

Tokyo, March 2000

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FROM THE DAY THE SUITCASE arrived in Tokyo, Fumiko and the children were drawn to it. Ten-year-old Akira, who usually loved to joke and tease, wondered aloud what it would be like to be an orphan. Maiko, who was older, loved to party and was an accomplished synchronized swimmer. She always became very quiet in the presence of the suitcase. It made her think about being sent away from her own friends.

The suitcase was the only object they had at the Center that was linked to a name. From the date on the suitcase, Fumiko and the children figured out that Hana would have been thirteen years old when she was sent to Auschwitz. A year younger than me, said one girl. Just as old as my big sister, said Akira.

Fumiko wrote back to the Auschwitz Museum. Could they help her find out anything about the girl who owned the suitcase? No, they replied. They knew no more than she did. Fumiko reported back to the children. "Try somewhere else," Maiko urged. "Don't give up," said Akira. The kids chanted encouragement like a chorus: "Keep on looking." Fumiko promised to do just that.

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Fumiko wrote to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum. No, we have never heard of a girl named Hana Brady, the director wrote. Have you tried the Holocaust Memorial Museum in

Washington, DC? Fumiko rushed a letter off to Washington, but the reply was the same. We have no information about a girl named Hana Brady. How discouraging it was!

Then, out of the blue, Fumiko received a note from the museum at Auschwitz. They had discovered something. They had found Hana's name on a list. It showed that Hana had come to Auschwitz from a place called Theresienstadt.

Nové Město na Moravě, 1939

ON MARCH 15, 1939, Hitler's Nazi troops marched into the rest of Czechoslovakia and the Brady family's life was changed forever. The Nazis declared that Jews were evil, a bad influence, dangerous. From now on, the Brady family and the other Jews in Nové Město na Moravě would have to live by different rules.

Jews could only leave their houses at certain hours of the day. They could only shop in certain stores and only at certain times. Jews weren't allowed to travel, so there were no more visits to beloved aunts, uncles, and grandmothers in nearby towns. The Bradys were forced to tell the Nazis about everything they owned — art, jewellery, cutlery, bank books. They hurriedly stashed their most precious papers under the shingles in the attic. Father's stamp collection and Mother's silver were hidden with Gentile, non-Jewish friends. But the family radio had to be taken to a central office and surrendered to a Nazi official.



Hana and George stood by each other as the Nazi restrictions increased.

One day, Hana and George lined up at the movie theater to see “Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.” When they got to the ticket box they saw a sign that read “No Jews Allowed.” Their faces red, their eyes burning, Hana and George turned on their heels and headed for home. When Hana walked in the door, she was furious and very upset. “What is happening to us? Why can’t I go to the movies? Why can’t I just ignore the sign?” Mother and Father looked grimly at each other. There were no easy answers.

Every week seemed to bring a new restriction. No Jews in the playground. No Jews on the sports fields. No Jews in the parks. Soon Hana could no longer go to the gym. Even the skating pond was declared off limits. Her friends — all of them Gentiles — at first were as mystified by the rules as Hana. They sat together in school as they always had, and still had good times making mischief in the classroom and in private backyards. “We’ll be together forever, no matter what,” promised Hana’s best friend Maria. “We’re not going to let anyone tell us who we can play with!”

But gradually, as the months dragged on, all Hana's playmates, even Maria, stopped coming over after school and on the weekends. Maria's parents had ordered her to stay away from Hana. They were afraid the Nazis would punish their whole family for allowing Maria to be friends with a Jewish child. Hana was terribly lonely.



A young Hana and her father.

With each loss of friendship and with each new restriction, Hana and George felt their world grow a little smaller. They were angry. They were sad. And they were frustrated. "What can we do?" they asked their parents. "Where can we go now?"

Mother and Father tried their best to distract the children, to help them find new ways to have fun. "We are lucky," Mother told them, "because we have such a big garden. You can play hide-and-seek. You can swing from the trees. You can invent games. You can play detective in the

storerooms. You can explore the secret tunnel. You can play charades. Be grateful that you have each other!”

