

May 10th, 1944

I stared in denial; as my husband and two eldest sons exited our ghetto, past the shutters we'd bolted into place. The spring sun beat down on the street, and straight onto my body; nature's attempt to warm my empty, cold chest. The fascist standing by me took pity on my obvious expression and handed me some crusty bread, which I clouted onto the rocky path. We had spent the previous few days revelling Passover, at the Wiesel family's home; singing, dancing, praising and eating. Yet here we were, days later, incapable of saying goodbye to our dearest. My youngest ran and grabbed my thigh and squeezed, not giving room for me to interfere. I didn't attempt to, as I knew what he was feeling too. Emptiness.

May 11th, 1944

Only this morning had it sunk in that I will only prepare meals for the two of us. Even though my husband spent a majority of his time in the study, he still had a mouth to feed.

May 14th, 1944

We have since been forcibly moved to the lesser ghetto by more Gypsies, and it grieved me to do so. To leave behind the last of our belongings, perhaps to never be seen again, the last physical reminders of my absent husband and two sons.

Despite bunking in with countless other families, it still felt like I was alone.

And still empty.

May 15th, 1944

Today, the Jewish Council organised for our convoy of people to shift to the synagogue, not under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian police. We passed peering eyes over shutters that were ready to pounce and loot whatever we had left in the ghetto.

The synagogue was already in ruins from the war and raids; the altar shattered, and bare walls surrounded us. I felt the desolation and austerity of the walls cave in at me, making me like a stark Siberian plain during winter.

May 16th, 1944

The cattle car triggered a claustrophobic emotion within me, the first proper feeling I'd felt since May 10th. Familiar faces surrounded me and haunted me. I caressed my youngest in my lap, during our turn at sitting down. His straw tinted hair reminded me of his father; for as he was a spitting image of him.

After a Hungarian lieutenant retrieved the last of our valuable possessions, we were threatened to be shot like dogs if one of us were to go missing. Inhumane, stripped of human emotions and instincts, and brainwashed with viciousness, evil spirits enveloped in human skin; that's what they were.

I was distraught, moaning and groaning to the other civilians' distress. After filling the void in my chest with feelings, I was able to express the monstrosity it was to lose half my life, my husband and two eldest children, and just how it was to have the remnant of my sanity in my arms. I stared at young Eliezer Wiesel and his family. Oh, just how I envied it. A complete family, heading to hell together. I asked the scrawny child why this curse has come upon me, where my husband and

children have been taken away to. Though, the child did not answer me and simply attempted to overlook my distress. Ignorance made me hysterical.

May 18th, 1944

I used this diary as a gateway to record my emotions, but tonight there were no amount of words in a single diary entry to comprehend just how I felt. Betrayed.

They called me a 'mad, poor woman,'. What excuse does anyone on this cattle car have to have called me mad? We are all mad and poor, individually but simultaneously losing our sanity.

Beyond the bolted bars on the window were fluorescent sparks of orange and yellow; I warned the countless other people on our cart.

In Sighet, unrestrained fire always destined evil spirits. The flames overcame my mind and they swallowed the emotions and memories I had left, leaving them to ashes I would never recover. The shadows it swallowed were the shadows of my absent family. As I warned the other Jews and expressed the last of my losses, other women and my son attempted to comfort me.

"Jews, listen to me. I see a fire! I see flames, huge flames!" I shrieked hysterically.

May 19th, 1944

I don't remember much of the previous night, apart from my last cry after being bound and gag being broken by a quick hit to my crown. I cannot look at anyone, so I stare into a void, feeling mute and betrayed once again.

The train had stopped, and optimism was contagious as men told us this was our destination, yet I felt nothing.

My sons and husband were gone in the flames and so my sanity was too.