movements, shushed us to a small house next to the tent where they stored the reed. We went in. Pleasant warmth enveloped our cold bones. A large pot of tea was brewing on top of the stove. We drank and drank and drank until there was no more tea then we drank water. A peaceful old German shepherd came to play with Anci. The middle aged man who was in charge of this tent, said that on the other side of this field, the AVH and the border patrol have a guardhouse. The soldiers are hunting dissidents with their guard dogs and guns. They come around here every half an



hour. You have to hurry away from here. When they come with their dogs I will lure the dogs in with kolbasz to keep them distracted from your smell. This will buy you time to get further away. The border is about two hours more walking distance from here. There you will see the border with the moat. The barbed wire fence is rolled up in some sections, in others it is cut through, but it is de- activated. "With Good Luck and Gods blessings we said our thankful goodbyes. In the beginning we all ran, later we walked, later we dragged ourselves. Hope was the only strength left, which moved our legs and dragged our weary bodies to this spot. Finally we could see a flicker of faint distant lights coming from the other side. We gathered up every last bit of strength to reach there. Finally there was the border moat. Happiness overcame everyone.

I turned around to look back into the starless night. A deep sorrow stabbed my heart, uncontrollably I started to sob. Unlucky Hungary! Here I was born; here I learned to love my country; to be patriotic; the way the national anthem says" Aldjon, vagy verjen sors keze, itt elned es halnod kell.— "Destiny may bless you or curse you but you have to live and die here"

I am not leaving you here with your blue waters, beautiful mountains reaching above the clouds, but the foreign suppressors who are forcing their ideologies on us, they are taking away our freedoms, and killing our national soul. I will be true to You, I will not leave you, and I promise someday to come back. Who knows, maybe toward the end of my days, I will come home to be with my ancestors.

Now, we just have to get over the frozen border trench. The others already crossed. Just the two of us were standing on Hungarian soil. I pushed Anci forward and lifted her up and over the trench. The others pulled her out. Then I crossed. With one leg up on dry soil, the ice broke under the other leg and I sank up to my thigh into the frozen icy water. The others grabbed after me and pulled me out and up on the bank. An excruciating, cruel burning pain enveloped my leg, but my



attention was averted by the reflector lights of an oncoming tractor, searching for the refugees who made it across the border trench. He came to us. The truck had an extension like a hayride and a man in the back was pulling us up on the hay because we were all too weak to do it on our own. We rode for a while until we came to a large farming settlement. Here we were dropped off into a huge barn filled with hay and earlier refugees. Everyone was laying and resting and sleeping on the ground. At the other end of the barn, a table was set with large pitchers of cocoa and tea. The Red Cross ladies were distributing the libations among the weary.

Andau—the word hit my ears, and I began to pay attention to a conversation in the hay. I heard of a story of what happened at the Andau Bridge. It was about two injured men who escaped yet witnessed the slaughter of over a hundred people as they were approaching and crossing the bridge. The AVH ambushed them and machine-gunned them down. And left them all there on the frozen ground. These two men pretending to be dead later escaped. The faces of the people who we left earlier in the barn, who decided to go toward the Andau Bridge came alive. I saw their individual faces filled with hope, with happiness, where are they? What happened to them? Are they all dead? What power has the right to take lives away, to extinguish hopes and dreams, to sentence unjustly, changing destiny? Endless sorrow and anger took over my heart. I became ill. I was dizzy, nauseous, exhausted, and physically and emotionally distraught. As I looked down on my throbbing aching leg, I realized that hours of walking with nylon stockings in the frozen reeds stabbed and lashed my legs. The pain only began to register after I was pulled out of the trench where the ice cut my leg up even more and the blood had dried on to the torn stockings. My pain vanished as I peered over the barn, the people lying around sleeping, resting; everyone was on the ground—except one person. A little girl. Standing up warming her hands on a cocoa mug, her stomach sticking out, peering over the assembled crowd—



only one little girl and she was mine, my brave, smart, courageous, heroic Ancikam. She seemed to be the only one who was not tired.

We could not rest too long here, as we were put on buses and taken to the nearby railroad station from where they took us to Vienna. In Vienna, the Red Cross volunteers brought us each a big piece of cheese, cracker and chocolate, and tea and cocoa after. It tasted so good. How did we endure this long road with out any food? I think it didn't even occur to us that we were hungry because the thirst tortured us more. Our train arrived at the end of the station to a distribution area where the tracks split apart. They jammed us into three wagons. Every seat was filled but they kept cramming us in until there was no more standing room. The wagon was ice cold. The windows frozen with ice flower motifs, people shivering and shaking from the cold huddling together, trying to keep warm. I was sitting and Anci was sitting in my lap curled up shivering, whining, crying that she is cold and she doesn't feel good and she is very sleepy and she wants to lay down and sleep. She just kept saying it over and over and crying. Poor thing was miserable. It seemed that the last two days of the journey now affected her and she was breaking down. There was no room on the floor for her to lie down because the people were all sitting down back-to-back trying to keep warm. So there was no room anywhere for Anci to stretch out. Dear Lord, I looked around, hoping for some help where I could lay down this tired little girl. Then I noticed that above the wooden seats, above our head was a net like luggage rack. That's the solution. My heartfelt gratitude went out. I took off my fur coat and made a bed out of it and put Ancikam in it. She was just the right size that her arms and legs could stretch out. I stood up on the seat and covered her up so that only her nose would stick out. She smiled peacefully, blinked slowly and closed her eyes. Soon the dream world took her over. I sat back into this cold wooden seat and looked around and saw what people were wearing. Warm pants, sweaters, coats, boots, and I had on a short sleeve green silk suit, a hat, torn



nylons, luckily a warm fur boot. I was shivering. The man next to me took the corner of his coat and draped it over my legs. On the other side a person put his arms and leg over mine to try to warm me.

I took a look at myself. How did I get here dressed like this? I thought back on the last three days events. On November 21st, I got up, got dressed nicely in this outfit because I was going to Uj Pest, my place of work to pick up my wages, paid in cash—The Ujpest Health clinic where I was working in the orthopedic department. Since there was no public transportation anywhere in the town I started to walk. It was nine km or five miles. I got there and saw that there was not too much going on in the clinic, except in the surgery department where all the injured were brought in. When I got my money I left. I started to walk along the railroad tracks in hopes of catching a train to Vac that would let me off in Alag. I was lucky. I found the last train to Vac as it was already underway. Chasing the already moving train, I hopped on and was saved from the long walk. When I got home my mother in law Mami suggested that we should go to the highway store to buy some food (since now we had money). I glanced into the dining room to say good-bye to the man in there. Looking at me as if I was the enemy again he did not say one word. Ancikam went over to say something to him. She was not too keen on coming with us, probably because of the cold—he just pushed her aside and said —Go with your mother! Of course she was coming with me. I would never leave her behind. We found a closed grocery store; a truck packed in the front, as if waiting for us to take us to the unknown—unprepared and inappropriately dressed for this long journey. So that's how I got here, sitting in the cold with my green silk shantung short sleeve elegant suit with marcasite buttons. A fur coat, torn nylons, and hat. Overdressed for the wrong occasion.

We felt a shove, heard the metal squeaking, as they attached the engine to the train cars. Great was our happiness; we



knew then we would have some heat soon. But we still had to wait at least two hours before the steam engine produced enough steam to pull the train and warm us up. People started to stretch, move around, as did I. In the meantime another day flew away. It was late afternoon. We weakened from the heat, relaxing and most of them fell asleep. Our train car was often side-railed for the faster regularly scheduled trains to go by. It was around midnight when we reached Linz. There the Red Cross boarded the train. They could not get through so we handed the crackers and chocolates one by one to each other. The tea was in large old-fashioned metal milk containers. With a few enamel mugs, they were distributing the tea. Everyone drank their fill with moho thirst, and passed the refilled cup further. I saved Ancikams cracker for later. I didn't disturb her sleep. We traveled all night with many side stops. The fatigue overcame me and I also fell asleep. I awoke early dawn to pain all over my body. My limbs fell asleep from the curled up position. I had no idea where we were; where they were taking us. Looking out the window in the early dawn light I could see the beautiful snowy mountainous region with glistening peaks. The Alps. Finally our train stopped on the outskirts of Innsbruck. The Austrian Alps were all around us. I woke up Ancikam who slept through the whole night.

