

Honorable Mention
Fiction Writing, Division I
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Who's Next?
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“As you walk through the museum, so magnificently conceived by Moshe Safdie, you wonder: Where is the place of rage in all that? How come that the Jewish people, when we discovered the magnitude of cruelty and the consequences of hatred, how come that we were not possessed by a[n] extraordinary, implacable rage — rage of the killers; rage toward those who inspired the killers; rage towards the indifferent — those who knew and were silent?” -*Elie Wiesel, Elie Wiesel's Remarks at the Dedication of Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum, 2006.*

I remember it like it was yesterday. All of my family, all 4 of us, my Abba, Ima, my sister, and I all nestled up by the fire, the soft crackling settling the mood, all of us in our own private two-story house, safe and secure. Sleeping in a cozy bed with a blanket as my guardian for warmth and protection. My father, Abba, would come home, stressing about how his co-workers could talk horrifically right behind his back, criticizing him because he was Jewish.

“Did you hear that Gideon got a raise? Unbelievable. He’s Jewish, why would he get a raise?”

“Even if he got a raise, at least my religion’s people didn’t kill an innocent man who tried to save the world.”

For centuries before my generation came along, as early as 2000 years ago, the Christian Church would evangelize the false fact that the Jews were responsible for the killing of Jesus Christ. This

led to the “practice” of anti-Semitism around the globe, some of which people still use these
horrific beliefs to this day.

I remember it like it was today. Only three of us stood now, huddled around the only picture of Abba, the only warmth we have. Gunshots six doors down. Nine Nazis yelling slurs only a devilish mind could even muster off their tongue at Jews. The screams of people passing the ghetto as they get shoved into train cars like creatures. The cold, hard floor is my only bed, a torn piece of Abba’s clothing, my only protection from the brittle and frigid and oppressive cold.

Abbas said he would be back. He never said when. Or how.

He said, “It will just be for a moment; Abba’s got to go to the zasób for tonight’s dinner.” He murmured, “If they will even let me get in the store or not take my money.” He quietly shut the door and was on his way with his rusted bike he’s had since he was 6, battered and bruised from
all the hatred he’s faced.

Little did he know, six of those little *Swastika armbands* were waiting for him.

Locked and loaded.

Word spread that the first target for the Nazis was our homeland, Poland, seeking out any Jews, Gypsies, people with disabilities—just anyone who wasn't their "kind." *We were both Jews and Gypsies.* They struck first in Zgorzelec, where we found out that Abba's brother's family was led out on a death march because Jerome, my math-loving cousin, was Jewish, Gypsy, and autistic.

My heart shattered. All kinds of feelings and emotions of hatred, frustration, sadness, and grief swirling through my brain. Thoughts rushing to my head:

Why would they do this? How cruel could they possibly be?

Jerome was such an innocent boy and never did anything to harm anyone if he even could have harmed anyone. His passion for math was much greater than anyone could think of. Almost greater than Hitler's passion to execute anyone who stood in his way. All of this because of a harmless eight-year-old being autistic and having a certain set of beliefs.

THUD THUD THUD.

The pounding of the door matched the thumping of my heart.

"Nazis Durchsetzung fegen vorbei, open up!" came a booming voice from outside the door.

The Nazi sweep-up was here. They were here to take anyone, **ANYONE**, who wasn't Aryan. We checked off that box.

"We will use force if this door doesn't open on the count of drei."

My heart starts to accelerate.

“Eins,

Zwei,”

A silence halts the Naz-

“DREI!”

CRACK!

The door bursts open and SS members, hollering commands at each other, swarm around us with M49s, like wasps furious about their nest being disturbed. Curse words in German being shouted towards my family and me, some of which I had never heard, nor could understand with my eight-year-old mind, going from getting just a taste of the world to this Hell on Earth. As I get shoved into a train car, my mind goes into a state of panic.

What is going on? Why are they taking us?

Little did we know, we were going to Auschwitz.

As soon as we got there, we were met with other Jewish people, starved and terrified of what was next. Or who was next. Before we could think, we were stripped of our goods, clothingAs

we line up we hear,

“Nächste!” said one of the Nazi soldiers that ran the camp, as we were shoved closer towards the gas chamber, awaiting our fate.

“Nächste!” Closer.

“Nächste!” Closer.

“Nächste!”

It was our turn. As soon as we were about to be shoved in, I heard a faint shout from behind me.

“We aren’t Jewish or Gypsy. We adopted this boy!”

My very own Ima betrayed me. They kept my Ima and my sister to the side as they shoved me into the gas chamber. I slowly see the wheel being turned shut.

As I started to doze off, the last thing I ever heard was...

“Who’s Next?”

Works Cited

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