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Hana and George were grateful to have each other and they did play together, but it didn't make them feel any better about all the things they couldn't do anymore, all the places they couldn't go. On a fine spring day, when the sun was shining, the two of them sat in the meadow, bored, fiddling with the grass. Suddenly Hana burst into tears. “It's not fair,” she cried. “I hate this. I want it to be like it was before.” She yanked a fistful of grass out of the ground and threw it in the air. She looked at her brother. She knew he was as miserable as she was. “Wait here,” he said. “I have an idea.” In minutes he was back, carrying a pad of paper, a pen, an empty bottle and a shovel.

“What's all that for?” Hana asked.

“Maybe if we write down all the things that are bothering us,” he said, “it'll help us feel better.”

“That's stupid,” Hana replied. “It won't bring back the park or the playground. It won't bring back Maria.”

But George insisted. He was, after all, the big brother, and Hana didn't have a better idea. And so for the next several hours, the children poured their unhappiness onto paper, with George doing most of the writing and Hana doing much of the talking. They made lists of things they missed, lists of things they were angry about. Then they made lists of all the things they would do, all the things they would have, and all the places they would go when these dark times were over.

When they were done, George took the sheets of paper, rolled them into a tube, stuffed them into the bottle and popped in the cork. Then the two of them walked back toward the house, stopping at the double swing. There, Hana dug a big hole. This would be a hiding place for some of their sadness and frustration. George placed the bottle at the bottom of the hole and Hana filled the space

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back up with earth. And when it was all over the world seemed a little lighter and brighter, at least for the day.

It was hard to make sense of everything that was happening. Especially now that the family radio was gone. Father and Mother had depended on hearing the eight o'clock news every night from London, England to keep them informed of Hitler's latest evil act. But Jews had been ordered inside their houses by eight. Listening to the radio was absolutely forbidden and the penalty for breaking any law was very severe. Everyone was afraid of being arrested.

Father hatched a plan, an ingenious way to get around the Nazi rules. He asked his old friend, the keeper of the big church clock, to do him a favor. Would he mind, Father asked, turning the clock back fifteen minutes in the early evenings? That way Father could rush to the neighbor's house, hear the news, and be safely home when the bell rang at eight (which was actually eight-fifteen). The Nazi guard who patrolled the town square didn't have a clue. And Father was thrilled that his scheme had worked. Unfortunately, the news he was able to hear on the radio was bad. Very bad. The Nazis were winning every battle, advancing on every front.



Hana and George.

Tokyo, March 2000

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THERESIENSTADT. Now Fumiko and the children knew that Hana had come to Auschwitz from Theresienstadt. Fumiko was excited. This was the first solid piece of information she had found about Hana. The first clue.

Theresienstadt was the name that the Nazis gave to the Czech town of Terezin. It was a pretty little town, with two imposing fortresses, first built in the 1800s to hold military and political prisoners. After the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia, they turned Terezin into the Theresienstadt ghetto — a walled, guarded, overcrowded prison town to hold Jews who had been forced to leave their homes. Over the course of World War Two, more than 140,000 Jews were sent here — 15,000 of them were children.

Fumiko stayed up late at night, her office a glow of light in the darkened Center, reading everything she could find about Theresienstadt.

She learned that terrible things had happened in Theresienstadt, and that over the course of a few years almost everyone in the ghetto was deported again, put on trains and sent off to the more terrible concentration camps in the east which were known to be death camps.

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But Fumiko also learned that brave and inspiring things happened in Theresienstadt. Among the adults were some very special people — great artists, famous musicians, historians, philosophers,

fashion designers, social workers. They were all in Theresienstadt because they were Jews. An astonishing amount of talent, training and knowledge was crowded inside the walls of the ghetto. Under the noses of the Nazis and at great risk, the inmates secretly plotted and established an elaborate schedule of teaching, learning, producing and performing for both adults and children. They were determined to remind their students that — despite the war, despite the drab, cramped surroundings, despite everything — the world was a place of beauty and every individual person could add to it.

Fumiko also discovered that children in Theresienstadt were taught to paint and draw. And, miraculously, 4,500 drawings created by these children had survived the war. Fumiko's heart began to beat more quickly. Could it be that among those drawings there might be one or more by Hana Brady?

Nové Město na Moravě Autumn 1940—Spring 1941

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AUTUMN BROUGHT WITH IT A CHILL IN THE AIR, as well as more restrictions, and hardship.