The Austrian Red Cross was there again herding the disembarking people on to large army buses and taking us to Solbat Hal, into a large army camp used to train firefighters which now was abandoned and empty. It's hard to remember but it felt like there were three hundred or maybe more. A long time passed by while we were being registered in the camp's main building. We all received an identification paper with the Red Cross sign, our name and "Ungar Refugee"

Then we were led into the huge barracks, with lots of cots side by side, without any partitions. We were already standing close to the door, when the guard instructed us to go with him. Next to the barracks was a small building, with five beds. It was probably the sergeant's quarters because it was small and private. There were two bunk beds, and a separate bed. Also it had an iron potbelly stove, oozing the warmth in the



room. While gratefully thanking the guard, Janos noticed us and came to greet us. The guard asked him if he belonged with us because then he can also stay here. Of course, we said. A nice married couple also came in and this way the five of us became roommates.

The morning activity consisted of standing in line for coffee and a roll or a piece of bread. Later in the afternoon there was another meal. It was a thick soup served cafeteria style from a large pot. We stood in line, they ladled and we sat in some army-dining hall, but the memory is faint.

While standing in the morning breakfast line, I saw a big Mercedes Benz car in front of the office. The chauffeur opened the door and an elegantly dressed gentleman stepped out of the car. Along with the camps director the two of the men walked side of our long line as if reviewing us. A little while later the camp director came for us. He told us that Mr. So and so, I don't remember his name, which was the director of the Mercedes Benz factory, had chosen us, for a coffee and a discussion. He would like to know first hand about the Revolution, the Russian re occupation, and the defeat of the uprising. We left the camp in the beautiful limousine.

Everybody was looking at us with amazement but I think I was the most surprised. Why did he choose me?

Was it because I had a fur coat and a hat and was dressed nicely? Did I stand out in the line? Was I pretty? True, I was twenty-nine years old. Or was it because he liked my beautiful little girl? We were on the road to Innsbruck. He took us to an elegant coffee, patisserie, cukrazda, where we conversed with my limited German and with his limited Hungarian. He was born in Hungary, left as a child to Austria, and wanted to know about everything. He expressed his concerns and his care and love for his native land and his people. I told him everything that I knew about the Revolution. He was listening sadly as I told him about the peaceful uprising which turned into a bloody revolution. The college youth, the young people marched to Bem and Petofi's statue where they read what the people's demands for freedom were. After that they marched



on the radio station, but by then a large crowd had gathered to demand that the radio station broadcast these demands. That is where the shooting started from the building. The youth stormed the radio station with rocks and fists, no ammunition at the time and took over the radio station and they succeeded in broadcasting their demands. There was an uprising in the city. Women with their children in the hundreds marched on the Parliament building. There were large public gatherings in the other Squares with patriotic poetry recitals and the singing of the national anthem. The AVH responded by shooting and machine gunning from the rooftops. Thousand were left dead in the streets. With this the avalanche began. The army stood by the side of the people; they distributed ammunition to them. They opened the prisons and freed its political prisoners. Fifteen and sixteen year old kids were building the barricades and making and throwing the Molotov cocktails at the enemy—. The people, the army, the police fought together against the AVH. The Revolution was successful had it not been for the Russian army's return prompted by the Communist governments request to help them overthrow the peoples revolt. They arrested and killed the people: those who could escape from the country did. My host quietly listened to my account. He was speechless; he had no more question; I could sense his sadness for his people's plight.

We talked about my coming to America. He said probably I will achieve career and money, but if I want some culture to come back to Europe. He was afraid of the so-called melting pot and I would get stuck in it. Meanwhile the pastries were beautiful and delicious and plentiful. We could not eat all of it. Ancikam whispered that she was full and I kept telling her to stuff herself; who knows when we would eat like this again? We left the cukrazda and he took us to a drug store. He supplied us with all the necessary beauty and cleansing products that we needed, shampoos, toothbrush toot past, powders, etc. and then he took us back to the camp. Actually, the chauffeurs took us back. He sat with us in the car. Reporting back our return to the camp director, he bade us good-bye with a warm hug and a hand kiss wishing us good luck.



When we stepped back into the camp, all the nosy people came by wanting to know details. How was it? Who was he, How do you know him what does he want? We hurried back to our room, little house, and I had an agenda. I also had the necessary things for our luxury. —

The camp had a communal shower, one day for men, the other day for women it was an open stall system, small narrow two feet spaces, with limited hot water supply. Women were pushing and showing each other, and hurrying each other until the hot water would last. I could not undress and bathe in the open because I had some scars that I was embarrassed about. So now I was about to solve my bathing problem. I told Janos and the other roommates that I found storage room where I saw buckets and a washbasin. If they would build a big fire and heat the water I would give them toothpaste and shampoo. So this was the solution for our private bathroom. We started with Anci. She was the first. I was second. We shampooed our hair, washed ourselves and even washed our underwear. We felt terrific finally after this. It was almost dinnertime when all of us finished bathing.

The next day we were in a long line again; this time to register for a choice of two countries where we wanted to go. We said USA for the first choice and Holland for the second because I got the information that in Holland there were less women than men and mothers with children got help from the state.

In the following days, everyone received thirty shillings. We walked into Innsbruck and spent the whole day there sight seeing. We marveled at the beautiful gothic churches, the Austrian architecture, and the downtown elegant section. In one of the little shops, we saw a darling little knitted pleated skirt for Anci. It was expensive, but we both liked it so I bought it. Let Ancikam be the best-dressed little girl, —just in case we ever get invited to another coffee house. I had just enough money left to buy a loaf of bread, an onion, and two bananas. Back at the camp Janos had been shopping also and he presented us with some lard. We had a feast of toasted larded bread with onions and banana for dessert. The camp received a charity donation of a truckload of clothes



piled out on a large table. We were able to “refresh our wardrobe” and had additional clothes. I still had my skirt and had some slacks and a sweater.

Every morning I awoke with new found hope in case I will find out something new. I used to spend a lot of time walking and packing around the office, waiting for some official whom I knew to come out and tell me how long we would be staying at this camp—is there still a quota to the US—who are they taking first—I wouldn’t want to stay here in Austria. I remember that Anci’s hand was always holding mine. I took here everywhere with me. The days were spent like this in the camp with constant worry and hope.

The Hungarians nations sport is football—soccer. We got a gold medal for it in the Olympics. When a few young men stand around, a soccer match begins. That is what happened. The Hungarian boys started to play and the Austrian boys joined in. Two teams formed and they challenged each other to a soccer match. The refugees from the Solbat Hall camp assembled at the local school’s soccer field for a Saturday morning match. The battle began. The cheering commenced for the favorite players. The newspapers photographer, with a Hungarian background, took a photo of the match and the team and also of me and two other ladies. It appeared in the newspaper the next morning with the title Ungar Refugees. I still have this photo.

We lost the game. The team’s excuse was the lack of proper sports equipment and no soccer shoes. They asked for a rematch for the following Saturday.

They got it. The whole scene started again the following weekend. The camp exodus to the nearby soccer field, the cheering for the victory. They won this match.

About this time was when we received our thirty shillings. We had spent it on ourselves for food, but the men spent it mainly on alcohol. The spirits were running high and the story telling began. This is where I heard that the prison cells were opened; the political prisoners not realizing what was happening in the city ran but were afraid for their lives. They were in



prisoner uniform. By the time they ran about two blocks, they were blending in as people were throwing clothes down to them from their windows. They ran far and fast and left the country immediately. There were other stories of prisoners fighting over who was and who was not a true political prisoner. One man admitted that he was not and had to smash a man over the head but the guy deserved it. More drinking continued and he swore he was innocent. I remember a married couple; they were huddled together getting pretty drunk crying over what they had left behind—everything. The most important thing is that we're alive and together and we will make it in the future and we love each other



I too had somebody with whom I thought that I would spend the rest of my life with in eternal happiness. We met in medical university. He was a handsome tall

man, very smart, intelligent, spoke languages, graduated with summa cum laude; we fell in love. We knew each other's thoughts. We felt that God had created us for each other. We married in 1947; Anna was born a year later; the crown of our love-Anna. In the next year Frigyes sickness began to show signs. I had one year of happiness. After that it was worry, anxiety, and fear over his illness that at the end of the summer when the relapses came in different forms –what would happen. Maybe that was my karma. To give me one year of bliss and then to take it away so that I would learn about life; that I have to become strong, face the problems, try to solve them. But if I receive something good, to be grateful and I will lock it in my heart.

