



M I L K W E E D



J E R R Y S P I N E L L I

Winner of the Newbery Medal for *Maniac Magee*

MEMORY

I am running.

That's the first thing I remember. Running. I carry something, my arm curled around it, hugging it to my chest. Bread, of course. Someone is chasing me. "Stop! Thief!" I run. People. Shoulders. Shoes. "Stop! Thief!"

Sometimes it is a dream. Sometimes it is a memory in the middle of the day as I stir iced tea or wait for soup to heat. I never see who is chasing and calling me. I never stop long enough to eat the bread. When I awaken from dream or memory, my legs are tingling.

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SUMMER

He was dragging me, running. He was much bigger. My feet skimmed over the ground. Sirens were screaming. His hair was red. We flew through streets and alleyways. There were thumping noises, like distant thunder. The people we bounced off didn't seem to notice us. The sirens were screaming like babies. At last we plunged into a dark hole.

"You're lucky," he said. "Soon it won't be ladies chasing you. It will be Jackboots."

"Jackboots?" I said.

"You'll see."

I wondered who the Jackboots were. Were unfooted boots running along the streets?

"Okay," he said, "hand it over."

"Hand what over?" I said.

He reached into my shirt and pulled out the loaf of bread. He broke it in half. He shoved one half at me and began to eat the other.

"You're lucky I didn't kill you," he said. "That lady you took this from, I was just getting ready to snatch it for myself."

"I'm lucky," I said.

He burped. "You're quick. You took it before I even knew

what happened. That lady was rich. Did you see the way she was dressed? She'll just buy ten more."

I ate my bread.

More thumping sounds in the distance. "What is that?" I asked him.

"Jackboot artillery," he said.

"What's artillery?"

"Big guns. Boom boom. They're shelling the city." He stared at me. "Who are you?"

I didn't understand the question.

"I'm Uri," he said. "What's your name?"

I gave him my name. "Stopthief."

★ “Stunning.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, Starred

He’s a boy called Jew. Gypsy. Stopthief. Filthy son of Abraham. He’s a boy who lives in the streets of Warsaw. He’s a boy who steals food for himself, and the other orphans. He’s a boy who believes in bread, and mothers, and angels. He’s a boy who wants to be a Nazi, with tall shiny jackboots of his own—until the day that suddenly makes him change his mind. And when the trains come to empty the Jews from the ghetto of the damned, he’s a boy who realizes it’s safest of all to be nobody.

Newbery Medalist Jerry Spinelli takes us to a devastating setting—Nazi-occupied Warsaw—and tells a tale of hope.



“Jerry Spinelli has fashioned a novel of beauty out of the ugliness of the Holocaust. It is a superb book, one of the best you will ever read.”

—*BookPage*

Winner of the Golden Kite Award for Fiction

A Notable Children’s Book of the Association of Jewish Libraries

Winner of a *Parent’s Guide* Children’s Media Award



Look for the reading group discussion guide at the end of this book.

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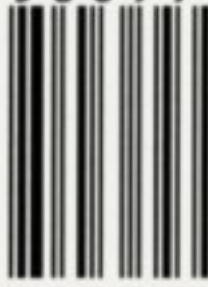
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