

## A CLASSIC QUEST

**Grandmother came from Dworitz: A Jewish love story.** Ethel Vineberg. Illus. Rita Briansky. Tundra Books, 1987 (reprint). 59pp., \$3.95. ISBN 0-88776-195-X.

*Grandmother came from Dworitz* is a classic. It is ostensibly the history of Vineberg's family, beginning with her great grandparents in the Jewish town of Lechovitch, the once Polish Pale of Settlement in Russia. It ends with Vineberg's parents in the New World on a farm just outside Saint John, New Brunswick, when Ethel was a child. As Vineberg writes in the unpretentious Foreword, "I write this because I am the link between the old country and the new," between stories that have been preserved and told her, and the story which is her own to write for her Canadian grandchildren, and for all children.

Vineberg wrote this book years ago. Tundra published it in 1969 in both English and French, and subtitled it "A Jewish Story." This edition, the second paperback edition, is subtitled, "A Jewish Love Story," but it is not a romantic love story about a single loving couple. It is the love of and for a people who must simply move on.

The dignity of the story is created by the illusion that it has been recited and lengthened as time goes by. The language is simple; the style is remarkably unadorned; and the effect is long lasting. The girls and women are the heroes of the book: Sarah Elca in Lechovitch (Part I); Sarah Elca and "little Nachama" in Dworitz (Part II); and Nachama ("They changed her name to Emma") and, perhaps, little Ethel, in America (Part III). Through different views of love – including arranged marriages – Vineberg's European ancestry shapes the story which has been passed on and recorded, even though, Vineberg remembers, Nachama left her home in Dworitz hoping to give her children "the glorious opportunity of being born on this side of the Atlantic." All the women are connected in Vineberg's voice, and the men (young boys do not really figure in the story) are uncustomarily beloved. And even though pogroms and poverty made life for the Jews in Russia intolerable, Vineberg's recollections preserve the joy of a quest which has brought a certain quiet wisdom to the book.

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