Every consolation and joy was in my daughter. Unfortunately I could not be with her for long. I had to go to work. Both of our



incomes were just hardly enough to live on. Every morning I tried to think of an excuse to get out of the communist party meetings, the Marxist, Leninist ideology study group—all mandatory.

We had to stay an extra hour after work for these mandatory meetings after working nine-hour days. We also worked on Saturday until noon. My mother in law Mami took care of Anci. I left in the morning when she was still asleep and came home when she was already asleep. These were very painful times for me.

Misfortune, sadness, bad things came one after the other to our family. I mentioned that my father in law had steel factory and a tool and dye shop. Steel is important during war times for the military and the arms production. He was a very wealthy man. He put all his assets into gold bouillon, napoleon coins. He was the only one, besides his second wife (from whom he had two sons) who knew the hiding place of his entire fortune. He also had two sons from my mother in law, his first wife. At the end of the war with the establishment of the new communist government, began the state takeover of private properties, houses, business etc. Those with larger houses were given two rooms in their homes to live in, the rest was given to the new party members—those who were brought up from the farms and were usually peasants. They were given uniforms and power. They comprised mainly the AVH, the secret police. They defended the new regime with their lives for having been given authority. They would kill, without thinking the rich and intellectuals who were deemed their new enemies. My father in law's steel business was closed down and the little tool and die factory was taken over by the state. From one day to the next he had to forcibly walk out. This broke his spirit and his health and he suffered a stroke shortly thereafter. He could walk and talk and only one of his arms was weak. About three years later, he got another stroke, more serious. The sons asked their father to reveal where the gold was hidden. But he was already weak in his mind and could not remember. He died from this third stroke.



shortly thereafter. The four brothers looked up the second wife to ask here where the gold was buried. She was a mean cruel woman who left her husband during his sickness. The sons attended to him during that time. She had many excuses and stalled the boys, and even kept it a secret from her own two sons. She also died very soon and took with her the mystery and secret of the hidden gold.

I gained some notoriety at the camp as a result of my invitation from the Mercedes Benz director. Every time the camp director saw me he greeted me very politely as if I was a somebody. One day he called me into his office saying that in the Zugspitze Valley, in Erwald, which is a very elegant ski resort, there is a Holland Hotel, whose owner invited a few mothers with their children as his guest. He recommended me as an only mother with a child in his camp, and the car would pick us up in two days, in the morning. The serpentine road traveled through the Alps. Beautiful sparkling snow covered the road and the mountains. It was an untouched whiteness; a true white winter wonderland. The group consisted of twelve mothers with their child or children. We got a very nice room with a bathroom with a large tub. We were all having dinner in the dining room when our host, a handsome, big strong, man greeted us. He did this every night. On the fourth day he asked for me to come into his office. He sat me down in his sofa next to him and interrogated me, wanting to know everything about me. He was not simpatico. I wanted to end the conversation that I have to go, because I don't like to leave my little girl alone and I have to put her to bed. I stood up quickly and left. It was late, the next night, I was reading, Anci was already asleep, when one of the staff came that the "Herr" wants to see me. I cannot go because my little girl isn't feeling good. She returned shortly that she would stay with the child because the "Herr" is insisting. I closed the door and went to see the man. I stood in the middle of the room. He came in front of me and without any hesitation, informed



that he has chosen me out of all the women to be his girlfriend. I will live at the hotel, and help him take care of the guests. I angrily burst out that I will not stay here. How dare he presume such a thing? Who does he think I am? To which he grabbed my arm with an iron grip and responded. "You are a nobody, no country, no family, a refugee who has nothing." You are in my hands and I can have you deported when I want to. But he is going to be good to me and help me and take care of me. I felt his hot unpleasant breath. His Piercing eyes were stabbing me. With his other hand he hugged my waist and started to push me toward the sofa with his huge body. Fear, Anger, and a strong will come over me. I need to be wise here. I have to outsmart him. I am better than he. I have to win. —With my resisting arm I hugged his neck; with my other hand I caressed his face. With humble eyes and a soft voice, I asked for his forgiveness. "I realize that you are right. I owe you my gratitude. You are a kind man who is going to help me." He let me go for a second stunned. Then he again wanted to hug and grab me. But I stopped him with my arm." Wait" Not now. Give me another night so that I can dream and plan this new future with you." Tomorrow night I shall return and make you happy and show my gratitude. I backed out of the room even throwing him a kiss and quickly departed.

Next morning after breakfast we went for a walk in front of the hotel. The guard greeted us and warned us not to venture out further than the corner, not to get lost because the "Herr" is responsible for you. Nonchalantly we sauntered toward the corner, then I looked back to make sure the guard had gone back into his house. The coast was clear. Then we made the corner and grabbing Ancikams hand we ran as fast as we could until we got to the next street. There we stopped, hitchhiked, the next passenger car that came. He stopped, and I asked him if he could take us to Solbat Hal. He was a very kind man who was going to Innsbruck, where he lived with his family. The long serpentine road away from this Hotel was another escape. Not speaking a lot of German, I concocted some story of why we were so far away from the camp. He



believed it or not, it didn't matter because he took us to his family's house. Here his wife welcomed us, offered us cocoa and cake. Anci received a little knitted pullover. This family owned a knitting shop. I got twenty shillings. Then he put us in his car again and took us to the entrance to the camp. We thanked him and bade our goodbyes.

We arrived at an almost empty camp. Only a few souls were hanging around. I peered inside our little house and that was empty. I ran to the office to find out what had happened and where was everybody. The director was surprised to see me. "They never even informed me that they were bringing you back today" Wisely I was real quiet. He told me that after our leaving came the order to evacuate the camp. The ones going to the USA are being taken to the Salzburg military camp. A few days from now will be Christmas, the American soldiers and the clerks are going home for the holidays. They will come back after January 6th only. The people who are still here are waiting for Austrian immigration.

My heart was pounding in my throat. What to do now? I knew I had to convince him to help us. Explaining to him my worries. What would I do here for weeks or more with a little child until a new group of refugees assemble for the American transport? If until then the Hungarian quota would fill up and I would be stuck here. He realized my hopeless situation. We spoke German. He told me that I was the only Lady in the camp. That I deserve his help. He acted quickly making arrangements. A beat up jeep with workers pulled up. He ordered the driver to speed to the train station with us so that we can catch the Salzburg train. Thanking him and God we jumped into the vehicle and headed toward the station. It was easy enough to find the right train. The loud Hungarian words, the people hanging out of the windows echoed all over the glass cupola. We jumped on board and we found a seat as the train started to pull out of the station.

The last two days events flashed in front of my eyes. Everything got solved. By itself? By accident? Or was I so



brave? Was I so clever? Not really. Some Power, some Eternal Love had to guide me in my decisions and actions.

It was very late at night when the train arrived in Salzburg. From here buses took us to a huge American military base. The people were crowded into a large noisy hall. We got a single bed where both of us cuddled together the clothesline sheet separated the beds from each other. We were on top of each other. Luckily Anci fell asleep immediately. She didn't hear the sounds of the families talking, lovemaking, moaning, fighting, snoring - a Babylonian frenzy.

The next morning we walked around inspecting the base, gathering information. I found out that tomorrow, December 22nd, is the last day for the Americans' screening and selection process, after which they will close for the holidays, until January 6th.

