

Tiny

My grandfather was a tiny man, but a big person.

He was born in a small town in east-Europe. As a tiny boy and as the only Jewish boy in his class he suffered a lot. The bullies used to beat him daily, take from him whatever they fancied and make jokes about him. He couldn't fight them. Not physically. But he found other ways. Once, when they took his sandwiches forcefully, the whole gang got suddenly very sick. They messed-up their clothes and were miserable for several more days. Another time they took his belt. They lost their pants in front of the whole class an hour later. Nobody could see anything to connect him to these mishaps. He was the only one who knew.

He managed to finish high-school with excellent grades, but didn't think about continuing his studies. Even finishing high-school was an achievement for a Jewish boy at those times.

He married shortly after finishing high school. His wife was just a bit younger than him and was very beautiful. His head only reached about her chest level. He told me there was a lot of love between them. A few months later she was already expecting.

She had some shopping to do that day. The bullies blocked her way. They said that street was not for Jews. Then one of them said "I wonder how a Jewish girl looks from the inside." He took out a big knife and cut her from crotch to chest. They continued joking about her until her body stopped twitching. Nobody dared do anything while the bullies were there, but somebody called the local doctor while others called my grandfather. The doctor could do nothing. He could only sign the death certificate for the woman and her unborn child and

give some tranquilizers to her grieving and shocked husband. The police didn't even pretend to investigate.

Grandfather didn't stay in town after the mourning period. He couldn't. His parents managed to send him to the university after all, though it cost them a lot. He started studying medicine. He used to come a few times a year and bring a red rose to his wife's tomb. He never said any prayer. "A God who allows such things to happen is not worth praying to" he said.

About a year later there was a visitor in town - a young student, quite short, who seemed somewhat familiar. He was betting he could outdrink any of the bullies. The leader took the challenge. The student took out of his bag several bottles of vodka and arranged them in front of them two. Four bottles later he declared he lost the bet and paid his loss by giving all the remaining bottles to the winner. They found the winner's body in the morning, floating on the river. In his bag he still had some bottles of vodka. The police said that two of the bottles contained only plain water, but nobody believed them. It was more probable that the policemen drank those two bottles and refilled them with water.

None of the other bullies lived more than another year. They all had some weird accidents. One of them was hit by a bull in his farm. His ripped lung could only resist for a few hours before he died. Nobody noticed the figure that urged the bull to charge. Another was hit by his own car, crushed between it and another parking car. He spent an agonizing week in bed before what he had for a soul left his body. Nobody could see there was anybody at the wheel. The third had the doubtful honor of being the first man to be electrocuted in town, just a few weeks after it had been connected to the electricity.

After his wife's second yahrzeit, my grandfather didn't go back to the university. There were bullies there as well. He left

for Palestine instead, hoping to create a new, free Jewish society. He played a small role in the creation of the State of Israel, teaching young people to protect themselves. Some of the family followed him. Others stayed in that town and were killed by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

Grandfather helped in creating the new society he wanted. He was even decorated for his part, but secretly. He also found a new love and new hope in this corner of the world. He used to show me his old album with the few photos of his first wife and to tell me “Never let such things happen again.”

Once a year he used to light a candle and put a red rose near it. Grandma used to pray near that candle, but he never prayed, except once – when grandma died.