

Escape From Nazi Tyranny

“Over there!” a Nazi commanded. Threatening claps of fireworks zoomed past my family while showers of water hit our bodies. I felt like I was lightning trying to get away. The Nazi soldiers felt like they were looming over me while the gunshots only grew in sound. Suddenly I felt immense pain go through my body. I fell into the oozing muck, not being able to move.

“Shira!” my mother, Ann, hollered. I tried to get up but the pain felt so sharp that I thought someone stabbed me with a knife over and over. I felt something flowing out of my body. Thick red blood circled me on the floor as I lay there. Yelling comes in and out of my ears. My eyes see blurry images of things that I can’t recognize then black for a moment. Darkness consumed me as my body settled in the pain.

When coming to I heard voices becoming clearer by the second. “Is she dead? She’s losing a lot of blood!” a pair of high-pitched voices exclaimed with curiosity and concern.

“Leave the girl be, boys,” an older but more calm and gentler tone. I opened my eyes to see a whole crowd of people around me. I sat up quickly but the pain in my stomach was intense.

“Easy there, little lady,” a young but deep older voice said calmly. The man gently laid me back down on the floor. I looked around and saw many people, but it was not crowded enough for me to lay on the floor. “My name is Jerimiah. You were wounded badly.”

“My name is Shira. Where are we?” I curiously asked the young boy as he stood up. He looks at me with a mixture of pity and concern.

“The Nazis captured us and put us on this train. I overheard them call it Sonderzüge.” a woman said looking serious. “When you got here you were bleeding out of your stomach. They shot you pretty close to your vitals. I’m even surprised you’re still alive after losing all that much blood.”

“I was shot? Was that the immense pain I felt before passing out?” I thought in my head while looking down at my bloody bandaged stomach. I touch my stomach seeing the cloth from a dress from which the bandage was made. “Where’s my mother and baby sister?” I questioned worriedly.

“You’re the only one that they put on the train when you got here.”, the woman stated. That sent panic through my bones. The possibilities of endless theories flowed through my head like a string going through a needle. Before I could ask anything, the train came to a complete stop and the door swung open by a Nazi soldier. Abundant Jews were pushed inside of the train. There wasn’t enough space for everyone to fit in with me lying down, so Jerimiah gently carried me in his arms. The Nazis were yelling and screaming at the children to stop crying and roughly threw the pregnant woman on the train. It was like a sea of people swallowing every piece of ground whole. Not once did I see my mom or baby sister.

Hours passed as everyone was smushed together like playdough. I learned that they will send us to some type of camp. A concentration camp they called it. *Maybe Mom is there.* I thought deeply while touching my wounded stomach again. The pain wasn’t as intense as before but it still ached. I looked around and saw some familiar faces like Ms. Marie from the block away from mine and Mr. Frederick, who used to work in his store peacefully until the Nazis came and destroyed it. I knew how important that building was to him because his late father gave it to him. I thought about how our lives changed since Hitler’s idea of perfectionism invaded our country. We were kicked out of the places we call home and were forced to put up our flag on the stores we had. We weren’t even allowed to go into stores that didn’t have the Jewish star.

While thinking we came to a complete stop. This time was different though. Instead of bringing more Jews, all the Jews were forcefully pushed out of the train. They separated me, Jerimiah, and the other Jews from men to women and the old and the young. At the front of the line they made them sit in a chair and cut their hair off. One after another after another until it was finally my turn. I struggled against them but they punched me where I was wounded making me completely vulnerable. I watched as my hair tumbled to the ground like wool being sheared off of a sheep.. After they finished cutting my hair, they roughly pushed me in the showers to get cleaned up.

After being roughly cleaned, I was made to wear striped-looking pajamas. In the distance when I stepped out of the baths I saw Jerimiah being brutally beaten. I ran up to him pushing past the Nazi. I stand in between Jerimiah and the Nazis only to be mocked and beaten while protecting Jerimiah. A Nazi grabbed me by the nape of my neck and threw me to the ground. The last thing I remembered was being kicked in my eye that hurt like being stabbed.

When coming to, I was surrounded by a bunch of women and girls. They had worried faces mixed with pity and concern. They told me the Nazis knocked me out after being brutally beaten while protecting Jerimiah. I learned the names Annie, Linda, and Naomi. They are the ones who banded my wound again after bleeding a lot. We were cramped in a room with bunks. I was on the top worrying about my mom, baby sister, and Jerimiah. I doze off into sleep while worrying a lot.

The next morning the Nazis barged in screaming yelling at us to wake up and get outside. After doing so we were assigned jobs. I was made to play the violin while there were others like a six-year-old playing a trumpet or some of the elderly playing the drums, violins in a pseudo orchestra. They made us march around the whole camp while playing nonstop. If one of us even

tried to take a break, we would get beat. I walked past a few Jews working in the field or carrying logs around. What caught my interest was a certain place that always had smoke coming out of it. It was off-limits to us, but something caught my attention. I don't know what but it did.