Hana was about to begin grade three, when the Nazis announced that Jewish children would no longer be allowed to go to school. “Now, I will never see my friends!” Hana wailed, when her parents told her the bad news. “Now, I’ll never become a teacher when I grow up!” She always dreamed of standing up at the front of the classroom and having everyone listen carefully to whatever she had to say.

Mother and Father were determined that both Hana and her brother would continue their education. Luckily, they had enough money to hire a young woman from the next village to be Hana’s tutor, and an old refugee professor to teach George.

Mother tried to be cheerful. “Good morning, Hana,” she would sing out when the sun rose. “It’s time for breakfast. You don’t want to be late for ‘school.’” Every morning, Hana would meet her new tutor at the dining room table. She was a kind young woman and she did her best to encourage Hana with reading, writing and arithmetic. She brought a small blackboard that she leaned up against a chair. Once in a while, she allowed Hana to draw with the chalk and bang out chalk dust in the brushes. But at this school, there were no playmates, no practical jokes, no recess. Hana found it

harder to pay attention or stay focused on her lessons. In the darkness of the winter, the world seemed to be closing in on the Brady family.

Indeed, when spring came, disaster struck. In March 1941, Mother was arrested by the Gestapo, Hitler's feared secret state police.

A letter came to the house ordering Mother to appear at nine o'clock in the morning at Gestapo headquarters in the nearby town of Iglau. In order to be there on time, she would have to leave in the middle of the night. She had one day to organize everything and say goodbye to her family.

She called Hana and George into the living room, sat on the couch, and pulled the children close to her. She told them that she would be going away for a while. Hana snuggled a little closer. "You must be good while I am gone," she said. "Listen carefully to Father and obey him. I will write," she promised. "Will you write back to me?"

George looked away. Hana trembled. The children were too shocked to reply. Their mother had never left them before.



Hana, her mother and George in happier times.

When Mother tucked Hana into bed that night, she held her tightly. Mother ran her soothing fingers through Hana's hair, just the way she had when Hana was very little. She sang Hana's favorite lullaby, over and over again. Hana fell asleep with her arms around her mother's neck. In the morning when Hana woke up, Mother was gone.

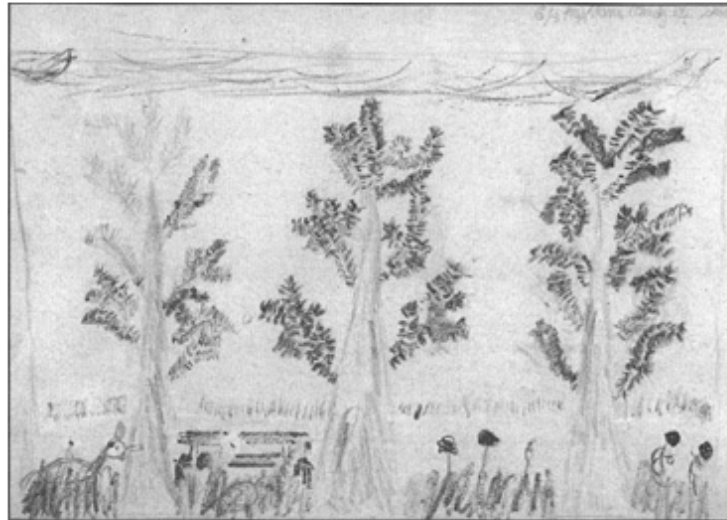
Tokyo, April 2000

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FUMIKO COULD HARDLY BELIEVE IT when a flat package arrived at her office in Tokyo. Just a few weeks earlier, she had written to the Terezin Ghetto Museum in what is now called the Czech Republic. Fumiko had explained in her letter how anxious she and the children were to find anything that would connect them more closely to Hana. People there said they knew nothing about Hana's personal story. But they did know about the huge collection of children's drawings that had been hidden in the camp. Many of the drawings were now displayed at the Jewish Museum in Prague.

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Fumiko opened the package. She was so excited that her hands were shaking. There were photographs of five drawings. One was a colored drawing of a garden and a park bench. Another showed people having a picnic beside a river. The rest were in pencil and charcoal, one of a tree, another of farmhands drying hay in a field, and another of stick people carrying suitcases, getting off a train. In the top right hand corner of each of the drawings was the name "Hana Brady."



