

Gone, they were gone. Taken away without a second thought. My dear husband and two eldest sons. The Germans, they took them, took them away aboard the train like animals, no one knew where to. I did not think I could go on without them, the other Jews were comforting me, believing that we will be reunited. But I knew, I knew what our fate would be. We would be next, they would take us all. We had heard of news that a man named Hitler wanted to exterminate our race. I could not believe it, I would not. It was impossible. But a heavy sense of dread settled on me as I thought about my family. I could not shake the feeling. The thought raged in my soul like a burning fire, an uncontrollable flame, a furnace.

I knew. The Germans, they came again, this time for us all. Their army cars had entered our community and they began to take over, ordering us about like slaves, I could not stand it. They then ordered us to leave the ghetto, leave our homes that we had known for so long. Everything that we had worked for in our lives, everything we had loved were now worthless objects, an extra weight that we did not need. All I had left was my youngest son, he was my only comfort through those dark times. Then we left to walk to our next destination, and I knew that we would never be back.

The next few days passed by like a blur. Walking, eating, sleeping. It was all we knew. We did not know when we would stop, if we would ever stop. We passed through so many villages we had lost count, and each one had been affected worse than the last. It was horrible. But that day news had come to us that we would be boarding a train, to where, we did not know. We had finally stopped at an abandoned synagogue; our sacred temple, it had been reduced to rubble. The following morning, we were told to march to the convoy of cattle wagons waiting for us, there we were split into groups of eighty Jews, and we were forced into a single carriage. The conditions were horrific. There was a huge commotion as we all struggled to find any room to call our own, but this disorder was suddenly gone as the doors to our wagon were slammed shut and all fell silent. I then decided to sleep.

The darkness, the silence, it was unbearable. The doors and windows had been sealed, there was no chance of escape. There was a defeated and depressed mood within the carriage. All around me there were ghostly, solemn faces of the people I thought I knew. No one spoke, no one showed any emotion. They seemed to have accepted their fate, or not known what it was. But not me, I just had to scream out, I needed to know why, why my family had been taken away from me in such cruelty, surely it was not possible.

The flames were burning brighter. I could stand it no longer, it was all too much. I had begun to scream out, I had to warn them of our dreaded fate. But they did not understand, they

could not see the things that I saw, instead they muttered between themselves, gazing at me with pitiful eyes. I could hear their whispers and murmurs, my fellow Jews, my dear son, they believed that I was insane. And yet the train continued into the night.

The following hours were torture. I could not handle the cruelty any longer, I could feel myself at breaking point, all I could do then was scream out. But they had begun to gag me and hit me, shout at me to stop. "Make her be quiet! She's mad! Shut her up!" But I could not, the fires were burning brighter, and yet they were still in denial. They did not want to believe a mad woman. I screamed no more, instead I sat in my corner with my son, too afraid to speak anymore. The train kept moving into the endless night.

It was midnight when the train finally creaked to a stop, the doors were opened instantly, allowing an awful, unmistakeable stench into the carriage. The smell of burning flesh. The others had begun pointing towards the distance, screaming and shaking in terror. There lay huge chimneys, with flames gushing out of them. I could not forget the feeling that sight gave me, and it completely broke me. They believed me then, but it was too late, the flames leapt higher, burned brighter, they were going to destroy us all.