God please help me. I have to get inside that office building where they are processing us so that I can be among those who will leave this place before the Americans go. Because this place is intolerable. We can't stay here. I practice walked with Ancikam two times between the two buildings—where we slept and where the office was. I wanted her to be sure and remember the road because in the morning when she would wake up, she would have to come after me by herself, alone. That is, I decided that I would be there first in the early dawn. Anci would follow me when she woke up and together we would go inside and be processed, before everybody else. Since I was not a criminal, not a Party member, I would have no trouble. That was my plan. But that's not how it turned out.

I awoke after four am. I put every single bit of clothing on me that I had because it was a bitter December night. I was not the first one in line. Five men were already there jumping around flailing their arms to keep themselves warm and trying to chase the cold away. We started to talk. But not for long. Our mouths could not even move in the icy wind. Then more people came. By six am we were en masse. I tried to stay in



front of the door, but from the sides came the intruders, cutting in and pushing me further and further back. The people who were in the middle kept getting further away from the door. I fought back until I could make sense of it. We were packed so tight that I could not move my arm. But they kept cutting in from the sides and the middle pushed back. Meanwhile it got lighter. A huge crowd of people has gathered. We were probably many hundreds. I wondered how many could go inside in a day to be processed. I gave up the fight and receded to the back and free myself from the crowd. I did it at the right time because not too far away I saw Ancikams helpless face in the crowd. She was looking for me and fighting the crowd to get to me. She was proud that she had even kicked some people to let her through. We have got to get inside. We will go inside but how? We walked around the building. I knew that they opened at eight o'clock. When we started to go around the second time, I noticed a small steel door on the side. Probably an emergency exit. We waited a little bit to be closer to the opening time. In the meantime I was encouraging Anci to gather all her English knowledge, (since age five she was taking English lessons privately at home) forcing her to remember the word for—beteg—sick. With her tearful stressed little face she started reciting all the poems that she learned. "Pussy cat Pussy cat, where have you been? I have been, sob, to London, sob to look at the queen, "That's all I know," she said crying and trying to remember 'beteg' Time has come. Before they open the office, I have to act. I started knocking on the door, then pounding with my fists and elbow. It seemed like a long while passed before the door opened. A Huge angry faced African American soldier yelled at me. Then I spoke. He could not have understood what I was saying, but perhaps he felt the begging tone of my voice; perhaps he saw my tearful eyes; perhaps it was the way I was stroking my little girl's head. Then I mercifully gazed into his big black eyes as if awakening my fate. He didn't say a word. He took Ancis hands, pulled us in and closed the door behind us.



We were the first to come inside!

This was a processing center. A large building with different area for different purposes. One part was the health exam area where they wanted to know our medical history. Chest x-rays were taken of a people for tuberculosis. Those infected were separated and sent to a sanatorium for cure. It was very nice of the Americans. In another part, Hungarian speaking soldiers and civilians were interrogating us at least for an hour with lots of questions__personal, education, profession, and mainly political affiliations. We got through this too. After a long wait we were called in where they took away our red cross Ungar refugee card and replaced it with a white card—the entry permit to the USA with my name on it and profession—intern—. That is how I was registered.

By this time it was late afternoon; we were finished with the processing. They directed us to a dining hall where they served us a good hot dinner that felt so good after our tiring day. Later on in the evening two bus loads of processed people were taken to the train station. We were one of them. By the time we boarded the train, got settled in, and the train departed, it was after midnight. We were taken to Munich, Germany to an American military base. We waited for hours on the Austrian German border while everyone was inspected for the proper papers.

I had time to think—to relive the last month's events in Austria. I met so may interesting valuable people, good-hearted, kind that helped us along our long journey. The only one who wanted to take advantage of me—failed. I outsmarted him. With my brave smart little girl we accomplished the journey so far. I am grateful to the Eternal Love, the Caretaker who gave me the strength for this journey so that I could persevere. I said” so long” to Austria, promising someday to return and visit all of these places ——in a better time.



Twenty years later...

Here I will skip ahead to the future...

Twenty years passed. I had a new life with my second husband who was a US air force colonel physician stationed in Zweibrücken, Germany. We were there for two years. We traveled a lot all over Europe and from here we revisited all of the Austrian cities of the escape journey. This is where my promise of twenty years ago came true. I relived the happenings all over again. The memories poured back into my heart. All the military bases had been dismantled; only the Solbat Hall barracks were still there. Most of the buildings looked the same. At the entrance where the gate had been, (a hand controlled railroad gate), the bar used to have bright red and white stripes on it twenty years ago. Back then we did not wait for the guard to roll it up, we just slid under it as we were coming and going. Today it struck me that the red had faded into light pink oblivion but the memories were still alive. My husband listened with amazement, with heartfelt sympathy, with sincere validation and praise and respect for our heroic behavior and our plight during those November days of 1956. So the promise was fulfilled.

We arrived at the Munich base camp on December 23rd where we got our own room with white sheets and our own bathroom. We enjoyed the splashing hot shower, bathing which we lacked the previous month. There was a big dining room with long tables where we were given lots of good food. Everybody got a number, which they announced, over the loud speaker. We listened anxiously all day to be called to board the buses for the airplane. I waited all day but our number was not called so we went to bed early.

Anci fell asleep right away. I watched her pretty sleeping peaceful face. I wondered what was in her heart in her mind in her dreams. Why she didn't ask me, not even once "why did we escape—where are we going and how far are we going?" Like someone in a daze, just holding my hand—she



followed me. The day will come when she will hold me accountable. Will she understand that I had to do what I did? Did I have a right to take her away from her happy childhood home? To expose her to this long journey and escape and uncertainties? From camp to camp, among foreign speaking people in foreign lands. And what is in from of her, new continents, new schools and a new language and the future unknown. She will have the right to blame me. My God –look down on me; I am also alone right now. There is no one beside me either. Only these little girls who is mine. I take responsibility for all of this. Don't take her love away from me because then I will have nothing.

I started to nap but not for long. I heard our numbers being called. I got Anci up fast and dressed her and went to the designated place. The buses were waiting and loading us on. As it filled up it started to go toward the airport. All of a sudden a huge snowstorm enveloped our transportation and the bus could go no further. It had to turn around. I asked the driver what was happening and he said that the plane couldn't take off in such a storm so we had to go back to the base .I was stressed, and tired of this long journey. I asked the Eternal Love to please help me—let the storm pass, let the clouds go away, let us reach the other continent, let this journey finally be over. We are so tired. But we were taken back to the base, where I put Anci back to sleep again. I went down to the large hall where there was a little chapel. The Hungarians were assembling for a midnight Mass celebrated by Hungarian priest. Waiting to go into the chapel, I overheard the Andau name again. I listened more attentively now. The AVH were strong at the border. The border guards were reinstated, the said. But the people were still attempting to escape and cross the bridge. When a large group was crossing the bridge, the AVH detonated and machine-gunned the rest of the survivors. That is what happened. This way they destroyed the only bridge, which crossed the canal. My heart was torn apart again by pain as it was on November 23rd. Why did so many people have to die when their only wish was to live freely in a free world?



The priest arrived; we all went into the small house of God. The little chapel was filled with sad homeless Hungarians. It pained us to think back about what and whom we left behind, our homes, families, friends; it frightened us to think about what is ahead of us—the unknown future. The priest sermon was about the Eternal Love that is within our hearts—about the hope that inspires us—about integrity and goodness that will help us to assimilate into the new world. Then we sang the Hungarian national anthem. Nobody's eyes were left dry as we departed quietly, sadly, solemnly back to our room. I cuddled up next to Anci: sleep came fast although short-lived. At four am the announcement with the loud speaker woke me up. I heard our number. Again we were on our way. The snow has stopped. It was a beautiful clear starry Christmas night.

We arrived at the Munich Military Air Base. In wonderment I looked up at this huge iron bird, which I had never seen before. It had big propellers. We boarded this military transport plane and settled in. Finally with a loud propeller noise, the engines revved up. It started to run and run and run and then took off into the clear starry night taking us toward the new world.

