

Honorable Mention

Division I – Writing

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*Forests, Fears, and Freedom*

Word Count 935

## Forests, Fears, and Freedom

Dear Diary,

We have escaped. We run from the train and into the darkness of the woods, though there is a spark of light, lit from wishes and hope in the eyes of my mother and father. They have heard rumors talking of groups of Jews that hide in the forests who want to fight back against those terrible, terrible Nazis. Now only if we can find them in the vast void of these woods.

Oh how I wished I could be with these people instead of searching for them.

Father leads our small legion. Behind him is Mother, she carries James. James, a baby in this time of war. He is stuck, unable to do anything that can fight our ever-shrinking world. Abigail and I make up the last, her hand is in mine. I think she is scared. I cannot blame her. It is dark and cold. She does not understand that this aimless wandering may just determine our survival.

Dear Diary,

It has been a few days since I last wrote. We found them. They call themselves partisans, the people in the woods. They don't just want to fight back, but they do, destroying railroads that supply the Nazis. The partisans have put us into what they call a 'family camp'. But Father grows restless, he wants to help.

Dear Diary

Father has decided to join a little group of the partisans that carry out attacks. I am afraid for him. He is much more likely to be found now that he will be closer to the Germans, but by helping out with the attacks, maybe the war will end sooner than we ever fathomed it could.

Mother and Abigail and James and I all stay at the family camp. It is okay here, there is food. Much more than what the Nazis gave us in the ghettos. Also, everyone is so nice. We all help make the camp better by building or repairing the hut like things we live in, though they still are not ready for the winter.

Dear Diary,

It is so cold here, but I am sure that I can make it, I know others have it worse anyway. I look forward to the warm seasons that are to come eventually. All still seems bright to me, for Father is okay and we are able to get enough food from the villages nearby.

They don't give to us willingly though, a shame it is that way, we steal it instead. Only enough to last the camps some time, never more than we need.

Dear Diary,

We must move. In fear of being discovered by the village, or worse, the Nazis. We are to go deeper into the forest. It will be hard to build a new camp, especially since it is cold and the snow on the ground is beginning to pile up. We have already packed up everything and everyone is ready to walk. Mother says we will probably only walk for about a day, which isn't too bad I guess. She also says that instead of a whole bunch of little homes, we will build several larger ones, which will help with containing heat. The idea of warmth brings me joy.

Dear Diary,

I have not written in weeks. We did move, but everything is worse now. The buildings still have not been finished yet and people are getting sick.

Dear Diary,

Fear is an abundant thing in the camp these days. Mostly fear of the cold or running out of food. I am afraid of being caught, but everyone is.

I feel like a lost child in the camp for I have the childish fear of the dark. It seems to consume everything. The large trees may help to keep us hidden, but the shadows they cast ripple and dart around in the little light that reaches the camp. It seems to be everlasting, devouring all that nears it. At night, I swear I see the bloodshot eyes of those who search for us on the other side of the fires we make for our comfort.

I fear for us all.

Dear Diary,

The most wondrous thing happened today, crates of food and supplies dropped from the sky. The partisans say it is from the Soviets. It is just the time that we need it too. Our food was running out and it was getting so, so cold. The blankets were most helpful.

Dear Diary,

I have seen something amazing. You want to know what it is? Little green buds on the shrubs near camp. It is exciting, for maybe the flowering blossoms of warm weather are soon to come.

Dear Diary,

The sun rises earlier and sets later each day. That means one thing. Spring is coming, with her warmer temperatures and blooming flowers. Father has come back in these days of promise. He brought food for everyone, but he wants to return to the edges of the forest that we think of as a safe place.

He tells us stories of his adventures. Of how it feels to blow up the railways the Nazis use to transport supplies to their soldiers.

The Nazis. I hear that they are losing grasp on their vast empire. That the Americans overseas have come to save us all. Oh how I feel these days. With the weather warming up and the idea of being saved, all I can do is hope that they come and free us from this forest. Oh how I hope.

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