

Two Young Girls

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Two Young Girls

"For the dead and the living, we must bear witness."
Elie Wiesel

A holocaust: "a great or complete devastation or destruction, especially by fire"

Fire made of hate, fear, control, murder

I survived the fire, but I am not unscathed

Bearing marks of my burning torture, I live

To tell my story

To remember my family

To mourn my friends

But never to hate.

My teacher says we have a special guest today

The woman will tell us what happened to her in the Holocaust

A hush spreads among my sixth grade class

Young, we know little

The history and details escape us

We only know that the Holocaust was bad

Very bad

When I speak to adults, they ask me how

How I bore it then

And how I bear to talk about it now

"Two Young Girls"

I wish I had an answer I could articulate

I don't

All I know is a feeling, a weight

To spread my story in remembrance

Remembrance of this horrible event must seem grim

But it is necessary

"It's important to be very quiet and respectful"

A sense of urgency fills the room

"Hearing this woman talk is a once in a lifetime opportunity"

What will soon occur is far bigger than us

I feel the importance

Rather than intellectually know it

But just the feeling is enough

When I see the children, they always stare

Not knowing what to expect

Many not knowing much at all

Maybe it's peculiar that when I tell them

My heart hurts for them, too

Because I have felt the indescribable hurt

Of experiencing this for the first time

And theirs does not compare to mine or my fellow victims'

Yet I see our very suffering reflected in their eyes

"Two Young Girls"

The woman sits down and begins her witness

She tells us from the beginning

Taken from her home

Separated from her father and brothers

Being shaved, branded

Her mother's death and her own starvation

Retching when she was freed and her stomach could not take food

A search for somewhere to stay

With her mother dead and father far away

And her survival

I was in sixth grade when I heard

So was she, when she endured.

I choke up when I talk about it, even after all these years

My tears mirror those of my audience, or theirs mirror mine

Emotions fill the room

Children shuffle their feet, but no one talks

Not yet

When she finishes, I try not to cry

Though I know that this is a valid reason for tears to be shed

The eighth grade girls walk up to the woman

Talk to her and hug her tightly

I am not yet that brave, but I walk up anyway

"Two Young Girls"

Looking into her eyes I am speechless

Understanding unsaid words, she reaches out

Her bravery envelops me with one hug

I was only a young girl

A young girl's memories can last a lifetime

I am only a young girl

This woman's memories will stay with me for a lifetime