

Life in the Jar

Chapter 1 All is well, but not for long

The warm summer breeze was tickling my cheeks as me and my friends were playing in the meadow catching butterflies, laughing at each other's attempt of trying. Today my four best friends Zoya, Aniela, Leo, Astan and of course me Ruth were a lot more cheerful and excited than usual because tomorrow we were going to school! We would learn so many new things, meet new people and get a good few months off farmwork but also other exhausting chores. But little did we know, fun and childhood would be the last things we'd be thinking of the very next day.

It's now September 1st 1939 and I woke up 4 o'clock in the morning, so eager to go to school that the moment I woke up I got ready for school. I was just about to pack my books for school when I heard my mame* scream and then burst out crying. Next, I smelt smoke, "Did Tate burn the breakfast again?" I thought.

I ran to the kitchen to take a look, it was empty! "Mame*? Tate*? I shouted, reassuring myself that they're probably outside feeding the farm animals. Worried that I was wrong, I quickly ran to the barn.

Glossary

mame - mother in old Hebrew language
tate - father in old Hebrew language

My mame and tate were looking at the sky covered with black German war planes. They were heading to Wielun. We saw smoke and heard bombing where Wielun was.

"What does this mean mame?" I asked puzzled.

Mame wiped her teary eyes and replied in an uneasy voice, "Ruth, I think Poland is in danger."

"Come on, we'll be safer inside," tate said shaking.

We followed him inside, not knowing how to react at that moment.

I still wanted to go to school so I asked my parents now, "Mame, tate will I still go to school?"

"Schools are closed," Mame said.

I was so disappointed that I couldn't go to school, I was waiting all summer and now I have to wait even longer.

Chapter 2 the Ghetto

It's been a few days since the Germans bombed Wielun and nothing else catastrophic has happened yet. But I didn't know this was just the beginning.

When I woke up I heard fists hammering on the door.

"What's going on?" I thought.

Mame screamed, tate was shouting, I heard bullets being shot out of guns. I felt confused but mostly scared.

"Mame! Tate!" I screamed as loudly as I could over

the noise of the guns. After I got my breath back I ran straight downstairs, and when I did I couldn't believe my eyes, mame and tate were in the kitchen with five or six other men telling them to leave!

"Mame! Tate!" I cried running into mame's arms.

"We'll give you five minutes." said one of the Germans.

"We have five minutes come on." tate said, his voice trembling a bit.

We started walking, the Germans following us with their guns.

"Mame, what's going on?" I asked with a lot of emotion in my voice.

"No time to explain, get your most special items and meet me back here." mame expressed quietly.

This was so wierd, mame always had time to explain things to me.

I quickly grabed my creamy white teddy bear, she was wearing her crimson dress that mame made her and holding a rich, red rose. I also took my dark blue pen along with my emerald green diary with it's golden patterning. And met back with mame and tate in the corridor. When I got downstairs I took a family photo from the shelf that I golded inside my school jumper pocket. When mame come she was holding a bascket, it contained two cans of differnet beans, three cobs of corn, a big loaf of bread, jars of meat and seperate jars of jam. Tate brought documents

a warm, thick blanket and our Tanakh.
"Put on your thickest boots, quickly." whispered mame.
We all put on our thick, winter boots that had wool sewed into them so they were extra warm.

When we got outside, we found out that we weren't the only ones being forced out of our homes. The air was full of anger and fear. I saw our neighbour Avigail crying in her mame's arms, but who would blame her.

Even I'm close to crying and I'm eleven and Avigail is only three. Our little town has always been quiet and peaceful, but after this morning our town is only bad emotions and chaos.

I suddenly gasped with horror as I saw people being loaded into trucks and being driven away. Some families even got separated.

"Mame!" I cried, "What about the animals?"

"We have to leave them Ruth." mame said in an upset voice.

I burst into tears, my mame holding me close.

"Ok, now into the truck with you." said another one of the Germans.

Tate stood in front of me and mame, "No."

"What?" a third German said looking both puzzled and angry.

"No, for all my life I'm guarding my family and we're not

Glossary

Tanakh - Hebrew Bible

going in there." Tate said loyally.
The Germans looked at each other and then all nodded at the oldest German... and they shot Tate!
"No!" Mame cried, tears falling down her face.
I on the other hand was too scared and astonished to speak tears slowly falling down my face. Tate fell on the ground with a thud, blood pouring out of his chest.

