

driver asked where she would like to go, the woman started to cry. Between sobs she said that she was Jewish and from the outskirts of the city. She was afraid to go home because her parents had been taken away with the rest of the Jews that day. She had nobody to go to. The taxi driver took pity on her and offered to take her to his home at 16 Nepszinhaz street for the night. He lived there with his wife and baby daughter.

The one night stretched into many months and the taxi driver and his family hid her despite the fact that the wife was also Jewish. They lived on the third floor of the back building. Across from them lived a man who belonged to the Arrow-Cross party and he was hostile and dangerous. Everybody in the house was afraid of him.

One day, he took the taxi driver's wife and another Jewish woman from the house to the nearby square and he shot both of them in the back of the head. The driver's wife wore a heavy winter coat with a thick fur collar standing upright. That collar saved her life because, by some miracle, the bullet stuck in the fur unable to penetrate its thickness.

"The taxi driver was my father and the baby girl was me," remarked Marta.

Unfortunately, Marta's father was captured and sent to a concentration camp where he died. The woman who was hiding at their place was sent to Auschwitz, but she survived. After the war, she went to Israel where she married and had a family.

On that summer night, Marta's wedding day, the woman's wish finally came true, to kiss and thank the child of the family who hid her and saved her life.

Marta finished her story. Tears gathered into my eyes as I remembered her parents, people I had known very well. Then hugging her I said in a low voice:

"Do you know my child, that it was your mother who kissed you on your wedding day through that strange woman?"

"I thought so too, aunt Ibi," she answered.

"But how did she know your new address?" I asked her.

"She went to the old house on Nepszinhaz Street to inquire about us from the superintendent. But the super was new and couldn't give any information, so she sent her up to Susie's parents who still live on the second floor. Because Susie is my best friend, her parents knew my address."

We talked a while longer, bringing back memories about their childhood. Then we said our farewell. I was sad, knowing that this was probably our last meeting and I would not see them again.

I have nothing left in Hungary—only painful memories. So I do not intend to go back ever again.

*Ibolya Grossman escaped from Hungary in 1956. She learned to speak English and took a job at a bank. After 17 years, she retired and began writing. Recently, she received an award from the Book Committee of the Toronto Jewish Congress for her book, An Ordinary Woman in Extraordinary Times (Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1990). Ibolya now lives in North York.*

<sup>1</sup>The Arrow-Cross bandits were the Hungarian Nazis.

## NATHALIE STEPHENS

### femmage hommilière

tu connais mieux que quiconque  
les quatre murs de ta maison  
et la terre sous tes pieds  
le vent a hurlé autour de toi  
quand tu as poussé hors de ton corps  
ce monde nouveau

tu balaies la poussière sur le seuil  
de ta porte  
déposée par les camions passants  
et cueilles dans ton jardin  
des fleurs mortes que la fumée  
noire a étouffées

tu tends l'autre joue avant le coup  
et ramasse devant le temps  
les débris qui vont tomber

les racines du vieil arbre poussent  
en toi t'attachant à cette terre aride  
et le serpent vieil ami t'accompagne  
tout au long de ta journée

s'il fallait t'écouter comme autrefois  
on le faisait...

à ne pas confondre avec un  
hommage familial

*Nathalie Stephens est étudiante en humanités  
et en études du «tiers monde». Ses poèmes sont  
publiés dans LittéRéalité et The Authors.*