


DANIEL'S STORY



Published in conjunction
with the United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum

CAROL MATAS

 SCHOLASTIC

1

What has happened to me? I feel just like I did when I was around ten years old and I got hit by a soccer ball right between the eyes and I wandered around the field disoriented, not knowing who I was, where I was, where I should be going. I feel like that now—stunned and confused. Who am I? Where am I going?

This much I know. My name is Daniel. I am fourteen. And I am Jewish. I am on a train with my mother, father, sister, and what looks like over a thousand other Jews from Frankfurt. We do not have any idea where we are going, only that the Germans no longer want Jews in Germany. My country. Generations of our family have lived here going back a thousand years, but it looks as if we will be the last.

Father and Mother sit across from me and speak in low voices to each other. My sister, Erika, who at twelve is two years younger than I, sits beside me

humming a tune to herself, no doubt composing a song for her violin. I bend over and pull my photo album out of my rucksack. I feel the need to look at my pictures, pictures of my life. Perhaps they can help me understand how I came to be on this train, who I am, and what has happened. I open the album to the first page.

The first picture in my album is that of me on my sixth birthday. Marked on the bottom is *March 30, 1933*. I am smiling at the camera, all pudgy cheeks and thick black wavy hair, my brand-new gleaming toy train on display in front of me.

Uncle Peter, my favorite uncle, would have taken this picture. He was the unofficial family photographer. The picture just beneath it is one he took later that day of our whole family. Everyone looks serious because they don't want to appear silly in the photograph. Still, I remember that day. The adults talking and laughing, the hustle and bustle as dinner was being prepared, the smell of freshly baked bread and roasting chicken, and, of course, the screaming and noise of all my cousins.

I look at each face in the photograph in turn. Uncle Peter isn't in the picture because he was taking it. He was married to Auntie Leah, my mother's older sister, a nurse. She always bossed us around and tried to organize our lives. Uncle Peter and Auntie Leah had four children under the age of five—Friedrich, a year younger than I, Mia, age four, Gertrude, age two, and Brigitte, age one. The children look so quiet and well behaved in the photo. But in reality they would run, scream, fight, and drive me crazy. I remember the first thing they went for when they got in the door that day was a magnificent castle I had made from my building

set. I had labored over it for weeks, methodically snapping the pieces together until I thought it was perfect—it was demolished only seconds after their arrival. “Daniel,” my mother *always* said to me just before they came over, “you are the oldest. You must hold your temper even if they do things you don’t like.” When I was five, I’d bopped Friedrich on the arm, hard, for breaking one of my toys. He’d cried. And ever since then all I’d heard was “You’re the oldest.” I looked at the shambles of my castle and felt like bopping them all. Strange, really, that they should be so wild, considering how strict Auntie Leah is. Perhaps she is better at controlling other people’s children than her own.

Also in the picture is my mother’s younger brother, David. He was an engineer and a bachelor, and we usually saw him at dinnertime, when he just happened to drop by to visit.

Standing beside my father are his three brothers: Leo, who came from Berlin with his family; Walter and Aaron, and their wives. Sitting on the floor are their children, three per family, most around my age or younger. I remember that as the photo was being taken Uncle Walter and Father were fighting, talking back and forth with clenched teeth so as not to ruin the picture.

“Palestine is the answer, Joseph,” said Uncle Walter to my father. “We should all emigrate there.”

“And do they need concert violinists in the Holy Land?” Father had replied. “No, Walter, they’ll put you to work in the fields.”

“Even a new country needs music,” Walter retorted. “And the Jews need a country of their own.”

“We have a country!” Father exclaimed. “Our



Can Daniel survive history's deadliest moment?

Daniel barely remembers leading a normal life before the Nazis came to power in 1933. He can still picture once being happy and safe, but memories of those days are fading as he and his family face the dangers threatening Jews in Hitler's Germany in the late 1930s. No longer able to practice their religion, vote, own property, or even work, Daniel's family is forced from their home in Frankfurt and sent on a long and dangerous journey, first to the Lodz ghetto in Poland, and then to Auschwitz—the Nazi death camp.

Though many around him lose hope in the face of such terror, Daniel, supported by his courageous family, struggles for survival. He finds hope, life, and even love in the midst of despair.

Although Daniel is a fictitious character, his story was inspired by the real experiences of many of the more than one million children who died in the Holocaust.

Daniel's Story was published in conjunction with an exhibit called "Daniel's Story: Remember the Children" at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Produced by Daniel Weiss Associates, Inc.

 **SCHOLASTIC**

www.scholastic.com

\$6.99 US / \$8.99 CAN

ISBN-13: 978-0-590-46588-5

ISBN-10: 0-590-46588-0

