



The First and Final Nightmare of Sonia Reich: A Son's Memoir

Howard Reich

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On the evening of February 15, 2001, Sonia Reich, Howard Reich's mother, packed some clothes into two brown shopping bags, put on her gray winter coat, locked the door to her home in Skokie, Illinois and fled. Someone was trying to kill her, "to put a bullet in my head," Sonia told anyone who would listen. Polish and Jewish, Sonia Reich had survived the Holocaust by staying always on the run. She and Howard's father, Robert, also a Holocaust survivor, had fled to America, moved to Chicago, and raised their young son to tell no one that they were Jewish. It was only after moving to Skokie, a town filled with Holocaust survivors, that his family would live as Jews. Still, his parents told Howard almost nothing about their past. *The First and Final Nightmare...* is Reich's moving and bittersweet memoir of growing up in Skokie, discovering an odd and personal American freedom in jazz, and his riveting, revealing investigation into his family's past and the nature of his mother's illness, called late-onset Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This is a poignant story of a mother and a son, a haunted past, and the irony of what may happen when that often repeated admonition to "never forget" becomes a curse.

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