

Hannah Borovika



My grandmother Hannah Borovika was like the women in Anton Chekov's plays: beautiful, with a strong spirit, romantic and self-sacrificing. This is a photo of her taken in Ludza in the 1910s.

My grandmother was born in Lithuania in 1873 and died in Riga in 1958. She was probably the main carrier of tradition in our family. She was a very interesting woman. She was really raised in the Jewish tradition. She was permeated with it through and through. I remember her explaining that eating pork was forbidden because it is written in the Torah, and because pigs eat their piglets. My grandmother was a unique personality. It is maybe thanks to her that we survived the war. We wrote down my grandmother's life. What I wrote down back then helped me a lot later in my life. She told us about the family in which she grew up, about her life in a small village.

When my grandmother was ill, my mother used to go to the cemetery to collect medicinal herbs. And when she recovered, she was given a new name. She had about seven names altogether; the ones I remember were Hannah, Anna and Maria. My grandmother was a tailor. She had her own tailor school. Not in the traditional sense, but a school where she was teaching. My grandmother invented her own curved ruler. She was able to teach anyone any kind of tailoring in two or three lessons.

I was lucky that she lived for so long. I learned much from her. The most important thing is sobriety. Sobriety with respect to origin. At the time she said to me, 'All right! You may marry a Russian. But don't forget, it may happen that one day, when you need help most, you will be reproached for being a Jew.' I wrote down the story of her life but unfortunately I don't have that

book anymore.

Despite her religious upbringing she was a progressive woman. She kept telling me, 'Why does the whole town have to know when I sleep with my husband and when I don't'. That was in Ludza. And then she stopped going to the mikveh. 'If you go there, it will be clear to everyone why you are going there', she explained. Well, she was such a granny!