



RUTH MINSKY SENDER
the cage

♦ “A vivid memoir of a woman who lost her youth and family to the Nazis . . . Sender tells a story that will be long remembered.” —*Kirkus* (pointered review)

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Warm rays of sunshine fill the house, mixed with the sweet smell of lilac in full bloom. Cheerful sounds of chirping birds reach my ears. A gentle breeze coming through the open window caresses my face. It is spring. It is good to be alive. I feel calm and happy this morning.

I had no nightmares last night. I slept well. No screams, no moans, no cries for help. Restful sleep. It happens so very, very seldom.

The nightmares fill most of my nights and stay with me through most days. I try hard not to think about them. Keep my mind busy. Remember the joys in my life, my children.

And then night comes. My yesterdays are back again. They become today. My children are in my dreams. I am a child myself and also a mother. I run from the Nazis, and my children are with me. I try to hide them from the Nazis. I know I must hide them to save them, but I have no place to run to. The Nazis are all around us. They point their rifles at us. They

reach out to take away my children. I hear their commands: "Jews, out! Jews, out!" I hear my voice, filled with horror: "Not again! Not again!"

I wake up screaming. I sit up dazed, shaken, my body covered with cold sweat. I feel my husband's arms around me, pressing me close to him. We do not speak, only hold each other tight. He also wakes up screaming at night. He is the only survivor of his family, and he knows my nightmares.

I lie awake now, still trembling. The faces of my mother, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, teachers, friends float before my eyes. A long procession of faces, some sharp and clear, some hidden behind a cloudy veil. Faces of people I loved, cherished, respected. They were all part of my life. Now they are all dead. Murdered. Not a trace left. Not even a grave.

Suddenly a through unfolds in my mind. A revelation. My children carry some of their names. These are the children who, according to the Nazi master plan to annihilate all the Jews, were not to be born. Their parents were to die, like the six million of their Jewish brothers and sisters who died in gas chambers,

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crematoriums, lonely hiding places. But we survived and gave them life. Here they are, the Jewish generation that was not to be, proud human beings, the new link in an old chain.

I fall asleep again, calmed. But the nightmares return. I am forever running, hiding, screaming.

Today, with the sun so bright, the air filled with sweet smells of spring, the happy sounds of birds singing, all my nightmares seem unreal. If they were real, would the sun shine so brightly? Would the birds sing so happily? Would I smile?

I look through the open front door. My daughter, Nancy, is playing in the grass, the new green grass, sprouting again from the earth that was cold and frozen all winter. New life is growing all around me, reaching toward the sun. My child: happy, healthy, strong, blossoming like a beautiful flower.

Suddenly Nancy is near me. She cuddles up to me, and I put my arms around her, pulling her close. I see the sadness in her face and ask softly, "What is wrong, sweetheart?" I know that look. I have seen it many times in the eyes of my sons, when they come upon something

AS LONG AS THERE IS LIFE, THERE IS HOPE

After Mama is taken away by the Nazis, Riva and her younger brothers cling to their mother's brave words to help them endure life in the Lodz ghetto. Then the family is rounded up, deported to Auschwitz, and separated. Now Riva is alone.

At Auschwitz, and later in the work camps at Mittelsteine and Grafenort, Riva vows to live, and to hope—for Mama, for her brothers, for the millions of other victims of the nightmare of the Holocaust. And through determination and courage, and unexpected small acts of kindness, she does live—to write the unforgettable memoir that is a testament to the strength of the human spirit.

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- An International Reading Association Teachers' Choice
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"The story of survival and the acts of courage and love which make it possible will bear witness to the strength of the human spirit."
—*The Horn Book*



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