

W2-215

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It was Monday, the worst day of the week, according to Daniella. She was in the middle of her third period class, world history. Currently, Daniella's class was learning about the Holocaust, a gruesome genocide led by Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler. Fortunately, it was a topic that interested Daniella, a seventh grader going to North ridge Middle School. She had long, dark, curly hair which she usually let fall freely around her shoulders, lots of freckles, and a shy, hesitant smile. Daniella felt that she could relate to the Jews, since her family was Jewish and talked about their family history often.

Class was almost over; the class had been instructed to fill out a comparison worksheet about the Holocaust and Present Day. Daniella sighed. Her heart was not in her work today. She could not take her mind off her upcoming problems. Two, to be exact. Jaime and Sarah, two girls in her world history and algebra classes. Daniella often feared what her encounters with these angry, stubborn girls would be like. They bullied her, teasing her about her hair, her face, her freckles. Anything they could think of that would have an effect on Daniella. They almost never held back, it was often that their bullying was to the fullest extreme. In fact, almost every day, after their classes together, they would think up cruel insults and throw them at Daniella, sending her deeper and deeper into the depths of sadness. Daniella would often think, *Why me? What have I done wrong?* There seemed to never be any justification for their tormenting, at least that Daniella could see. They seemed to think that they were better than Daniella; that she was a lesser being.

She tried many times to go to a teacher for help, but none really understood her dilemma. That was unfortunate, because it seemed that the longer it went on, the worse it got, and it had been going on for a good portion of the school year. She just didn't feel safe anymore, and she felt like she had absolutely no control over what was happening. Luckily, their teasing had not escalated to physical assault...yet.

RING! The bell; class was over. Daniella looked about. The rest of her classmates had already started to gather their things. There were Jaime and Sarah sneering as they picked up their books. Daniella hurried to pick up her belongings, hitting her desk as she frantically rushed towards the door. Daniella was anxious to escape her tormentors, but too late, they were waiting by the door as the rest of the class hurried to their next period.

"Where do you think you're going?" Sarah grinned.

"Yeah, running home already? Come on, stay for the fun!" Jaime taunted.

Daniella was terrified, like always. She had no idea what to say, so she blurted out, "I have to get to class!"

“Oh, really,” Jaime said, “Or are you just scared? Huh?”

“Chicken! Can’t even say an intelligent sentence, can you?” Sarah agreed.

“Oh, well I really have to go,” Daniella stuttered. *Where were the teachers when you needed them?* Daniella thought.

“Fine! Leave! Run home to your mommy why don’t you? We don’t care,” Jaime teased.

Daniella felt her bravery rising, “I will!” She exclaimed as she ran away. She was close to tears as she heard the other girls snickering behind her. But she was also relieved, she had never expected herself to be able to stand up to Jaime and Sarah, even if it was something as little as saying, “I will!”

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Daniella hadn’t slept well in a while. She could barely keep her eyes open as she walked into world history for the second time in the week. There were Jaime and Sarah, eying her from their seats in the front of the room and Mr. Schneider, writing today’s lesson on the board. As the bell rang, Mr. Schneider began to illustrate today’s lesson, bullying in the holocaust. He proceeded to put up a slide show and started to give one of his long-winded lectures. As hard as Daniella tried, she could not manage to keep her eyes open. Her head plopped on her desk as she began to doze off.

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Daniella woke up in an extremely different place than she had fallen asleep. She was exactly the same as she had been when she had first fallen asleep, but she was definitely somewhere else. “Where am I?” She murmured, still a little drowsy. As she began to look around she noticed a few key elements of her surroundings. One, she was laying in front of a massive arch which had written upon it “Arbeit Macht Frei,” which she had remembered from her world history class to mean, “Work Makes You Free.” Two, there were long lines of people heading into it. Daniella quickly realized where she was; Auschwitz, a Nazi concentration camp where Jewish prisoners were sent to work, or to die. Daniella was overwhelmed by the situation. Several thoughts ran through her head: *How have I gotten here? How will I escape?* And finally, *I am Jewish, what will they do to me?* Suddenly Daniella felt very frightened. She knew very well what a scary and horrible place this was. She decided that she must do something to escape. Luckily no one, neither SS officer nor helpless Jew had noticed her. She got to her feet and looked around to get a better view. There was really nowhere to run. There were intimidating officers all over the grounds. *Maybe I can ask a Jew for help, surely they will take pity on me, because I am one of them,* Daniella thought. But before she could make a move she heard shouts and screams. As she turned her head she realized what was going on. A young Jewish man had tried to run away from the camp when he thought that no SS officers were looking. Evidently, he had been wrong, for now he was laying on the ground, paralyzed with fear as the SS officers readied their guns. Daniella looked away, not wanting to see the outcome of this situation. **Bang!** *Oh no!* Daniella thought. *He’s dead now, and just for trying to escape. They didn’t hold back on him at all. One*

