

Midnight

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“Bina! Bina!” I called as I chased after my friend. Her dark brown curly hair flapped in the wind as she quickly ran away from me, scared to get tagged.

“No, Elisa!” Bina giggled. As she turned her head slightly to see how far behind her I was, her perfect ringlets blew into her face and slightly covered the enormous grin that she was sporting. “You’ll never catch me, Elisa!” she exclaimed as she turned back around and continued to run.

I closed my eyes and laughed loudly, feeling incredibly happy as I played tag with my best friend on this summer night – just two innocent twelve-year-olds, happily content with no care in the world. Suddenly, I came to a stop; during the split second that I had closed my eyes, I ran into something still and fell right on to the ground. I opened them only to find Bina staring up at the night sky in awe.

“Bina, what are you doing? Why did you stop?” I asked, genuinely confused as to why our fun game had to come to an end.

“Elisa...” she whispered. “Elisa, look – the stars, they are so beautiful,” Bina said, her eyes never leaving the sky. I got up with a huff and whipped the dirt off my plaid skirt.

“Bina, can we please just-” but my breath was taken away before I could finish. Shining above me was an endless sea of twinkling lights. They were so beautiful, so wonderful, and so comforting. I felt a wave of ease wash over me as I stared up at the midnight sky.

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Bina turn to look at me, so I lowered my head to look at her. With tears in her eyes, she was holding onto the little golden Star of David charm that always hung around her neck. I pulled my matching necklace out from under my white

blouse and held onto it as well. We both smiled softly at each other before turning our attention back to the shining stars above.

From then on, anytime I looked up at the stars, I knew I was not alone.

14 July 1942

I walked down the dirt road that wove in between the floorless bunkers with my head down. I stared at my bare feet and counted each step that I took; the cold air had no effect on me anymore, given that all of the warmth was sucked out of my body months before.

I am thirteen now. Oh, how much can change in just a year! Our innocent game of tag matured into something so much more only a few days after that summer night; it was only twelve months ago, but could have very easily been years and years before. The day the Nazis infiltrated our small Jewish neighborhood in Malbork, Poland, was the day that the starry skies I looked up to for comfort became overcast with dark fluffs of grayish black.

Bina and I were separated only two days after being in the first camp. We stood in lines parallel to each other, our held hands dangling in between us as we slowly proceeded towards the two blonde men who had rifles slung over their shoulders. The lines came to a halt and the two men began to talk to us loudly in German. I wasn't really paying attention, rather I was looking around at my surroundings, taking in the new conditions that I would be living in for an undecided amount of time. I was pulled out of my thoughts, however, when I felt a tug on my right arm. I looked over to see Bina's mom pulling her away to a group that was heading over to a brick building with smoke coming out of the chimney. I wasn't that naive. I knew what was going to happen.

“No,” I stated. Bina just looked at me with big, scared eyes. “No!” I shouted this time. Bina’s mom tugged harder on her arm, finally freeing Bina’s hand from her death grip around mine. We both sobbed, arms still extended, as Bina walked closer towards the consuming darkness. That was the last day that we saw each other.

I continued my walk down the dusty path after my thoughts subsided. I only took a few more steps before a strong gust of wind halted me from continuing. I figured this powerful air was a symptom of an impending storm, so I glanced up at the regularly dark sky to check for any new conditions. Surprisingly, my eyes were not met with the blank, gray canvas that I was so used to, but instead the clouds had parted and above me was a sea of shining stars: an endless array that comforted me in the best way.

Through the loud hissing of the wind, I heard a faint whisper. “Elisa...” the whisper said. “Elisa.” Whether this soft voice was from God guiding me through the night, Bina giving me companionship, or even my own mind going crazy, it washed into me peacefully. I felt a yellow warmth enter my rather cold blue body. Tears spilled over the sides of my face from this new sense of serenity. I went to grip my Star of David pendant and though it was no longer there, I swear I felt it.

I closed my eyes tightly and sobbed quietly. When I opened my eyes again, one star twinkled brighter than all the rest. It told me, “You are safe. You are not alone. You are not alone.”

“Holocaust Timeline.” The History Place - Holocaust

Timeline, [www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html](http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/timeline.html).