This is where I became familiar with Americans through the soldiers on the plane. Next to the stern demeanor of the Austrians and Germans the American soldiers were polite helpful kind big giants. I remember a tall African American soldier who fed us. He brought the most delicious and unusual foods to us—turkey breast with sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, broccoli and then the pumpkin pie, which we never saw nor tasted before. We sampled but didn't eat much as these flavors were so unusual for our palate. He would bring Anci some milk when she didn't drink it then he brought her some coke, and then some other soda trying so hard to feed her and to please her. He stroked her head and lovingly talked to her. We didn't understand what he was saying but we could feel his love shining through his gestures. We flew for what seemed like an awful long time.



Finally we arrived at Fort Dix, New Jersey on Christmas day, late at night. From here they took us to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, an Army base, which was turned into a refugee camp (the camp is no longer there). Here we were welcomed in a large hall with a huge decorated Christmas tree and with lots of presents. Smiling, well wishing American soldiers welcomed us. Everybody got presents mainly chocolates. Anci got a nice box of something. Groups were assembled and sorted to large sleeping quarters again with lots of beds side by side. We were in the line waiting our turn when an officer came giving orders to everyone. He saw us and came over. He bowed his head as if he was greeting us Then he said something very nicely, smiling— I don't know what he was saying but he directed the two of us to a private little room all our own. Again I was very lucky and thanked him in Hungarian. We shook hands, we said good night, every word that was said in a different language, was filled with love and care. A two bed private small clean little room—how did I deserve this? I don't know—but Thank You.

I remember the big dining hall cafeteria where they served salads and fresh vegetables and foods that were out of season and plentiful. This was unheard of in Europe in the winter-time. Here we started to socialize with people hearing their stories. One day when we were carrying the tray to the table a TV Newsgroup was filming doing documentary for a news show. They selected Anci to carry the tray toward the table and were going to film her. She had to practice this and smile a couple of times. She was very happy but later told me that the food was terrible and the beans were sweet.

There were different ways of handling the placement of the refugees. One of the ways was according to religious filiations because the churches were all there to help sponsor. Then large companies came to recruit workers. It was an auction style assembly. The Pennsylvania coalmine representative stood on the podium and asked for hundreds of workers. He had jobs for specialists and for laborers. He told them the wages and the terms. For the first three months they could



live rent-free and get some money for food. He gave them an hour to think about it and if they decided they come and sign up. The buses were already outside waiting and taking them to Pennsylvania. Then came the car manufacturers. They were also looking for engineer's specialists and assembly line workers. The same format—to sign up and to be taken away. Farmers were looking for labor also. This is here I ran into Janos. Surprised and happy to see each other. He was in a daze. He said a very elegant rich lady wanted to adopt and take him to her farm. He was so excited and scared. "She is a millionaire," he said, "what does she want with me?" I wished him all the best and that was the last we saw of each other as we went our separate destinies.

The camp was rapidly being emptied of people. Large groups and masses had left. We could not fit into any of those groups. So we went seek help from the churches. There was a Greek Catholic priest, a family man, who offered to sponsor us and place me in the crippled children's hospital in New Jersey, due to my medical background. He also sponsored fifteen other families and found housing for all of us in the New Jersey low-income housing projects. The projects were in an Italian neighborhood. All sorts of people from all classes were housed in the new twelve story high-rise apartment houses. This is where our American Story began.

These projects were recently built, about three years ago. So everything was nice and clean. We were given a two-bedroom apartment. The Salvation Army furnished our apartment with the necessary items. It had black and white linoleum-checkered floor. The heating system was radiators with the exposed pipes outside the walls. These were the fifties in America. For five dollars a week I could feed both of us. We did not have to pay rent for three months and then it was thirty-five dollars per month. In the neighborhoods was a private Catholic school called Saint Lucy's. We nicknamed our sponsor father G. He convinced the mother superior of the elementary school to let Anci continue in the third grade, rather than putting her back into the first grade like a lot of other kids. So Anci was accept-



ed as a charity case and they gave her a free uniform, and brown and white saddle shoes and a cap. She was a good student and learned English by the end of the third grade. By fourth grade she made the honor roll and stayed there until graduation. She told me how the first day of school went. As I had to be at my hospital job earlier than her school she had to go alone that day. We practice walked to school as we lived about two blocks away in the neighborhood. On that special morning, she got there too early not wanting to be late. No body was in the schoolyard yet. So she stared at the black wrought iron gates with her head stuck between the bars. Huge black figurine flew toward her. It was the nun, dressed in the Franciscan habit, coming to open the gate for her. She had never seen a woman dressed like that before. During the communist regime all of the nuns were sent to labor camps so this sight of a nun for her must have been so strange. The Nun kindly led her in. They were expecting her because she was enrolled previously with father G. the children from the boarding school were having oatmeal for breakfast. The Nuns sat her down to have breakfast with the other kids. Ancikam had a little taste of it and wondered which was worse, the sweet beans of the yucky mush. The first days of this new school system must have been so hard on her. Everything was strange. The kids were all happy and playing and running around in the school yet she stood alone in the corner looking out and bewildered and lost. The Sister told father G that her heart was breaking for the little girl because she didn't belong here. There was sadness about her. The escape and the uprooting took its quiet toll on her and she was not socializing with the other kids. Her shyness lasted for most of her school career. She was obedient and a good student but clearly withdrawn and aloof. She was a transplant from another culture and throughout her life she felt like a misfit, not a Hungarian and not an American, wondering where she fit in. I stayed the Hungarian and she stayed the misfit.

I got a hold of a Canadian Hungarian newspaper in which I read that after the revolution was overthrown among the cap-



tured and executed freedom fighters sixteen were still alive and waiting to be hung on their eighteenth birthday. According to the law they cannot hang underage kids. These boys were





fifteen to seventeen years of age. We were outraged. We started the petition and protested. We wrote letters to the Hungarian government, to the counselate, to the American authorities including the US President Eisenhower. Father G helped us with the letter writing. The reply was harsh from the Hungarians “Those who excite and try to overthrow the existing regime are traitors and guilty. This was why the sentence of hanging is just the government has to set an example for the future traitors”—don’t you know Revolution is the opposite of tyranny, always was and always will be.

Dear God, what is sin and who is the sinner?

What worldly power has the right to break a young life in two?

And to hang him on his eighteenth birthday

To rob him of the life that you gave him

We were mourning this. All of us, our little group of immigrants in the project. The Hungarian priest said a requiem mass for the heroes. I can’t forget to this day the memory of the sixteen young boys with the other thousand of freedom fighters, Hungarians who sacrificed their lives for a better future.

In Hungary the Revolt had its results. The newly formed government of Janos Kadar was more lenient. This way they were able to start corresponding with the west although the letters were censored and opened. I was finally able to write a letter to my father. We were much relieved and happy to know that we were all well.

I would like to write something about my father. He was of Italian descent. His parents were from northern Italy, Trento, and Verona. My grandfather was Emmanuel Francheschini, my grand mother Countess Gyappay Koppány Veronika Franceschini. My grandfather was a famous sculptor and ornamentalist. In the late 1800 they came to northern Hungary where they build the Hommonai Castle. His crew of sculptors created all of the marble sculptures, the stairways, the balconies, the statues, which held up the balconies, and all the ornamental fountains. This is where my father was born.



Tragedy befell on the family. There were four children, Maria, Janos, Carlo, my father, and Gisela, my namesake. Veronika, my grandmother died after Gizella was born in childbirth complications. My grandfather died right before Gizella was born. We don't know how. The four-orphaned children were separated onto different orphanages and foster homes. Carlo got into the Szeged orphanage. From here he was sent to foster homes. These orphans had horrible lives. Her drunken foster father beat little Gizella to death. My father's life was very sad. Like a slave he was kept in labor until exhaustion. At one of these foster homes he met another little orphan girl named Veronika ; they grew up together and helped each other as good friends and siblings. After my mothers death it was Veronika who came to take care of my father until her death. She was the Veronika before our leaving Hungary who gave us our last dinner and put Anci to her bed.

My father escaped from this sad life. He was not even sixteen years old when he joined the army and enlisted in the First World War. There he ran into another Franceschini—his brother Janos, whom he had no knowledge of since childhood and presumed he was dead. Till the end of their days they loved each other and remained close.

