

# Forget me not



**Year of birth: 1913**  
**Age 20**  
**Female**  
**Yiddish, 44 pp.**

I apologize for my bad style, spelling mistakes and, most of all, for not writing clearly. I wrote this under circumstances in which I was unable to pay attention to my work. I wanted to relate accurately my life's trial, which I experienced from the day of my birth to the present.

-from the author's cover letter accompanying, her autobiography

In my twenty-first year I look back on my life, which has been so eventful. I never would have imagined that a weak girl, as I used to be known, would be strong enough to live through so much. This has made me realize that life is stronger than everything else. When I add up my twenty years, I see that, despite my young age, I've experienced more than me other people have in the course of their entire lives. I've kept all my experiences a secret from everyone who knows me. I've never been open with anyone and rarely even with myself. Even though I've spent my entire life among other people, they know very little about my private life. Everyone thinks that they know me, but my past remains a secret. Until now I have never met anyone I could trust enough to confide in. Perhaps my life has conditioned me to be this way, to see people as egotists who can't empathize with anyone else. To this day I remain locked within myself, an enigma to others. Now, for the first time in my life, I will be entirely candid. I'm sure that those who read my life story will never know me personally, so I will describe my life honestly, from my birth up to the present. It will be rather difficult to read so much; it was much more difficult to experience it.

I was born in the final days of 1913. I still don't know the exact date; apparently my birth wasn't much of an event in our home. My family never spoke about it; they never celebrated my birthday. As my father said, I was born by accident. Such accidents were frequent in our home, resulting in the births of five sisters and one brother, who was the oldest.

I don't know how I was raised. From what I could find out I was always sick during my first four years. This was due to our living conditions. As my mother later told me, I didn't escape a single illness pox, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, every nuisance and misery. And as if that weren't enough, at the age of two and a half I had rickets. I didn't stand up until I was four years old; I just stayed in one place. I was always ninety-nine percent dead and only one percent alive. My father would have gladly let go of this part of me, too, so as to be rid of this affliction. I must have felt like an unwelcome guest in the house. Despite everything, though, my mother saw to it that I stayed alive and didn't, God forbid become a cripple. I survived and eventually grew up to become a responsible individual.

For as long as I can remember, our home was always noisy. My father and mother fought constantly. They were opposites who couldn't get along. Father was a harsh man. He had never experienced any tenderness from his parents or heard a kind word from anyone. He hadn't ever known his mother; she died giving birth to him. As a young child, he was sent away to study at a yeshiva in another city. There, at the age of ten, he was sent away to eat a meal at another person's house. As a result, he was incapable of living in a family.

# Forget me not

---

He never developed any fatherly feelings. In addition, he was very religious and miserly. He had always hated having to work. What little savings he had came from the money that my mother's relatives sent us from America. He lent this money at interest, and we lived on the income. He always taught us that saving is better than earning. Rather than work, he would always scrimp, even when it came to feeding us. We rarely had enough food to eat.

Mother was the exact opposite of Father. She was the youngest in her family and had always been surrounded with love and tenderness. Her family were fishermen, who at the time had a reputation for being well off. In fact, she got married by chance. Her father, who had loved her very much, died and her mother feared that her daughter might remain an old maid.

YIVO reference (original yiddish)

[https://digipres.cjh.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps\\_pid=IE6074599](https://digipres.cjh.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE6074599)

Awakening lives, pp 123 – 140 (First 750 words listed here)

There are many ways of being Jewish in Europe today,  
but your life is unique.

Kaleidoscope gives you the chance to share your story.

Are you Jewish and living in Europe?

Go to the website to learn more and take part!

---

**@kaleidoscopeliveseu | [www.kaleidoscope-lives.eu](http://www.kaleidoscope-lives.eu)**

Kaleidoscope is a project of the Rothschild Foundation Hanadiv Europe