Mame picked up the things that Tate was holding and the Germans pushed us into the truck.

As the truck started moving Stella our sheepdog was running after the truck barking to us to come back. After some time Stella was out of sight, and so was our home. We got taken further and further and the trucks stopped.
"Mame, why are we here?" I asked confused.
Mame didn't answer.

There were at least twenty other trucks stopping at the same place. In one of the trucks was Zoie and her Mame and Tate, but I didn't look for long because it made me think of my Tate getting shot.

The Germans pushed everyone out of the trucks and put an iron fence with sharp spikes around a small part of the section of our town.

We later found out this small section of our town that the Germans put us in was called the Ghetto.

Chapter 3 life in the Ghetto

Three families got put into one house, four if one of the parents died. Me and mame got put in a three-storey house with a balcony on the third storey. Zoya's family and two other families that we've never met before got put into the same house.

"Mame, who has done this to us and why?" I asked as we entered the house.

"A doly Hitler dear, he told the Nazi* to do it." mame sighed.

When we got inside a mouldy and dusty smell filled the house which made me feel very uncomfortable. Everyone was unpacking.

"Zoya!" I shouted, running over to her, "Are you ok?"

"Yes." Zoya said in her soft, reassuring voice, "But are you? I've realised you're a little pale." she said, taking out her white toy bunny in her sky blue dress and made it touch my cheek as if she wanted to make her bunny say "don't worry". I put on a little smile, but then my frown returned.

Zoya looked at my mame and gasped, "No tate?"

I shook my head, "No, he got shot by the Nazi*."

"Oh you poor thing!" Zoya exclaimed hugging me tightly.

Glossary

Nazi - a member of the National Socialist German Worker's Party

My mame told me that all the children will sleep on the third storey and that if I needed her she'd be either here or on the second storey.

When we got to the third storey there were two bedrooms. Me and Zoya got the bedroom with the balcony that had one small bed with grey covers and pillows which had oak bed frames with plain brown walls. The other two children, we later found out were called Rebecca and Eva got the other bedroom without a balcony but it had a window with a view of a garden. It also had stripped wallpaper along with a bed that had stained brown.

At supper our families got along, we ate Rebecca's mame's special meat and potato soup as we shared happy and sad stories and the story of how we got here.

Before me and Zoya went to bed we read our diaries to each other, sang a couple of songs and said wishes aloud to each other that we wished would happen tomorrow.

When I woke up the next morning the not humble smell of mould told me that I wasn't home. I checked the old, dusty clock, it's rusty hands showed me that it was 3 o'clock in the morning. When I opened the dusty doors to the balcony that were covered with mould I saw a bird fly onto a bear tree and sing a sad song. But then someone's shouting scared him off; "Halt!"

Halt!" One of the Nazi men was shouting, chasing a man that had nearly escaped the Ghetto.

Both men were exhausted, sweat all over their faces. I could tell that the Nazi man was going to shoot the other man when Zoya dragged off the balcony and behind our small bed.

What on earth did you think you were doing?" Zoya exclaimed quietly.

I didn't reply.

"Well your ok and that's all that matters." Zoya exhaled.

Suddenly, we heard Mame call, "Girls breakfast."

But her voice had a strange sort of quiver to it like she'd been crying. We all ran downstairs. Mame had some sort of weird band on her arm; it had a blue David Star on it. All the other adults were wearing it too, there were more on the table too.

"We all have to wear them dear, they're called Star of David." Mame explained.

I put it on, it was a bit too tight for my liking but I wasn't about to complain.

We ate eggs for breakfast but these were burnt, they tasted overcooked they even had burnt sides. I miss home, I long for the day when I'll be back home, in my own bed, with much better food and for this strange situation to end.

It's been a couple of months now that we've been staying in the Ghetto and things couldn't get worse, almost everyone has head lice and the only bread that's affordable these days was black bread, but it was horrible it tasted of sand dust! To make it even worse, the food was rationed.

People die on the streets with hunger these days! Everyone I saw had pain and sorrow in their eyes. We lost hope, and I reassured myself that nothing could get worse... but I was wrong.

Chapter 4 The Great Escape

It was the next day in the Ghetto, 5 o'clock in the morning everyone expecting a normal day when suddenly a woman called Irena Sendlerowicz* knocked on the door. Mame welcomed her inside and spoke to her alone in the kitchen. They spoke for a while, but then mame started crying.

