

Honorable Mention Division I – Writing

Cameron Marquis, Grade 7

The Night of Broken Glass

Copley-Fairlawn Middle School

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The Night of Broken Glass

I remember the night like it was yesterday - the sounds, the smells, the sights are forever embedded in my mind. Eighty-seven years later, I am still haunted by the memories of that dreadful night, November 9th, 1938. I was twelve years old, and it was just a normal day in the shop, my father and I were about to close up like normal. We had heard on the radio that two days ago, a boy named Herschel Grynszpan had shot a German diplomat named Ernst Vom Rath. They said that Rath died earlier today due to his injuries. However, I was curious and worried. I didn't find out why Mr. Grynszpan had murdered a man without reason until long after the war was over.

Kristallnacht, German for "The Night of Broken Glass," was a result of rage by the Nazis and non-Jewish civilians following Rath's death. Starting in the late hours of November 9 and continuing until later the next day, SS officers, Nazi mobs, and our regular neighbors and friends attacked us without reason. They damaged, vandalized, and destroyed hundreds of Jewish synagogues, homes, schools, businesses, hospitals, and cemeteries. My father and I were about to leave when we heard screaming and glass breaking down the street, so I stepped outside to check it out. As my dad stepped out from behind me, he started yelling at every other shop owner on the street before he told me to do the same. He said, "Run! Run, Run, it's the Nazis!" in hopes of warning our fellow community members of the impending danger.

There were dozens of men running down the streets throwing bricks into windows, torching homes and businesses, and beating people without reason. Slowly, over the violent days of November 9th and 10th, about 30,000 Jews were taken away to concentration camps. The innocent people were taken from their homes, their families, their jobs, and the world they knew. Between ninety to one hundred Jews were murdered, including someone very close to me. My father and I ran to the alleyway behind our shop to the car. As we were pulling out, we had made it to the edge of the city only to find dozens of Nazis marching into town. The officer in the front barked out commands like he owned us.

He said, "Wohin denkst du, dass du gehst?", German for "Where do you think you are going?" They then asked if we were Jewish, and pressure, my father said yes. The officer signaled to one of his soldiers to go over to my side of the car. My side. Suddenly before my father and I knew it, we had a Nazi rifle pointed directly in our faces. I don't remember what exactly happened right after that moment. The next thing I recall is waking up to the smell of smoke. As soon as I stepped out of the car, it exploded into a massive ball of fire. My dad was waiting for me outside of what was left of the car. I noticed he was crying, so I asked him what was wrong, and he just pointed down the street. In my horror, I looked down to see the entire street on fire as well as Nazis and non-Jewish civilians beating up Jews. I couldn't believe my eyes, I couldn't believe what was happening.

My father said we had to go right away or else we would end up like the rest of the street, destroyed. As we ran up the street, we fought our way through the fire, smoke, chaos and

the Nazis yelling anger-fueled orders in German. My dad and I felt frozen with fear, shocked by the destruction and violence unfolding before our eyes, and scared of what was to happen next.

The footsteps of the Nazis became louder as my dad and I ran as fast as we could. Within a matter of seconds, we were grabbed by our coats and forced to the ground with the rifles pointed in our faces again. “Bewegen Sie sich nicht, Sie kommen mit uns!” he said. “Don’t move, you’re coming with us!” the Nazi’s yelled in German. My dad was picked up and led down a dark alley with a Nazi leader and one of his soldiers, while two other Nazis kept me pinned to the cold ground. I heard more indistinct yelling in German, a loud bang, and then silence. I knew in my heart that something terrible happened. Before I could ask where my father was, the Nazis rushed me to a waiting jeep where they were taking large groups of Jewish people to concentration camps.

As I was almost loaded into the jeep, an unknown man approached me and asked “Are you Samuel Joseph’s son?” How did this mysterious man know my father’s name, and how did he know I was his son? I quietly nodded in hopes that Nazi soldiers wouldn’t notice. He quickly whisked me off in the darkness of the night down a side street without saying a word. I didn’t know this man, but he knew my father’s name, so I instantly trusted him. We came up to a waiting car and got in before Nazis could chase us down. I was sitting in the car full of other rescued Jewish children who were also saved by the mysterious man who we learned was a resistance member. He later told us that our parents were resistance members as well.

Although I never found out what happened to my father until the war ended. There were reports from two Nazi soldiers who confessed to murdering a man on November 9, 1938, in the back of an alleyway with a similar description of a man like my dad. Mr. Feldman, the resistance member who helped me, had taken us to a resistance camp where I stayed for most of the war and helped with minor partisan missions.

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