He was twenty years old when he returned from the war. He only had four years of elementary school. He enrolled into night school. He studied diligently and graduated high school and went to junior college. In the meantime he learned a trade of interior design, furniture making and design. He later became an instructor in the trade school. He married my mother Erzsebet Abraham who died at an early age of thirty-nine with kidney failure complications. My father was the first Yogi in Budapest whom I am aware of. At the age of eighty-two he was still practicing head stands in the middle of the garden. At the age of eighty-three one night he peacefully died in his sleep.

I started writing to Mami. After five encrypted letters I was able to put the pieces together and found out what had hap-



pened to Anci's father Frigyes. He also escaped, He crossed the border. He was wounded and he became sick. He was behaving in a peculiar way and ended up in a police station from where they took him to a hospital. When he healed and became normal again; he felt very weak and lonely and displaced. He went to the Hungarian consulate and asked for clemency; he admitted that he was wrong and wanted to go home. This way the sentence was very lenient when he went back. He was sentenced to work as a prison doctor for two years while he was imprisoned.

I will mention what happened to him later.

Three years after his release, he moved In with a woman and they had two sons. The sons escaped later to Canada. As he was aging his mental imbalance lessened. He became much calmer. His hobby was painting. He painted beautiful impressionist primitive Hungarian scenes, which decorate many of our homes. He used to send them to Anci in rolled up packages and she would sell them in America to close friends who liked his style.

Their marriage was stormy but both of them are dead now. He died of a stroke at age seventy-two.

At the end of 1957, I got the sad news from my father that my grandfather on my mothers side, my ideal, my teacher, died at the age of eighty-seven. He was a very smart wise and well-read intelligent man. I remember his baritone voice; I was about six years when he told me in fairy tale form Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. When later my daughter read it to me from her highs school lesson, I realized that I had heard it and knew it. But from where? I never heard this in school. I never read this book. Then my grandfather came alive to me and I remembered how he used to tell me stories. I knew many of the world's grates literary writings at age eight like a sad or happy tale. Later when I read the books myself I realized that I knew all these works; I realized how smart my grandfather was and enriched my literary knowledge.



In the late 1800's Hungary had its first REAL Gymnasium. This was the first higher education, college level school of its kinds. He attended this school and this was a big honor. After graduation he went to England to study the new discovery of the Steam Engine and electricity. Fulton's steam engine discovery was in his time and this was the new frontier He became a master at this and when he returned to Hungary, all the nobility were fighting for his service so that their castle would be the first to be "lit up" and modernized with new machineries.

I would like to go back to the past on the wings of my memories when I was six years old to bring alive the past and before that which I know about through my grandmothers stories.

I want you to know how noble and how beautiful it was. It was a long time ago.

1933 - Budapest Keleti Railroad Station

When the ladies wore the large panoramic brimmed hats with their tight wavy hairs pressed close to their head; when the tight skirts came three inches below the knee; when on the street corners there were maimed invalid, limbless men from the first world war and victims of the great depression begging for food or money; when people were walking with brown paper bags with a piece of bread looking upon those walking with attaché case enviously because they already had jobs; that is when I was six years old. In this crowded railroad station, I was the happiest one because I was one of the people traveling and not hungry and begging. My mother was taking my to my grandparents house for the summer. She would return for me in September. I was finally going home to my Eden garden where the happiness lives. Where the large leaved horseradish plants are waiting for me to make big hats. Where from my grandmother's apron I will make the most fashionable long skirt.



The train has left Biatorbagy. Soon it will arrive to Alsogalla, then circle around Kalvaria Mountain where we can almost see the sign for Felsogalla. There are no worries because the only autobus is always standing by for the train's arrival. First it takes its passengers to Kalvarias small village and then goes down the only main street where all the houses in this mining town are on the right side of the street perpendicular to the main street. The houses look like five family town houses with fenced in front flower gardens and water hand pumps in between every five houses. My grandmother can carry two buckets of water while I am proudly managing a small blue zomanc mug. I think this summer I will be able to carry two. Finally the bus stops at our corner. My grandmother's house is in the second block but I already see her at the corner of the main street waiting for us. I know she is near sighted and waiting for me with her squinting eyes. I know she can't see me but is waiting for me to yell "here I am"" and then she will run toward me with open arms hearing her say "God brought you back and how you have grown"

This greeting will only be topped by my grandfathers who will say "Look into my eyes; let he see how smart you have gotten" then squeezing his hand to show him how strong I have become. The sun was setting at the end of the road behind the coal cable cars and I could see the miners coming home from the mines. They looked black in the distance and even blacker up close carrying coal lanterns in one hand and pick-axes over their strong shoulders. My grandfather is amongst the first ones to arrive because he is not coming from below but above; he is the engineer, director of the control tower of the cable cars. A few jumps and I will be up in his arms; he will carry me back to their house and tell my grandmother "here is your hungry little dove-feed her well" She will feed me my favorite foods, hus leves with marrow on toasted bread, lots of cooked carrots so that I can sing well because after dinner everybody sits outside in the front garden and sings to the accordion and citer. Our neighbor Paul Cina only has a small mouth harmonica but he plays it the best. The village comes to life. Lots of people come to visit and they all give



me praises. Then my grandmother will take me to see the other neighbors to show me off. When the visiting is over finally I came back to my grandfather.

Then the real magic of the summer night will begin. My grandfather has the small stool at his foot. I am going to sit on it and lean on his leg listening to his fantastic stories. I have to watch that my blinking is not too long because if I fall asleep then my grandmother will tuck me in and the last thing I remember her saying is “sleep my little dove, Tata will continue the story telling tomorrow”.

One evening he told me the story of one of our ancestors Ibrahim Pasha. In the sixteen century a part of Hungary was under the Turkish rule for one hundred fifty years. The Sultan ruled from Constantinople. The Pasha ruled from Buda. The Basha ruled in the counties. They robbed the people, took away the livestock, animals, the harvest, the pretty girls, and sent everything up to Buda to the Pasha and from there they selected out the best and sent it to the Sultan. If the Pasha found out that the Basha was getting too rich and kept the girls for himself then it was customary to send him a golden rope—to hang himself—and give his wealth back to the Budai Pashha. There was a Turkish Basha, who loved the Hungarian girl more than his wealth. He took the girl and disappeared and blended into Hungarian life where he had to live meagerly and unnoticeable. This is how Allah’s noble Ibrahim Basha became Abraham whose descendent took the Christian religion. This ibrahimBasha told this story to his great-grandson who was my grandfather’s great-grandfather. This is how my grandfather told it to me so that I may tell it to my grand children.

On another story telling magical night, my grandfather took me back to a time when he was the chief engineer at a nobleman’s palace in northern Hungary. Together we reminisced and relived the hunt stories of the estate and how he found an orphaned baby deer and gave it to my mother, his daughter,



as her pet. A sigh of wishful longing came from me. My grandfather understood the sigh; the next day he brought me a baby squirrel. This was my first pet ever and it was all mine. My grandfather even built a cage for Muki but he was going in and out freely. At night he would go back in his cage because he knew that my grandfather would bring him the American peanuts, which were both of our favorites.

My grandmother and I cooked together. During these times she reminisced and brought to life her youth. This is how I learned that during the end of 1890 my grandfather was in charge of blasting and widening the Iron Gate. The Iron Gate was the name of an area in greater southeastern Hungary where the Danube narrowed between the cliffs. This was hazardous to many ships due to the rapids and many smashed against the cliffs and rocks. He was the captain of the steam ships and he was also the man in charge of the blasting. This was a long procedure of blasting and clearing the rocks. This allowed the ships to go safely to the Black Sea.

My grandmother was Maria Kovacs whose parents died while she was an infant; her grandmother raised her. The little Maria, the last heir inherited the family's fortune. The largest house in Szeged belonged to her. Its still there today with its restored cupola as a historical building. Her jealous relatives tried to murder her; one somebody put her head under running cold water; she survived this but to her dying day she suffered from migraine headaches for three or four days locked in a dark room until the pain left her. She has also had a sever pneumonia but the little girl survived. She was sixteen years old when her grandmother died.

