

Perseverance

****FIRST DRAFT****

By David Sommer

This Short play is based on the life experiences of Estelle Nadel a holocaust survivor. Some details have been changed for story-telling purposes. All the name's in this piece are names of people from Estelle's life. Even though she has told her story countless times, she has been gracious enough to allow me to interview her in order to create something to help keep her story alive.

Estelle is one of the few Holocaust survivors still alive, able and willing to talk about her life. A special thanks to Estelle for her kindness and willingness to share her experience with the world through Stories That Live. These plays are meant to make us question how the Holocaust happened and how we let antisemitism pervade throughout our lives in the modern age.

Cast:

Enia (7 yr old)

Reuven (aba)

Chaya (ima)

Sonijia 21 yr old sister

Moishe 19 year old brother

Shia 15 years old (very short)

Yashic 14 years old (very blonde)

Pudlina:

Neighbor:

Officer

Officer's Wife

Guest 1

Guest 2

Aunt (tante)

Scene 1: In the Nadel's House. The Family is sitting eating breakfast around a table. A mother and daughter and two boys. '

Narrator/Enia: It started when my family was sitting down for breakfast.

Sonjia sprints in

Sonjia: The Nazis have surrounded the factory! GO out into the fields in case they come to raid the house. I need to get back to Aba and Moishe.

kids react looking at Sonjia and Chaya and each other

Chaya: Sonjia! Don't go back. Come with us to the fields where it's safe. it is too dangerous for you to go back.

Chaya grabs at Sonjia, Sonjia pulls away

Sonjia: It's fine mom, I will be fine. I just need to get back to Aba and Moishe. I have friends there. I will be fine.

Sonjia turns and runs out stage left, the kids chase after her, but no luck. Chaya turns around frozen and scared

Chaya: Everyone out into the fields.

Lights down on stage left

*Scene 2: The factory
as we move to stage right. lights up as we follow Sonjia to the factory, People in 2 lines on stage. Sonjia runs in*

Sonjia: Abba! Moishe!

a soldier grabs her and forces her in the line with her father and brother.

Sonjia: Where are you taking us?

Soldier: *(nonchalant nothing to worry about attitude)* A work camp near Auschwitz.
March.

Sonjia: What's happening to that line where are they going?

Soldier begins to escort them off stage

Soldier: don't worry about them

Lights back up on stage left.

Chaya, Enia, Shia, and Yashic are walking up to the door with bags over their shoulders. Chaya knocks. Pudlina answers

Pudlina: come in quickly

Pudlina ushers them in quickly while looking around for watching eyes. The family swirl around Pudlina and move into center stage to enter the house.

Chaya and the children: *(Babbling all at once)* Thank you! Thank you! You're a savior. What a blessing!

Cut lights out

Scene 3: Pudlina's Attic

lights up on only the bottom half of the stage. The characters must crouch to be seen or seated in the light fully whilst being in the Attic.

Shia: Mom you can't risk going out again. You were almost caught last time you said.

Chaya: We need to eat, I'll be fine. I'm only going to people we can trust. I will be okay.

Lights down and up

Yashic: Where is she?

Shia: It's never taken her this long to get back.

Enia: It's almost daylight out.

Yashic: Do you think she's been caught?

Shia: No I would know. I would feel it.

Enia: Are you sure?

Yashic: it is much too late

Lights down and up

Yashic: Any news? She's been gone for two days. What's going on?!

Shia: We should ask Pudlina

Suddenly a knock at the door and the kids freeze. A whisper to Pudlina on the opposite side of the stage, Pudlina nods her head and goes to the children.

Pudlina: children, it's your mother. I just got horrible news. I don't know what to tell you. *Enia starts crying and everyone gets into a tight hug.*

Lights down and up On Yashic dressing to leave at night. Shia wakes up and so does Enia

Shia: Where are you going?

Yashic: Borek or some other town close by. Anywhere but here where they know I'm a Jew.

Shia: Are you crazy?

Enia: Yashi don't go

Shia: shhh Enia, Yashic, do not leave us it is too dangerous.

Yashic: I can't just sit here anymore. I have blonde hair and blue eyes and you two do not. It might be possible for me to pass as one of them instead of hiding here waiting to get caught as one of us.

Yashic leaves

lights down and Lights up

Enia: It's been two weeks since Yashic left. What do we do?

Shia: Pudlina has been nice enough to take care of us so far. All we can do is wait, maybe we go find our aunt in Borek? But not any time soon.

Lights down on that part of the stage. lights up on Pudlina and her neighbor

Pudlina: Your children have been stealing my vegetables, You need to stop them from stealing my vegetables. If you don't stop them I will have to go to the police.

Neighbor (*like they know something*): I don't think you are in a position to threaten me with going to the police

Pudlina blanches and turns around and runs into the house

Lights down that side of the stage and back on the attic. Where Pudlina appears.

