

## Lasar Blekhshtein's Niece



This photograph was taken in 1920s and I do not know where. Here you can see my elder sister Elena.

My elder sister Elena was born in St. Petersburg in 1898 (you see, I do not know when my parents arrived in St. Petersburg, but I know that she was born here).

My elder sister Elena got married at the age of twenty. Her husband's name was Aron Sust, he was a Jew. But he never visited his relatives. Never. I do not know why. Possibly he was a man of bad temper.

I lived with Mom and my second sister Elizabeth. Elena lived with her husband in their own room (in another street), and she never came to see her mother, never brought her anything. As for me, I visited Elena many times.

Aron worked as a mechanic: he repaired sewing machines and typewriters. He made a lot of money, but I never saw him with a book in his hands.

My sister also was a housewife and nothing more, but a very loving mother and a good wife. She was a real cordon bleu. A good wife, a good mother... But there happened a misfortune: she smothered a baby in her sleep.

Elena was very tired, went to bed and the baby was sleeping beside her. She turned over on her side and pressed the child against the bed. Elena's husband loved their children very much, therefore that loss made things difficult for their family (Aron considered it to be an inexcusable sin).

They had got two more children, two girls: an elder one Vera (born in 1928) and a younger one Elizabeth (I do not remember the date of her birth).

During the war in 1942 I evacuated from the besieged Leningrad my Mom, my sister Elizabeth, and my nieces (Elena's children) stayed here in Leningrad.

Elena's husband was lost during the first months of the war. From rumors we got to know that on the Volkhov River their barge turned over and all passengers were lost. So he did not fight.

Later (in 1942) Elena was killed during bombardment. She worked at the Kirov factory (wanted to get a worker's ration card). She was buried in the Daddy's grave. No Jewish ceremonies.

I was present at the ceremony and I remember that we all were silent. I am distressed with it now.