

1, The Jews in the Basement

The Jews in the Basement

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It was a late afternoon. Only one slice of bread sat in the middle of the bed of newspapers for this family of four to share. The mother and three children were used to this type of dinner, as awful as that was. A slice of bread is all the Wagner's could risk giving to the family, out of fear someone might find their secret hidden in their basement. The night before, the family in the basement had a cold bowl of soup to share that was leftover from the Wagner's dinner, but tonight they were not as fortunate. She tore a small piece off the slice for little Aviva and herself, then passed it to Adam and Ayala to share the remaining bread.

The sun fell as the family's stomachs growled. Mother would soon have to blow the oil lamp out for the night. But in the meantime, Adam and Ayala sat in the corner of the room messing with a bug on the wall. While Mother brushed through baby Aviva's hair with her fingers, she sang a sweet lullaby:

"Sleep my little one. Sleep without worry or pain."

When Mother finished, she called the twins over to pray. The family held hands and bowed their heads as Mother began to speak.

"O Lord, grant that this night we may sleep in peace. And in the morning our awakening may also be in peace. May our daytime be cloaked in your peace. Protect us and inspire us to think and act only out of love. Keep far from us all evil; may our paths be free from all obstacles from when we go out until we return home."

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Mother blew the lamp out and the darkness swallowed them all. Ayala lay on the floor, barely covered with her battered blanket she had been gifted as a baby, wondering if she would spend the rest of her life on this cold basement floor. Ayala got her answer early the next morning when the house woke startled from the loud banging on the upstairs door. The banging didn't stop until the sound of Mrs. Wagner's calm voice began.

"Hello, sir."

The family in the basement huddled together, making sure to keep quiet to listen in on the conversation coming from up the stairs.

"The Führer has requested us to search all houses of any hidden Jews," said the man dressed in brown.

The man walked in without any sort of welcome from Mrs. Wagner and began to search the house. While Mrs. Wagner frantically made tea for the unexpected guest upstairs, the family in the basement rushed for a place to hide. There was not much of anything in the basement of the Wagner's house, but there was a secret room hidden in the closet. Mother rushed Adam and Ayala into the hidden room and placed Aviva in Ayala's arms.

"Mother!" Ayala frighteningly whispered.

Mother gave the children each a kiss on the head and quickly shut the entrance to the room. The kids waited in silence even as they heard footsteps on the creaky stairs that led to the basement. They waited in silence even as they heard the shrill voice of Mother's cries. The children knew the bad man was taking away their mother as they sat in the pitch dark, tears

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rolling down their cheeks. They sat in the hidden room until they dozed off and were later shaken awake by Mrs. Wagner. She held two sandwiches in her hands.

“I’m sorry to say this, but you kids can no longer stay here.”

The twins shook their heads understandingly.

She handed them the sandwiches and said, “I have a friend from the United States that has written a letter letting me know he is willing to take you all in.”

She had a sorry face on, she knew the dangers of traveling for Jews, just as the children did.

“He left two weeks ago, he will be here tomorrow morning.”

With that, she was gone, and the children started on their sandwiches, both saving some of their sandwiches for Aviva. They didn’t know what to think. Mrs. Wagner used to be their neighbor until they were no longer safe in their house. Mr. Wagner was kind enough to fake that he had burned down the Jews and their house. When in reality, the Jews were hidden away in his basement. The Wagners were who the kids had relied on for the past month, and they were afraid to now be someone else’s responsibility.

Early the next morning, Mrs. Wagner’s friend arrived, along with another man. Mrs. Wagner’s friend’s name was Peter, and the other man’s name was August. The kids had nothing but the clothes on their backs, so packing up wasn’t a problem. The men carried two large boxes big enough for the kids to fit in.

“We will need to carry you in these boxes so you all will be hidden,” Peter explained.

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The kids said their goodbyes to the Wagners and got into the boxes. The men carried them to the truck and placed them in the back. After about 10 minutes the truck stopped and the men hopped out. The children were picked up and carried for a bit until they were set on the ground, then picked up once again.

They sailed on the boat for a little more than two weeks and then finally arrived in the United States. Peter's house was not far from the dock, and when they reached it, they learned Peter was very wealthy. He had a stupendous house and all his cupboards were filled.

"This is your place," said Peter with a smile.

The room was spacious and had everything the kids needed. They were relieved to find many nooks to hide in if danger was ever to come. Thankfully, danger never did come. The kids grew to be strong adults with a story that would remind future generations of a series of awful events.

Works Cited

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