

Honorable Mention
Fiction Writing, Division I
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"The Shattered Life of Dalia Katz"
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My family's nightmare began on a night like any other. I ran down the hall to go to bed. I brushed my teeth and combed my hair like an ordinary girl, and went to bed in the same room as my two younger sisters. The gentle thumping of my heart ushered me to sleep.

In the late night, I heard loud stomping. Marching. Guns. It sounded like someone might have been in Abba's shop downstairs. I crept down the hall barely looking. I saw Ima and Abba still asleep. I started back toward my room when I heard a clack. A loud clack. The clacking of what sounded like one thousand men's heels clicking on the rocky sidewalk. I began to sweat and cry. I checked for a fever. No fever.

"I must be going crazy," I uttered. I think about my sisters: Irene and Adina. I tiptoed quickly to my room and picked up little Adina. I rushed her down the hall. I carefully set her down next to Ima. I tiptoed back to our room, back to Irene. Irene was just little too. She was only five years old. I was only seven years old, and Adina was only three years old. I gently picked up Irene and made my way back to Abba and Ima's room. I carefully set Irene down next to Abba, so she did not wake him up. I laid down next to my family. Everyone was together and safe. I slowly fluttered my eyes, and thought I heard the sound of glass breaking as I fell asleep.

It must have been a few minutes later when Abba jolted upright. He listened, carefully. Ima took a look through the house. I sat up and clutched my sleeping sisters. Abba stared into my eyes. "Dalia, take you sisters to the most enclosed room in the

house while Ima and I take a look around," he said. I nodded and ushered my sisters to a closet.

"What's going on?" Irene fumbled. Adina began to cry. I hushed them quickly, and held them tight. Ima and Abba joined us a few minutes later. We waited. For a sign. Or voice. Anything.

What felt like an hour later, we walked over to the door. Abba cautiously opened it as Ima shielded us. We crept downstairs to Abba's store. He was a tailor and we lived in a small apartment above his shop. We were shocked by what we saw. I followed him quickly, tripping on the mess of debris. Mama picked up Adina and held Irene's hand, trying to keep their little feet from being cut on glass. His shop was empty. Looted. His store was labeled, "JEW" in bright yellow paint. For the first time in my life, I saw my father break down and cry. Everything he had worked for his whole life was gone. It didn't feel real. We were jolted from our nightmare by the sound of our neighbors. There was the sound of gasping, crying, and screaming. Abba yelled at us to stay where we were and began to make his way outside. I didn't listen. I ran after him.

I saw glass scattered on the streets, and crying families. It looked like our shop wasn't the only one destroyed. Our whole neighborhood had been terrorized. Some of the shops were labeled with the Star of David and the word "JEW," just like ours. There was nothing left inside the shops except for broken furniture and glass. I saw my neighbors hugging each other and sobbing.

A woman was clutching her baby in one arm and had her other arm on the body of a man. Her scream pierced the air like a plane through the sky. I couldn't tell if the man was alive or not. A man was being beaten by what seemed like a civilian. People were being attacked, and were fighting. I saw a group of Jewish men being loaded into the back of a police car. I was confused. Why were they taking them? Why weren't they helping us? I couldn't stand seeing people being hurt for who they were. I scrambled after Abba, toward the synagogue.

The scent of smoke filled my nose. I caught up to my father and grabbed his hand. He squeezed my hand. Tears of fear stung his eyes, or maybe it was the smoke. As we made our way down the street we saw our synagogue. Or at least where it used to be. It had been completely burned to the ground. I began to cry. A place that used to be filled with hope was now demolished, gone from our community. I scrambled through the rubble, trying to find something, anything. I found burnt books and pages. A piece of paper was tucked under a rock. I slowly moved the rock and held the piece of paper in my hand. It was a prayer. *"Dear God, please protect your people from this hate. Grant us peace."* I held it to my heart and let its message sink in. Abba came and picked me up. "You shouldn't be here," he said and began walking back towards home. "None of us should be here," I responded quietly. I buried my face in his shoulder and let myself cry.

We made our way back to Ima, Irene and Adina. Ima held me close. We had each other. Nothing more, and nothing less. I knew at that moment that everything was going to change. We couldn't stay here. I looked into the faces of my little sisters. I had hoped they would never have to face hatred like this. Hard times were ahead, and this was just the beginning. I knew that there were people who hated us. I never thought their hatred would turn to violence. This day changed everything. Our lives would never be the same.

Work Cited Page:

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