Pudlina: Kids. the neighbor. They let on like they knew you were here. It is not safe. You must go for a while in case they come and raid my home. You'll leave tomorrow.

kids sit in silence lights down

lights up on sleeping children shouting as soldiers come in and grab them and drag them off stage.

Scene 4: Nazi Jail

Nazis throw Shia's body on the ground and grab Enia while she's screaming Shia's name and fighting to reach him. They set her down in a chair and the man in charge starts to interrogate her.

Officer: Where's the rest of your family? Who else is hiding with you? Who is helping you?

Enia cries nonstop

Officer waits, and waits, trying to comfort Enia. Eventually gives up and brings her over to her brother and locks the door on his way out. Shia immediately jumps up and looks around. A single wooden bed. With a gobo light showing a small window with bars to look through. Shia starts to try and escape and gets stuck. He comes back down and gestures for help. Enia helps Shia escape out the window.

Shia (*offstage or through the window however the staging works*): you were incredible thank you for your help! Do just what I did, up over the bed and it'll be easier for you to squeeze through the bars. Wait for the guard to be around the corner and then go for it. Meet me across the street on the other side of that fence. I'll wait for you there.

*She waits then hops up and squeezes out into the offstage.
Lights out*

Scene 5: The Jailer's Wife

lights up as Enia comes on stage now on the other side of the fence. She hides and creeps around the perimeter.

A woman walks out and sees Enia

Wife: AHHH!!

Enia (crying): Please help me! I am a Jew and I just ran away from that jail.

Wife: I don't know if I can, my husband is one of the jailers. It's not safe, but maybe we can help you. Come inside where it's warm, we'll get you something to eat.

The scene shifts across the stage as we exit the Yard of the house and into the Jailer's Wife's House.

While Enia sits uncomfortably the adults speak, the wife and a couple having a tea party of some sort.

Wife: I just found a child in the garden, she needs our help. She just escaped from the prison where my husband works. She is a Jew and we cannot keep her here but maybe we can think of a solution to her problem.

Guest 1: Help a Jew? Aren't they the cause of all these problems we are having here?!

Guest 2: But darling, she is so cute. Look at her. How could she harm anyone? Oh! We must help her.

Guest 1: well how darling we cannot take her in ourselves. It would be too obvious.

Wife: Maybe she has family somewhere else we can take her? Maybe the town over? Borek perhaps. I will not give her to those animals.

Enia: Do you know the public showers in Borek?

Wife: eh? Yes I do.

Enia: Could you take me there? I can find my way if you take me there!

The adults all look at each other with varying levels of worry and to see what the wife will say.

Wife: Yes, let's go.

Lights down and back up

Scene 6: Outside Borek Bathhouse on the street

Enia: goodbye thank you for your help!

Wife: goodbye good luck

Enia sits in one place, then moves and sits in other places then moves one last time. The light moves from one side of stage arcing across to near the middle, it should be about 2-3 am by this point in the moon cycle.

Finally sure no one is following her she goes across the stage and knocks on a door.

Aunt: Hello..? Enia? Get in here! Oh my god you could have been followed. Where have you been? Why are you here alone? Where is your mother? Where is everyone??

Enia (crying): I don't know. I was in jail- escaped with Shia. He disappeared. Someone helped me. I did wait tante I did wait.

Aunt (Holding her tightly): Shhh it's alright I've got you. We are safe here. You can tell us everything later.

A knock on the door causes both of them to jump, Aunt opens the door. Shia walks through.

Enia: Shia!!

she runs into his arms

Aunt: shhhhh

ushers them to be quiet and move further inside.

Lights fade out as Enia steps forward into a spotlight.

Enia: We stayed with my aunt and uncle and cousins for two years. We weren't able to stand in the attic we were hiding in. And when the Russians finally came we had to be carried out because our legs were so atrophied. My family and I went to Hungary to escape the Nazis. Even Yashic came with us to Hungary. One night there, our cousins and aunt and uncle left without us for Australia. We ended up in a displaced persons camp en route to Israel, but one night someone offered me the opportunity to go to America and my brothers seized it. I didn't even know what America was at the time. We were lucky enough to have made it that far.

My father, sister and brother were taken from the factory to Auschwitz. It was only when we visited Auschwitz in recent times that I read their names on the scroll and discovered their fate. My mother was killed the morning after she was reported and caught. We were able to meet the man who turned her in much later, but he had no remorse. His actions were only meant to save his own life.

Shia had the opportunity to meet our jailer who told him that he had purposefully placed us in a cell we could potentially escape through because of my tears.

We survived. Not a day goes by where I do not think about my experiences, the loss, the pain, but my being here today is a miracle. This is a message for the last generations who have heard the voices of those who survived the Holocaust. There are so many stories like mine. All unique, and all very similar. There are so many who cannot bring themselves to share their story. And that is why I tell mine, that is why we tell our stories. Our history. Because as we all know the age old adage: If we forget history we are doomed to repeat it.

End.