

She was eight years old. She heard the war drums of the SS soldiers for many years later, as they were parading through the town then. She remembered the days when they were marching past their house, surrounding their house – stomping, crushing the frozen ground. She would close her eyes and ears and pretend they were horses.

Then they were not marching by. They were stationed around their house for days, weeks, endless weeks... They set up camp right under the old cross in the middle of the three birch trees next to their house, the cross that for ages had humbled people to bend their knees and cross themselves when walking by... From their kitchen window looking out onto their neighbor's higher ground the soldiers looked ten times bigger and scarier to her than they were. For years, in her nightmares, she heard the rhythm of them marching by. Nightmares were a normal thing for her; she thought everyone had them. She knew her mother did. When she dared to look out of their kitchen window once or twice, she saw the boots – and long after, the boots...big almighty boots. They seemed at least as scary as the uniform, the rifle hanging from the shoulders... That far up she didn't even dare to look. She just saw the boots. They represented everything she feared, so much power, that it was paralyzing... She remembered the sunlight reflecting off the buckles, piercing her eyes... She remembered shivering in bed at night listening to the sound of the boots crushing the snow with threatening determination, just a few feet from her window. She remembered trying to put faces on those boots that belonged to familiar people, guys she knew...in an attempt to lessen her fears of the impending certainty of their fate.

It was absolute law to stay clear of the windows and doors in the first place, and she should have listened. Of course her mother was trying to shield them and protect their home with her life. She was a child, and as frightened as she was, she just had to dare and look out once in a while – with a glimmer of hope that it was not as bad as it seemed or as they said. She was desperately

trying to be brave and courageously adult for her mother, who certainly needed her, since she was the only one home with her most of the time.

Diana realized later, after her sister reminded her, that the SS were not the first troops that marched past their house. It wasn't the first time Diana had heard these drums, and felt the rhythm of war. This is why the impressions were so deep.