One of Hana's drawings from Theresienstadt.

Nové Město na Moravě, Autumn 1941

SINCE SHE HAD MADE A PROMISE TO HER MOTHER, Hana did her best to behave well. She helped her father when she could and did her lessons. Boshka, their much-loved housekeeper, tried to cook Hana's favorite meals and give her extra helpings of dessert. But Hana missed her mother terribly, especially at night. No one else could smooth her hair with quite the same touch. No one else could sing her lullaby. And that big booming laugh of her mother's — everyone missed that.

The children learned that their mother was in a place called Ravensbruck, a women's concentration camp in Germany. "Is it far away?" Hana asked her father.

"When is she coming home?" George wanted to know. Father assured the children that he was doing everything he could to get her out.

One day Hana was reading in her room when she heard Boshka calling for her. She decided to ignore her. Hana didn't feel like doing any chores. And what else was there to look forward to? But Boshka kept calling. "Hana, Hana? Where are you? Come quickly! There is something very special waiting for you at the post office."

When she heard that, Hana dropped her book. Could it be what she hoped for most? She burst out of the house and ran down the street to the post office. Hana approached the wicket. "Do you

have something for me?” she asked. The woman behind the counter slid a small brown package through the hole. Hana’s heart leapt when she recognized her mother’s writing. Her fingers trembled as she opened it. Inside was a little brown heart. It was made of bread and had the initials “HB” carved into it. Attached was a letter.

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My dearest one, I wish you all the best on your birthday. I am sorry that I can't help you blow out the candles this year. But the heart is a charm I made for your bracelet. Are your clothes getting too small for you? Ask Daddy and Georgie to speak to your aunts about having some new ones made for my big girl. I think about you and your brother all the time. I am well. Are you being a good girl? Will you write me a letter? I hope you and George are keeping up your studies. I am well. I miss you so much, dearest Hanichka. I am kissing you now.

Love, Mother. May 1941. Ravensbruck.



The gifts made from bread that Hana's mother sent to the family after she was taken away.

Hana closed her eyes and clutched the little brown bread heart. She tried to imagine that her mother was standing beside her.

That fall brought another blow. One day Father arrived home carrying three squares of cloth. On each was a yellow star of David and in the middle of the star one word: "*Jude*" — Jew.



Jews were ordered to wear yellow cloth stars whenever they went out in public.

“Come children,” said Father, as he took a pair of scissors from a kitchen drawer. “We need to cut out these stars and pin them on our coats. We must wear them whenever we leave the house.”

“Why?” asked Hana. “People already know we are Jews.”

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“It’s what we must do,” replied Father. He looked so dejected, sad and tired that Hana and George didn’t argue.

From that day on, Hana went outside less often. She would do almost anything to avoid wearing the yellow badge in public. She hated the star. It was so humiliating. It was so embarrassing. Wasn’t it enough, the children wondered, that they’d lost their park, their pond, their school and their friends? But now, when they left the house, the star was pinned to their clothing.

One Jewish man in town was not willing to obey. He’d had enough of all the rules and restrictions. So on a late September day in 1941, he left his house feeling a little brazen. He did not cut out the star and pinned the entire cloth to his coat. This tiny act of rebellion was immediately

noticed by the Nazi officer in charge in Nové Město na Moravě. He was furious. He declared that Nové Město na Moravě must be made *judenfrei*, free of Jews, immediately.

The very next morning, a big black car driven by a Nazi officer drew up in front of the Bradys' house. Four frightened Jewish men were already huddled inside it. There was a knock on the door. Father opened it. Hana and George hung behind him. The Gestapo officer barked at Father to come out immediately. Hana and George couldn't believe their ears. They stood there, stunned, terrified and silent. Father hugged the children, implored them to be brave. And then he, too, was gone.

Tokyo, Spring 2000

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FUMIKO WAS ENCHANTED BY HANA'S DRAWINGS. She knew they would help children better imagine what kind of person Hana had been. It would be easier for them to put themselves in her shoes. Fumiko was right.



Another of Hana's drawings from Theresienstadt.

