

A Little Part of Me

By: HoJin Seo

Weihai Zhongshi International School
Weihai, Shandong Province, China

Word Count: 995

The high sunlit clouds drifted across the blue sky, and the weather was oddly good for today's training session. To avoid the unusual feeling that accompanies training these days, I repeated to myself that everything was going to be all right at the end of the day.

I arrived at the camp only two days ago from a Berlin suburb, where my family live to try to distance themselves from increasingly overt cruelty and harshness of living a life as a Jew. Being a Jew once symbolized our ancient religion, or at the very least our unique heritage as people. Now, after new laws, are we even citizens here? Are we even 'people' anymore? We even treat ourselves differently now, believing in that our rights were taken away justly and lawfully by our people who once granted us the "privileges" to be who we are, to breathe in air as a free men, which we are not allowed to do anymore.

I am a High Jumper and I was told to join the national team and bring glory to the country in the Berlin Olympics. My grandmother always said that she did not feel good about it without telling why. She just stares an imploring warning and says, "Things were just different in my days."

To get rid of the ominous feelings, I began training an hour and 30 minutes earlier than everybody else. I started with 1.80. My mind was burdened, but my body was light. It was a breeze.

A while later, my two Aryan teammates approached me and commented on my mother's well being, calling me a sucker. Although their attitude did not surprise me, I still get offended. Only a few weeks before, they removed signs unwelcoming Jews from public places and I thought it signaled a change for the better; but it did not hinder their relentless efforts of trying to build an unconditional hatred toward us through the power of legislation and 'definitions.'

The Nazis came to power only three years ago and it marked the dawning of darkness. My parents were teachers and I went to the school they worked for. We were not wealthy, but

I did not have to starve when I was only 15, like my little sister now. Our happiness did not last long. The Nuremburg Laws passed, my parents were not allowed to teach, dad left, but I still had my jumping! I could always focus on that ... to, for mere moments, be above it all.

As I was training on the track, I was forced to leave since the “pure” Aryan kids had the “right” to use it first.

I waited until lunch to practice, since the field has not been available all morning. I tried to do 2 meters; I can still do it. 2 meters is not easy, but there is an unusual thrill today, as I have proved that I was better.

My short training session ended when the German fellas came back from lunch. The coach and I sat in silence, communicating non-verbally.

The coach reminded me of my father. He was not a Jew but he was taken out because he loved my mom, who was a Jew, which was presumably a sin. The coach cared about me, unlike the many others who just want to see me crawl, begging for my life they have taken away. The coach also gave me the hope that this animosity, this hatred that separates us and splits us into two, will come to an end.

I was training. The coach wanted me to focus on my run ups. I demanded of myself to run faster and jump higher. I jumped 2.02 and tied the national record, surprising the coach and the others.

On the way back home, distantly, a terrible instinct strikes me. I walked more slowly. And the truth was worse. I tromped into the house. The door opened, it allowed access, it was a way in, but could I go?

They ransacked my house and took away my family. I sat down in vanity, drenched in tears and in agony. Where could they be? Dachau? Auschwitz? Or could they have left to hide in a safer place?

I still don't know.

It has been more than three years since I won a medal at the Olympics. I made the country proud, they praised my Aryan genetics and repeated that only one of my grandparents was a Jew. The führer congratulated me in person. He told me to be proud, exalted my Aryan gene.

However, there is a little part of me – the Jewish part of me. It has taken too much away from me: my dad, my mom, my sister, and everything else that was believed to be a part of my life. For a while, I blamed it for who I was in favor of recognizing my ‘better’ Aryan self. After all, the law rewarded that, and who can fight the law? However, the little part of me insistently remained regardless of law. I looked at ‘my’ country and recognized that the little part of me was being methodically snuffed out as surely as my ‘other’ brothers and sisters were in Dachau and similar places. Had I, too, finally accepted, as the führer had, that only ONE of ‘me’ could exist – either the Aryan or the Jew? Does this little part of me have any hope for survival...and should it? I look at my Olympic medal and wonder, “what have I become?”

I was too small to contain the little Jewish part of me. A small part of me failed to believe in the superior race, and refused to be a part of it. Its ideal and dream were too big to be filled by a small pride of being an Aryan and an Olympic-winning medalist.

A little part of me wanted so much to be noticed and it has finally become my real self.

Works Cited:

"Antisemitic Legislation 1933–1939." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d. Web. 26 Jan. 2017.

"The Nazi Olympics." The Nazi Olympics (August 1936). N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Jan. 2017.