They met each other at the Szeged national Theatre. She was about sixteen at the time. "You should have seen him then, he was so tall and handsome". "He came to visit me one day and brought large boxes with him" he lit a fire under the cauldron to heat the water. "While you are bathing, and dressing he



said, I will look around. But I want you to wear everything, which is in the boxes.”

“Did you know my dear little soul that a bridal outfit was in the boxes? Tata pinned up my hair and put the veil on my head. He burned all my other clothes on the fire; then with an elegant horse and carriage we went to the priest to be married. This was 1901. We left the house behind so that the relatives could fight over it. We will return someday for the big city house. “

During this time my grandfather was working in southern Hungary on the Iron Gate project. They had two children, Janos and my mother Erzsebet born in 1907. Around this time they went up to northern Hungary, Zemplen County to the Zatureczky and later the Sennyei Nobility estate to mechanize the estate with steam powered engines. This was a large industrial leap in farming production in Hungary and my grandfather was the forerunner of his day. The children grew up on the large estate. They were tutored alongside of the counts children and the tutor said that she was smartest among all the children. She could ride a horse better than any of the others; she was smarter and was interested in everything. When I would suffer from my three-day migraines, she ran the household just as good as me. She was familiar with Tata’s machines and learned a lot from him.

Your mother was not just smart but she was also very brave. After the First World War the communist regime was formed under Bela Kun as the party leader. Under their ideology they persecuted the upper class gentry. You know my little dove, when the count left the estate with his whole family (probably they bribed the communists) they surrounded the estate, grabbed Tata as he is the only official there, to give them the money and treasures of the count. The count took all his wealth and treasures and jewels with him. Tata told them –“Here is the castle with all the furniture” but they demanded the jewels. Even the servants left or took sides with the communists (reds) they imprisoned poor Tata. They beat him and



tortured him. For a long time we did not know if he was dead or alive or where he was. I thought that I was going to perish from the grief. That is when your mother Bozsi said that she is going to look for him. I had no strength to hold her back because my migraine had started. When I came to after a few days, I walked into the other room and there was a skeleton in Tata's bed. That was your grandfather. My Bozsikem brought him home to me despite that the reds were still circling the estate. Tata escaped from them. He walked as far as he could; but in the meanwhile he got the "spanyol" (in Europe there was a sever flu epidemic and thousands were dying—it devastated one third of France). He had a fever and he hid himself in his hunting den, which was a space in an old tree trunk from where they used to hide and watch out for the hunt. Only the two of them know about this secret place because Bozsi would go hunting with Tata. She found her father there. She fed him and gave him a strong palinka and it took her three days to drag and carry him home through the forest. It's a miracle of God that your grandfather survived this. We kept hiding him in an outside food storage or coal bin or among the bales of hay. When he was finally strong enough we left the estate and we left everything behind us. We hid ourselves in hay carrying railroad car. As the train was starting to move Bozsi's little dog Csopi who we had not seen since the reds came, appeared out of nowhere from the bushes and ran after the moving train. We yelled and yelled for him to hurry and Bozsi almost jumped off for him but he disappeared as the train sped up. This nearly broke her heart. This sweet little dog was the only one that stayed loyal to us in the whole estate.

I think my grandparents went to Szeged from here to the big house where he opened an electrical business. It was the first of its kind in this new era of electricity. This timing was in the great depression era. He mortgaged his house for the business and lost everything when the money was devalued. He lost his house and his business. Around 1925 they must have gone to Felsogalla where he became the engineer for the



Tatbanya Koszenbanya Reszvenytarsasag. (A coalmine).

My mother was an intelligent girl; she did not find a suitable mate in Felsogalla. My father was working there as an interior furniture decorator: he met my mother and they married in 1926; they moved up to Budapest where they got a small one-room apartment. From the rich high society estate life she dropped into a poor city environment due to the depression era. I was born in 1927 and remember her love, and her depressive moods. Only the Felsogalla times meant true happiness for me in my childhood.

This is how the summer was spent until my mother came to get me for my first September school year. It pained me to think of the goodbyes. I pressed my head against the window-pane of the rail car—crying—I will be back—I will be back. My mother would stroke my head but say nothing to me. She knew I couldn't answer because I was busy swallowing my own tears and trying to comfort myself in my self-pity. No matter what happens to me in the city, next summer I will come back. My grandfather's big house and garden is always waiting for me. I will always come back. Then I did not know that there would be only two more summers left. My grandfather would be retired by the mine and he would have to leave his house for the younger engineer. It's better that I did not know this then; that I would be banished from my Eden in two years to which I could never return.

But I did go back in the spring of 1946 after the Second World War. The one-hour train ride took me all day. Why did I go? I don't know. But I wanted to go. Who was I going to visit? Nobody—but I was really looking for someone. The train station at Felsogalla was small, cold and sooty. I walked along the main street; it was muddy; the houses were run down, dilapidated in places. Part of the mining town was in ruins. I came to our street. My grandfather's house was locked. The garden had disappeared. The big garden looked very small. I went to visit the Cina neighbors. The kitchen looked small and



instead of the smell of langos bitter smoke came out. A young woman came forward; from whom I found that her in-laws had died and her husband Pali is in the mine. I walked toward the mountain. The old street disappeared; the control towers big glass house had disappeared. The cable cars were not working. Night befell me. I was hungry and cold. I went back to the train station, waiting for hours for the next train. It was a very sad long time and I wanted to escape from here- not back to Budapest but somewhere where I would find what I had lost.

Don't bring the past to life because it will die in the present forever. That which was beautiful and had passed let it lie in your memories behind colorful veils

I wanted to escape into the nice memories of my childhood to lessen the dark memories of the war years. In 1943 the Germans were already in Hungary to draw us into a war against Russia. On August 13th 1943, on my birthday, which went, unnoticed, my mother left us for a younger man and went to Szeged. In the spring of 1944 my father was recruited to active duty. He didn't go into the army; rather he decided to hide; he knew we would loose the war and he wanted to stay alive for me, as we were the only two left in our family. However at the time I did not know this. So this way I was alone during these hard times and felt completely lost and abandoned. I had no idea that my father was hiding. He kept it a secret even from me in case they came looking for him. Fate is so merciful for having erased my memory of that time. I still don't remember how I survived. My girlfriend Edit remembered me in 1944; we were schoolmates until October. She said I was a sleepwalker, not talking, in the prior years I was a good student and now I was failing. I have one memory of Christmas Eve in 1944. I crawled into bed with my winter coat and boots; I was very cold and very hungry; I had only one wish—that somebody; anybody would come to me with just a kind word.

We lived in a three family garden courtyard little house. All of



the men had been drafted into the army. Three women, two little children and I went to the basement under this courtyard to hide because the siege of Budapest began. Soon the Germans came to live with us in the bunker due to the constant bombing above. They were from the German high command and their communication systems, radios, were constantly blaring. There was no peace even in the bunker. In a few more weeks the Russians advanced to the other side of our street, Szent Laszlo Utca, street the communists later renamed it Mautner Sandor Utca Street). A German soldier with his intestines hanging out was dying and begging for his mother and water at our front gate. The Germans ate all our little food and took away the rest. We gathered up what we could of our belongings and fled to the next courtyard housing basement through the back of the yard and cutting through the fence. Here at this basement there were already filled to capacity with about fifty people. They did not want to let us in; but finally after begging we could stay there. The airless, stench of the bunker basement struck our nose. We got a small cot for all of us to sleep on and I slept on the damp floor; covering myself with my coat for a pillow as the basement bugs and wet earth surrounded me. This was our life for the next three weeks while the Russians were advancing and winning their siege of Budapest. Then the bombarding and hand-to-hand combat stopped. We came out of hiding, frightened, to collect snow to melt for drinking water, as our thirst was greater than our hunger by this time. It was a very cold winter and snow covered everything. I got word from my father on March first. He was alive and wanted to meet me. A mutual girl friend that was his confidant came for me to lead me to his hiding place. We camouflaged ourselves as old women in dark gray flannel blankets and we walked through the ruins of Pest among the frozen rigmortus dead soldiers and civilians in the streets. We were going to another bunker in the down town area where my father was waiting for me with open arms. My happiness was indescribable. He could not tell me of his plans to escape the draft because he knew that I could not lie if they came looking for him. He did it to



protect me and to stay alive for me. On April 4 1945 the last of the German troops left our country and the Russian occupation began. In May 8 1945 the Second World War officially ended. I was on my own from August 1943 to March 1 of 1945. I had my own personal war and finally it was going to be over.

