

B

Tina Feldman

Through the entire fabric of my life my mother's strength has been woven. She is my rock and my savior. She taught me to appreciate the simple pleasures of life, like her wonderful Hungarian cooking, or the love of beautiful flowers. She has given me a feeling for high moral standards and ethics. She has been a mentor to many others as well. She is committed to her family, but she can also appreciate the worth of every human being. She has never forgotten to care for "Grandma Boehm" (her Aunt Minnie), who cared for her when she first came to this country. She has never refused to help my daughter Caryn or me when we need her.

But I also feel pain, the pain of knowing what my mother endured in her early years, and the thought of it haunts me to this day. And it is, frankly, hard for me to understand how God allowed the Holocaust to happen. I will never abandon my Judaism, but I have serious and unresolved questions.

I can remember when I was a child. World War II was over long before I was born, but I remember still fearing for my mother's welfare. In dreams I experienced frightening things happening to me. When I was eight or nine, I had a persistent nightmare. Earlier I used to love to go to the house of my parents' friend Roselee Borow. She had a huge fireplace, and at a

very early age I used to sit mesmerized by the flickering flames it emitted. In my dream, however, a Frankensteinlike bogeyman called Hitler used to emerge from the flames and slit my eyelids with a razor. Until very recently, I couldn't tell my mother about it, although the dream is vivid in my mind to this day. When I finally told my mother of it, she wept. It was very difficult for me to tell her this, but perhaps it will help me to communicate more openly with my mother about these things that have haunted me since my early childhood.

I recall our trip to Hungary in 1972. I was only fifteen, but I could sense in my mother that she had once felt safe and familiar, yet in the end had found herself unprotected and vulnerable, and that she was reliving the terror and fright during our journey there. My one positive experience there was meeting and spending time with my uncle, my only other Hungarian relative who had survived. Even Israel failed to bring me tranquility. I don't want to be in places where life is in jeopardy.

I am not able to deal with the issues confronting the Second Generation. It is still too painful for me even to imagine what my mother went through. I avoid films and books about the Holocaust.

All this having been said, my mother is an anchor to me. She is, to risk repeating an overused phrase, my role model. Despite all she has suffered herself, she brings help and hope to others. She works steadily to better the world around her. She has provided and promoted for me the two most important values in my life: stability and security. I hope I can be for my daughter, Caryn, what my mother has been for me.