

Three Times But Then No More- Sam Michael

3rd Place

Warm Springs Middle School, Morgan County

Grades 7-8

I felt my feet pounding against the slimy ground of the ghettos. Darkness was my only company as it gently rained. Death and disease chased me down the streets as I gingerly carried two pieces of bread I “liberated” from a local looted and destroyed store. The 1941 breeze pushed against my face and annoyingly placed a strand of hair across my eyes. The alarm for curfew sounded as I spotted the dirty house in which I lived. I moved around the wooden door and slowly shut it.

I turned around to see Jakob, my brother, excitedly watching Mr. Jones, a fifty-year-old man who lived with us, taking his pills. I let out a small laugh. He quickly turned to me and all of the animation in his seven-year-old body seemed to fade. He raced to me and, only coming to my chest, started to pound fiercely against my abdomen. I tried not to laugh for he thought that I must have been killed or captured. I shrugged him off and pushed a piece of bread into his still waving arms, then crossed the room and gave the other to Mr. Jones. Before they could fight about how I had nothing to eat, I ran to the stairs and bounded up them two at a time to where I would sleep.

Mother and farther had died at the camps, but that doesn't say I can't still talk to them, or to myself. I tried not to cry for I had to be strong near Jakob. It was hard but I had to sleep, so I looked up at the stars and drifted to sleep. I woke up in a cold sweat, gasping for air. The Green Police were coming I could feel it. I shuttered as I let a breath roll over my lips. That's when I heard the screams. I watched out the upstairs window as people were thrown out into the streets from their own doorsteps. I shook. My worst nightmare was about to come true.

“Jakob”, I said shaking him awake, “C’mon get up.” He twisted awake and looked at the room in which he lay. “I need you to get Mr. Jones and take him down to the cellar, stay down there no matter...”

“No.” He said cutting me off coldly, and crossing his little arms across his chest. “Not until you tell me what’s going on.” I couldn’t believe he had the nerve to argue with a fifteen-year-old. I took a deep breath and let it out softly.

“The Green Police are coming.”

My hand tightened around the metal pole I hoped I wouldn’t have to use. The cellar came straight up from the floor, which made it terribly convenient. My stomach lunged and I felt sick deep in my chest. Jakob and Mr. Jones clumsily went down the stairs to the cellar beneath the house. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw him about to argue with me, but I shook my head before he could speak. Reluctantly, he walked slowly down the stairs and closed the door. I sighed knowing what I had to do. I looked at the table next to the doors. I moved it over the double doors and let out a breath. A tear ran down the side of my face as I tightened my grip on the pole. I heard the door fly open but I did not turn. Then, with rage, I turned and swung as hard as I could. I hit one of them in the chest, and he fell, hard. Tears covered my face. Then there was a laugh, a crash, and then everything went blank.

Six other Jewish people and I trudged out to the woods. We had misbehaved and needed to be punished. I looked back at the fence where Jakob screamed for me as a tear rolled down his tiny face. We stopped as they loaded their guns. One tear rolled down my face as a shot of pain hit my abdomen and his screams faded away. I hit the ground, then I blinked three times... but then no more.