The days would repeat themselves but more and more Jews were brought in and more and more were going missing by the day. One afternoon, I ran into Jerimiah who was working the field. While the Nazi soldiers weren't paying attention I slipped to him in the field. Jerimiah looked at me in a panic and was scared but I shook my head to keep silent.

"Are you crazy!" Jerimiah yelled in an angry whisper.

"Halfly," I whispered back more calmly. I put my violin in some of the grass and rubbed some dirt on me. I pretended like I was working like Jerimiah. "Aren't you curious about what's happening to all those missing Jews?"

"I am but what does putting yourself in danger have to do with it?" he questioned with a bit of anger and protectiveness in his voice.

"Something about it seems off and I want to investigate it," I asserted.

Jerimiah's face palmed his forehead. "I'm starting to believe you're stupid."

I shrugged at his statement and looked ahead at the marching band. "Tonight I'll go," I said with certainty.

"You're not going alone without me. We'll meet here after everyone falls asleep," Jerimiah said. I nod then grab my violin and quickly, without being noticed, slip back into the marching band.

Later that night after I made sure everyone was asleep, I slipped outside. A Nazi turned in my direction and I hid behind a few logs. He walked in my direction and my heart started pounding out of my chest. Suddenly the grass moved making the Nazi look in that direction. I

saw Jerimiah in the distance and him motioning for me to go to him. I took my opportunity and ran. When I reached the grass, Jerimiah hit my head for not being cautious and then motioned to the place where smoke kept coming out.

After slipping past some soldiers, we reached the place where the smoke was. We saw Jews going in and we slipped by the wall of the building. We watched as the Nazis pushed them in there and left. Suddenly gas came from the ceiling and came onto the people. They started coughing and one by one they fell onto the floor like grass being cut from the field. The realization hit me. "They're dead!" I thought while looking pale. I threw up while crying, grabbing my clothes. Jerimiah threw up too. We ran back to our cabins looking like we saw a ghost.

The next day I slipped next to Jerimiah again while marching. "They killed them. They're dead!" I said shakily. Jeremiah said nothing while looking at the floor. The fear in his eyes showed all of what he'd seen last night. I couldn't let anyone else be killed nor let my mother or baby sister come to this camp.

"We have to do something," I said my voice was shaky.

"Do what exactly? We're going to end up like them and nothing can change that!" Jeremiah yelled in a whisper. I looked at him with sympathy and determination. "We're escaping in a week. And we're taking everyone else with us," I asserted.

Jeremiah still said nothing but looked at me, "That's the only way others won't die." He hesitated for a moment looking at me like I was crazy then nodded giving me the affirmation I needed to start my plan.

After that day, I made a plan to escape from a small opening in the field. While all the Nazis were distracted by taunting us and treating us like we were lower than slaves, I would

sneak over there and dig my dirt under the fence. A week felt longer than normal and more and more Jews were dying. Jeremiah and I secretly told everyone my plan. Some people agreed and others gave up hope. They said they would rather stay there and die instead of dying while trying to escape. I tried to convince them but there was nothing I could do.

Finally, it was the day to escape. During the day we took the pain and suffering and believed it was our last. At night we all slipped past the guards into the field and one by one we were all going out of the hole. After everyone got over they were relieved. As if everything seemed too good to be true, suddenly gunshots rang out. The Nazis ran after us, making us run while we tried to escape. There were 150 of us and numbers died down as more and more people got shot. One by one I saw bodies fall while still running. A girl tripped over a root and fell. I saw the Nazis try to shoot her and protected her by covering her with my body. I was ready to take the pain but I felt nothing. Jeremiah was over me using his body as a shield while being shot through his stomach. He coughed up blood making my face turn pale.

“Run, Shira!” he exclaimed. I hesitated but he pushed me and the girl. I couldn’t leave him. I just couldn’t. I gave the girl to a man and went back for Jeremiah. I saw him being hit with the gun. I ran between them and fought against the Nazi. I carried Jeremiah on my back and started to run. Bullets flew past us. One shot me in my ankle. I screamed but still ran fearing for my life more than the bullet that went to my ankle.

After it felt like forever running we made it to an abandoned city. I fell to my knees bringing Jeremiah with me to the ground. The Nazis grew closer and closer, and a feeling of nostalgia came. I yield to our fate, giving up on the possibility of surviving. Suddenly, gunshots were heard killing the Nazis who were chasing us. I turned around to see some Jews who had guns in their hands. I felt dizzy but I stayed awake wondering what would happen to us. My

vision was going in and out but the last thing I remember was saying to a familiar person before losing consciousness.

When coming to, I saw my mother over me. I thought I was dreaming but she petted my hair. I started to cry and told her all I'd been through for months. She stayed quiet while letting me cry about it. After crying she told me about what happened after I was taken by the Nazis.

A bit later I sat outside looking at my ankle. The bullet chipped the top of my ankle when it went through and running didn't make it better. I saw Jeremiah in the distance then he walked to me and sat down next to me on the steps. He had stitches on his stomach. I was relieved that he didn't die. We didn't say anything, just sat there in silence. It was finally peaceful even though only fifty survived. As we watched the white birds fly freely in the sky, we felt the calmness in the air. We had escaped and would soon soar to freedom!

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