I got worried, but I knew I wasn't allowed to enter. "Ok, so see you tomorrow then." mame said with a quiver from crying.

Before Irena Sendlerowicz* left, she touched my hair and said, "Your hair is very pretty, I'll be seeing tomorrow Ruth."³³

Glossary

Irena Sendlerowicz - Irena Sendler

Today mame gave me a lot more love and attention than she normally did, she sat next to me when we ate, she let me read my diary to her, she told me how brave I was for going through all this but the most special moments were when she tucked me into bed. She sang me lullabies and read me stories! But, before I fell asleep she told me that because of my unique blonde hair and green eyes I wouldn't be that highly suspected that I'm Jewish and that tomorrow Irena Sendlerowa would rehome me into a church and that she could be my only hope.

I burst into tears and hugged my mame as tightly as I could and told her that she will always be in my heart and that I would never forget her. With mame holding me close, I cried myself to sleep.

The next day I had to gather my things before Irena Sendlerowa* arrived. Me and mame had an emotional breakfast, sharing memories and telling stories.

When Irena Sendlerowa* arrived I hugged my mame tightly for a while, if I could I would have never let her go, but I knew I had to so I gave mame one last squeeze before facing to Irena Sendlerowa, "It's ok Ruth, you're going to be ok." said Irena Sendlerowa patting me on the head.

Glossary

Irena Sendler - Polish social worker, humanitarian and nurse who during World War II saved 2,500 Jewish children from death camps.

And I went with Irena Sendlerowa as I left the gates of the Ghetto forever. Suddenly, Irena Sendlerowa took off a lid from the sewer opening and told me to get in with her. I got in slowly, hugging my teddy for comfort. Down there were lots of children big and small, short or tall.

We walked through the icky, smelly sewer for a long time. I guess it had even been an hour before Irena Sendlerowa told us it was the right opening.

When we finally got out of the sewer we were face to face with a big church.

Irena Sendlerowa asked if the nuns could take in one of us. They took in me and another girl. They also took in a boy.

Before Irena Sendlerowa left, the nuns asked if they could have one more child. At first, it was hard to recognize the girl's thin face covered with tears, but after she spoke her voice was unmistakable, "Aniela!" I cried hugging her tightly.

"Shhhh!" Aniela said cautiously, "Ruth, don't call me Aniela anymore Irena Sendlerowa gave me a fake name Basia."

"Irena Sendlerowa gave me a fake name too Maria, although the nuns call me Marysia." I explained.

It has been a few weeks that we've been staying with the nuns, they were caring but I miss my name.

One day when me, Basia, Walter and Halina were playing on the tall hills near the church when suddenly we saw smoke coming from the Ghetto that Irena Sendlerova took me from so we went to ask the nuns what was going on.

"It's the liquidation of the Ghetto Marysia, most of the people are bombed or shot but some get taken to concentration camps," said the younger nun.

The older nun gently whacked the younger nun on the shoulder, "Don't say that her parents are in that Ghetto!"

As soon as I heard those words I ran through the church doors, but before I could go any further the older nun grabbed my waist. I was fighting to get free but after some time I gave up.

"Marysia, the last thing your mame wants you to do is for you to go there. Stay here," said the younger nun leading me back inside, as the Ghetto was burning to the ground.

Chapter 5 Reunited

It's now 1945 February and me, Basia, Halina and Walter were catching snowflakes at the church hills.

"Hey! Guys! Let's have a snowball fight!" Walter suggested. I might be sixteen but I couldn't resist a snowball fight. We could have played hours on end, but we had other things to do.

We were half way down the hill when Halina called us

back up, "Guys look! There are two women coming this way!"
Both of them were very thin but one was completely bald, only
her dress showed that she was a woman.

The bald woman came closer to me and slowly mumbled, "Ruth, is
that really you?"

It took me a couple of minutes to recognize her but at the
end I did, "Mame?"

We both ran to each other, bursting into tears and hugging tightly.
Me and mame were together once more.

Epilogue

"So mame, you really stayed in Auschwitz - Birkenau the
Concentration camp?" I asked.

"Yes, I went through undescrivable hell. Anyway, thanks to
Irena Sendlerowa who buried the list of Jewish children
in the Jar we were able to reunite." mame said...

(and so as 2,500 Jewish children)

Brooklands Middle School

Nelly Baran

6JSE