*false move and you're dead! Wow, they're very extreme.* Daniella realized that would be what happened to her if she tried to escape, so she stood very still and tried to analyze the circumstances. Obviously, the officers thought that the Jews were not human beings, that they were far inferior to the SS. Also, if you did anything wrong, they would act harshly and, in Daniella's opinion, irrationally. Without realizing she was doing it, Daniella started wandering towards the camp. Before she could stop herself, she had already walked a good five paces. Suddenly, several pairs of eyes were upon her. Mean, fierce, interrogating eyes. **Bang!**

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When Daniella woke up, she again found herself in a different place. The only difference was, this time she was already standing up, lined up, and in rags. *Where am I this time?* Daniella thought. *And what happened to me?* As she looked around, she realized that the people around her were marching. Having stopped for a brief second, she quickly copied those around her, comprehending her situation. *I must be in one of those horrible death marches,* Daniella concluded. *If I stop for one moment, they'll shoot me! Or I'll be trampled to death.* Luckily the officers - who were marching along with everyone else on the perimeter of the lines - hadn't noticed her slow down. So she kept going along with everyone else, following what they were doing, as best she could. Multiple times she heard gun shots, each one making her flinch, and get a little more panicked. Daniella felt like crying, she was so scared, tired, and upset by what she saw. It didn't help that the SS were continuously shouting insults at the crowd. It was in German, of course, but Daniella could still tell it was meant to be hurtful. And the worst part was, there was no way out. Daniella had no power at all. This is no better than what I deal with, Daniella thought. The constant insults, feeling as if she had no control, non-justified actions, no holding back, feeling like she wasn't as good as them, not feeling safe. These were all things Daniella dealt with every day, but luckily not as extremely as in the Holocaust. Several more shots. Daniella gulped. *How could this have happened?* She wondered. *What was that Mr. Schneider had said before I fell asleep in class? Oh yeah, something like, "The Holocaust would not have been nearly as bad if more people had stood up against it, just like bystanders can stop bullying."* Just then Daniella noticed something she hadn't before, that affirmed her teacher's statement. They were not randomly wandering in the middle of nowhere. They were marching through villages and towns, most of which were at least semi-inhabited. *Those people could do something!* Daniella wanted to scream. *They have power! It will just get worse and worse if they don't, just like my problem with Josie and Sarah does. There are a lot of similarities between bullying and the Holocaust,* Daniella concluded. *I wish I was back in class so I could learn more about it. It is really interesting...when you're not in the middle of it.* Suddenly Daniella realized how frightened she really was. She shut her eyes as tight as she could...

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This time when Daniella woke up, she was back in her world history class. *What the...?* Daniella hadn't even thought of the possibility that she could be dreaming; it had seemed so real. *Thank goodness!* Daniella thought. She felt like kissing the ground like people in movies. The bell rang. She felt a wave of panic rush over her. Jaime and Sarah still existed, Daniella's personal reminders of all her faults. But the panic quickly passed. To her intense surprise, Daniella knew exactly what to do this time.

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It was a month later, and Daniella was as happy as could be. She had easily and respectfully gotten rid of her bullying problem that same day she had her dream about traveling to the time of the Holocaust. She now had no problems with anything of the sort, and she stood up for others who *were* having trouble with bullying. In fact, she felt so strongly about how bad bullying was that she started an after-school program to help those who are bullied and to explain how important it is to stand up for yourself and others.