

JADWIGA SKŁODOWSKA

Class 7

Łuków

My wartime experiences

The first 11 years of my life were one big happiness. My parents surrounded me and my siblings with nurturing care. I went to them with every one of my worries or contentments. I could not imagine my life without them. And yet that horrible and unexpected separation happened.

In December 1942, one week before Christmas, something awful happened. At around 11 p.m., I heard a shot and a horrific cry. I jumped out of bed and I suddenly felt cold. I looked around and saw the torn-out window. Mum's voice came out of the kitchen, it was saying: "Leon, Leon, run!" and at that moment I heard a shot. A person fell over and mum, wounded, was screaming, repeating the same word over and over again: Leon. That person was my dad. Mum ran through the dining room and burst into the bedroom. "Mum, what happened?" my older brother asked. She didn't answer, she just kept saying dad's name, clutching a blanket to her chest. "What happened?" my brother asked a second time. Mum forced a barely audible voice out of her chest: "the Germans killed your father." We all cried.

Suddenly there was another shot. My younger brother and I were very scared. Germans were moving around in the hallway, in the kitchen, outside. I went into the room, wanting to get dressed. I looked at the door to the hallway and I saw a horrible thing. I was petrified. A German was leaning against the door. Blood was squirting out of a wound in his neck. His eyes were half-open, but he was a corpse. I wanted to scream, but I couldn't force my voice to come out. I wanted to leave, but I couldn't take a single step. At last, when I heard a taxicab coming, I took a step and tripped over. Afterwards, I jumped up and ran breathlessly to bed. Meanwhile, the taxicab with gendarmes drove up and took the deceased, my mum and my brother. The gendarmes ordered them to get dressed and go with them.

Mum, being injured, couldn't dress very quickly. Besides, blood was flowing from her wound and she had to find something to bandage it with. Suddenly one of the Germans spat out

a curse and hit her so hard that she nearly fell down. They left without saying goodbye. I stayed with my younger brother. We spent the whole night like that. The Germans walked around, smiling scornfully. In the morning I escaped through the window with my brother and we went to our neighbors.

They buried dad while I was in the country. They let my brother go after a few days, but I never saw my mum again. It is only then that I felt my Mother and Father's absence. My sister went away somewhere, and my brother and I were thrown to the winds of fate. Hunger and destitution began gnawing away at us slowly. At that time I remembered my mum and tears filled my eyes. And today, even though it is a little better, a painful cry of despair still wrests from my heart and my eyes still turn red with tears. And although I was among people – with relatives or at the orphanage – I have never known or felt a heart like the heart of my Mother and Father.