Redemption

Blow after blow rained down on my mother's back. The officer's face contorted cruelly as he brought the whip cracking down. Silent sobs racked through my malnourished body as I watched the sadistic scene. Fellow prisoners formed a rough circle around the person who had been by my side since the beginning. Every strike drove deep into my burdened heart and I forced my eyes away. Around me, whispered prayers were drowned out by the sounds of a woman who had lost her will to live. My knees gave way and I crashed to the sodden ground. After an era of unyielding blows the bloodthirsty demon dwelling in the soldier was sated. In my mother’s ultimate moment of lucidness, she locked her eyes on me and feebly extended a broken hand. I held it gently as the gathered crowd silently dispersed.

“Mama,” I sobbed. “Please don’t leave me.” I stroked her bloody face tenderly and she smiled, as if all was right in the world. Her brown eyes reflected all the pain and wisdom in the world as she opened her mouth one last time.

“My beautiful dove, I will never leave you,” With those words her spirit departed it's broken shell and soared into the heavens. She would finally receive the peace and elation she had always deserved but yet I had never felt so desolate. I felt myself sinking into an empty state of anguish and despair as I closed my mother’s eyes. Until this moment I had managed to find hope because of the corpse beside me but she was gone and with her my will to live. I looked into her content face one last time before sinking into the infinite abyss of sorrow within me.
It was happening again. The suffocating fear I felt during the Holocaust was once again devouring me. As I watched the news broadcast Neo-Nazi marches all through America, I felt dizzy and devastated.

“Please,” I whispered to the heavens. “Don’t let it happen again.” I clutched the golden star around my neck. The beloved necklace had been given to me in 1945 when survivors were liberated from Auschwitz. It had become a part of me, a memento of the darkest days.

I was pulled from my memories when the door swung open. My youngest daughter Lilia, climbed into my lap and wrapped her arms around me.

“Mommy, Mommy! Daddy took us to the park today but I missed you!” Her chiming laugh filled the room as she bounced excitedly. I hugged her tightly and ran my hand through her luscious curls.

“I missed you more, my dove.” As I looked up at the TV, tears welled up in my eyes. The thought of monsters terrorizing Jews again, reopened a fresh wound inside me. Lilia places a small hand on my cheek and looked at me with concerned eyes. Sometimes, it was hard to believe she was only five and the youngest of my four children. At that moment the rest of my family poured into the room.

“Adelaide darling! What's wrong?” My husband Richard asked worriedly. I smiled at the sight of the man who had brought me unfathomable joy. I leaned my head toward the TV where a raging inferno devoured an idyllic synagogue. Richard immediately understood my distress and beckoned for my oldest son, Gabriel to empty the room. He put his strong arm around me and
tears flowed freely from my haunted eyes. I remembered the fateful night when I had silently watched my mother’s murder. I did nothing to help the woman who had given me everything. I was just another stoic bystander in the crowd. It was at this moment a newfound passion enveloped me. I knew that would not stand by idly and watch the Neo-Nazis wreak havoc. I knew that I would do everything I could to stop them and the fear they were disseminating. The time had finally come for me to take a stand.

Applause filled the air as I walked to the large, gray podium. Thousands of hopeful survivors and supporters were gathered under the pristine sky. I could see the sprawling city of Skokie, Illinois, laid out before me. Just days before, Frank Collins had announced a Neo Nazi march with the sole purpose of spreading the hate and racism that had slaughtered millions of Jews. This awakened the devastating and ravaging terror in survivors who wanted nothing more than to live their life out in peace and well-being. At first I had wanted nothing more than to succumb to my troubles and stay in the comforting embrace of my family but my heart spoke otherwise. Now a mere week later, I stood before thousands of expectant and distressed beings. I look to the heavens for reassurance and my beautiful mother gazes back. All the shields I had fabricated around myself stripped away, revealing a dispirited 14 year old, who had lived through unending terror and anguish. After years of attempting to bury the Holocaust deep within myself, the memories were finally resurfacing. A lifetime ago I had watched my mother die so it was for her now that I stood before my people, preparing to join the fight. At this moment a lone dove soared over my head and perched on a nearby branch. A feeling of confidence and euphoria swept through me as I began to address my nation.
“My beloved brothers and sisters, I am so thankful to stand before you on this monumental morning. Most of you will find that an all too familiar fear has taken over your lives again. You may feel as if the bloodthirsty claws of the Holocaust are once again snatching you away from your beloved families and the peace you deserve. The ghastly memories of carnage, agony, and despondency may all be flooding back, but we must rise above it. United as one. An unbreakable front that will not fall victim to the Holocaust again. The time of Jews being slaughtered, abused, and suppressed is over and it's our job to keep it that way. We'll no longer stand by and let worry and anxiousness control us. Instead, we'll fight this threat using nothing but our compelling voices and powerful stories. We’ll stand unyieldingly till peace and bliss is ultimately received.”

“Thank you.”