Life in the City started to get back to “normal.”

We walked to school through the ruins of the bombed city—but not all of us lived to graduate from the commercial academy in June of 1945. In September of 1945 I enrolled into the Pazmany Peter Medical University. I was then 18 years old. The Russians prior to Budapest occupied Szeged, where my mother moved to with her new boyfriend. . She could not send word to us about her situation. The first letter came from her when the war ended in May of 1945.

She had planned to leave our family, which she announced, to her parents. My grandmother just sobbed, but my Tata disowned her for her decision. She ended up in an abandoned situation as well because her boyfriend left her. She became ill; lost a lot of weight and there was no one to take care of her. She was so sorry and remorseful and would have done anything if her father and her husband would forgive her. But this was not the case. She wrote to me of her condition. I kept the letter a secret from my father; I wanted to spare him. I traveled to Szeged to see her. She had kidney problems. The surgeon operated on the good kidney while the other shut down. I saw her right after her surgery. She was already under morphine. I had to go back to Budapest to take some medical exams. Her condition worsened day by day; a neighbor of hers telegraphed that Bozsike is on her deathbed now. I arrived in the afternoon and my mother had died alone in the hospital that morning. I saw her in the morgue after an autopsy. I cannot write any more about this as the pain of this is too overwhelming even to this day. I buried my mother. The neighbor and I were the only ones there. I sent a telegram to my father, as I left in a hurry, to inform him that I just buried my



mother. I wanted him to remember her as the beautiful young woman he loved.

My father was always the softie. Why didn't you tell me and ask my help; How did you do it all by yourself. "I told him all the details and he just hugged me and loved me and praised me.

Now let's return to our lives in the new world.

Father G was able to get a job for me at the Crippled Children Hospital in Newark New Jersey in the Physical Therapy department. I did not speak English at the time but I understood everything because the diagnosis and the medical terms were in Latin and I had medical school experience. My anatomy was fresh in my mind from the medical school so I was doing the muscle testing for the many poliomyelitis children, which was an epidemic in the 1950's. The Salk vaccine was used in 1956 for treatment of polio. Then in the next year the Thalidomide babies came to the clinic for treatment that were born without extremities. We were treating these cases at the hospital. I enrolled at the Seton Hall University in Educational child psychology so that I could understand the American children and get close r to them. They were differently reared than the strict European mentality. I did not yet have my Physical Therapy diploma, but I was the acting head of the department. From here I got a job in a cerebral palsy day center. I loved working with these children and they really loved me also.

The years flew by. Little Anci grew up. We live together side by side like two girlfriends. After high school graduation Anci enrolled in the University of Bridgeport Connecticut majoring in biology. I got married to my second husband Sandor Boytar MD. Meanwhile I had an exacerbation of an illness that was diagnosed in 1959 as multiple sclerosis. Soon I recovered and in 1969 we moved to Wilmington Delaware. Anci transferred to the University of Delaware; here she graduate with BS in biol-



ogy. After that she went to the University of Pennsylvania to get her masters in physical therapy, where she met her husband Jeffrey Matthews. They lived in California where my first granddaughter Jennifer was born. They came back to Delaware after one year. I had opened up a private physical therapy practice in Newark Delaware at the Medical Center and I gave this to Anci and Jeffrey as a wedding present. Later my two other grandchildren were born Adam and Candice.

My husband and I lived in many different places because large corporations employed him as a toxicologist in industrial medicine and internist specialist. We lived in New York, Maryland, Virginia and Delaware. We liked to travel a lot. At home I spent my time with my favorite hobby stone carving. For years and even today I teach stone carving sculpting. My husband died in 2001. Thus I am twice widowed. We had a long marriage. I know that he loved me but he had an unusually cold personality and incapable of showing affection. We were bound together by a sense of duty and mutual respect. That's how we lived out our married life. My consolation for happiness came from my three loving grandchildren. When we lived in Niagara Falls Anci sent them up to spend the entire summer with me. To watch them grow from year to year to feel their love was the greatest gift of all. Unfortunately these times also flew by rapidly. They grew up, and moved away. They have their own lives. But in my heart I savor the moments as I cuddle them and caress them in my lap telling them stories.

Meanwhile I became old. Looking back on my youth I felt lucky. The Eternal Love graced me with a clear conscience, a logical mind, and a strong will to see the right path before me, to make good decisions and the will to follow through. Otherwise without the presence of the Eternal Love protecting me, how could I have survived alone, as a young girl, the last year of the War (WW2) the bombings, the German invasion, the Russian occupation, the starvation, the freezing



weather, hiding in bunkers away from the soldiers, without any help without any family; but did it and I survived it all.

Ancikam and I are together again like two girlfriends. The difference is that now she is holding my hand.

Epilogue by Anci

I opened the door to the past and found out that it was no longer to be feared. I didn't have to keep it sealed away. I had escaped from my childhood imagery that had haunted me. The images were worse than the truth.

After finishing the last sentence of the translation and later that evening I was relieved. As a child my perspective on the escape was a small pea pod in the land of giants. I had a struggle going on inside me for the past forty-eight years. I never wanted to revisit this event. It frightened me to think about it. I had a recurring nightmare as a child, which didn't leave me until my teenage years. It was a dark brown sepia ancient war scene of barbarians killing each other. I am sure it had to do with my perceptions of the told events. I kept so many things sealed away. Now to go back and relive the events as an adult and to "escape" all over again! This time I will escape from the childhood fears and distorted memories. One such memory lingers on to this day. During the Solbat Hall initial days I remember the people talking in our small room. It was the night after our first real bath. I had been put to bed early and on this particular night didn't fall asleep. A man's distressed whispering voiced was talking. I overheard something that scared me. It was about the tortures done to the Hungarians in the prisons by the AVH. Not many survived the prisons. Their tortured bodies were put into large meat grinders and flushed into the Danube. The graphic description of hot scalding showers followed by the freezing ice till death and other forms of tortures were described that night. To this day every time I go into my shower, I am restimulated and

reminded of that night when I heard this as an impressionable eight year old.

I faced my very personal struggle with the telling of this story. I am grateful that Anyu finally took the time to tell it in great detail. I admire her to this day for being so brave. This was a twenty nine year old young woman with an eight-year-old child who braved the new world with its later hardships. She was so determined and so strong and willful. Fear is not one of her adjectives. In fact when we were translating, I would ask about the emotion-taking place at a particular event and she never said it was fear. I was the one who inherited the fear genes; even to the point of being afraid to do the translation. I was afraid to face the events because I had locked away so many memories. They were haunting me. The ghosts got bigger than life and I struggled with them. If this story never got told—it would have gone one forever. Now I really understand when they say “And the truth shall set you free”

I kept in touch with my father through letter writing and his paintings throughout the years. My house is filled with his beautiful impressionistic watercolors and my mother's stones. I met my father in Hungary in 1989 and had a discussion about the misfit feeling that I was struggling with all my life. He invited me to reframe the Misfit and to say that I have one foot in each culture and am whole in both of them. That riddle was solved and I let it go. I made peace with that distress also. I was close to my father through his art but I did not know the person. The physical and the emotional distance between us were too great. My mother was both my parents to me. I remained loyal to her.

These days my mother, my children, and my Yoga practice give me great solace and happiness.

Later that night I went to sleep in my bedroom; and this time—for the first time in my life—I left the door and the two sliding glass windows wide open. Until now I had been sleeping all “boarded up” in my room. I listened to the sounds of the evening insects, the wind in the trees and Anyu breathing in the next room. I took a deep sigh or yawning relief from myself and I was free.

Anyu and I live together in our condo in Florida and I am holding her hand now. But in truth, we are just holding each other’s hands in

ETERNAL LOVE



