

Retracing Shoes

March 1938 Warsaw, Poland

Jump one. Jump two. Jump three.

Hopscotch.

Her favourite game other than skipping down the sparkling fields into endless possibilities

Her bouncing curls

Her luminous grin that made the whole town beam with her.

Her tiny shoes tapping together with excitement to fulfil the dreams of her childhood.

Move. Run. Duck. Hide.

Hide and seek.

But not the way she played it.

Scurrying amongst the horrors of her bad dreams.

Her shattered shoes fighting for survival.

Bold leather boots tread upon her.

Her mother grasping on for dear life.

A stretched rifle pressed against her precious head.

Choo. Choo. Screech. Screech.

The trains.

Claustrophobia crept in, unable for a gasp of air.

All the victims stepping into the unknown darkness of what would become doom.

A song.

A sound.

The words *Eretz tzion, virushalayim* spiralled out of people's lips in protest.

A wall that could not be torn down.

March. Halt. March. Halt.

Roll call.

Shivering she stood as every bone in her body turned to dust.

Her ribs decaying as the beat of her weakening heart knocked in despair.

The lump in her throat grew bigger as every gunshot sounded.

When would it be her turn.

March 2022 London, England

Identity. Community. Heritage. Religion.

Survival.

She stands strong today at the age of ninety-two

She is surrounded by two beautiful children, four wonderful grandchildren and seven miraculous great grandchildren.

Hope is what she believes in.

Hope in that many children of a younger generation will retrace the steps that her diminutive shoes trailed in the year of the holocaust.

She believes in identity.

To discover the importance of Jewish identity which was built by the holocaust.

She lives on to tell her story.

As time passes the significance of others telling her story grows much stronger.

We will retrace those steps.

We will rediscover our identity.

By Yasmine Gurevitz