More than ever, the children who volunteered at the Center focused their attention on Hana. Led by Maiko, some of them formed a group with a mission to let other kids know about what they were learning. They called their club "Small Wings." Once a month, they met to plan their newsletter. Everyone had a role. The older kids wrote articles. The youngest were encouraged to draw pictures. Others wrote poems. With Fumiko's help, they sent their newsletter to schools far and wide, so others could find out about the history of the Holocaust and the search for Hana.

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The Small Wings

More than anything, they wanted to know what Hana looked like. They wanted to see the face of this little girl whose story they yearned to know. Fumiko realized that if she could find a photograph of Hana, she would be even more alive to the children as a real human being. Fumiko was determined that the search would continue.

Now that she had the drawings, a sock, the shoe, the sweater, and, of course, Hana's suitcase, Fumiko felt it was time to open the exhibit she had been working towards, "The Holocaust Seen Through Children's Eyes."

Nové Město na Moraleě Winter 1941-1942

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NOW THERE WERE ONLY TWO CHILDREN. No parents. George put an arm around his ten-year-old sister and promised to take care of her. Boshka, the housekeeper, tried to distract them with special treats and lighthearted talk. It didn't work. The children were sad and they were very scared.

Hours after their father's arrest there was another knock at the door. Hana's heart pounded. George swallowed hard. Who have they come for now? But when the children opened the door, they found Uncle Ludvik, their beloved Uncle Ludvik. "I've just heard the bad news," he said, hugging Hana with one arm, George with the other. "You are both coming with me. You belong with family, with people who love you."

Uncle Ludvik was a Christian who had married Father's sister. Because he wasn't Jewish, he was not an obvious target for the Nazis. But he was a brave man to take in George and Hana. The Gestapo had warned that terrible harm could come to anyone who helped the Jews.

Uncle Ludvik told the children to gather up their most treasured things. Hana took her life-sized doll named Nana whom she had had since she was five. George put together all the family photographs. Each of them filled a suitcase with clothes. Hana chose a large brown suitcase that she had taken before on family trips. She loved the polka-dot lining. When everything was packed, they turned out the light and closed the door behind them.

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A younger Hana with George and her doll, Nana, that was almost as big as Hana herself.

That night, her aunt and uncle tucked Hana into a big bed with a feather-filled comforter. “We will care for you until your parents come back, Hana,” they promised. “And we’ll be just down the hall, if you wake up in the night.”

But long after lights out, Hana lay awake, blinking into the unfamiliar darkness. It was a strange bed. And the world — now full of danger — seemed to have turned upside down. What will come next? Hana wondered with fear. Finally, she closed her eyes and fell asleep.

Hana awoke the next morning to urgent barking outside her window. Her heart pounded. What could be wrong? Then she recognized the sounds. It was Sylva, their loyal wolfhound. She had

found her way across town to be with Hana and George. At least some friends, Hana thought, stay true. It was a small comfort.



Hana, George and their wolfhound, Sylva.

Aunt Hedda and Uncle Ludvik's house was small but comfortable, with a pretty little garden in the back. It was very close to the neighborhood school, and every day George and Hana watched the other children with their book bags, laughing, playing, on their way to their classes. "I want to go too!" Hana stamped her foot in hurt and frustration. But there was nothing anyone could do.

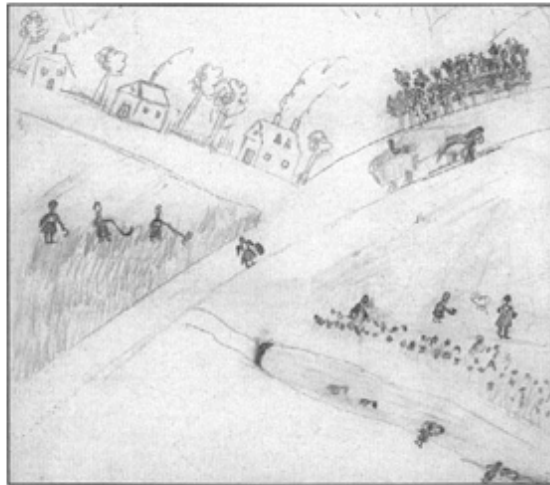


Hana and her loving and brave Uncle Ludvik.

In the months that followed, Uncle Ludvik and Aunt Hedda did their best to keep the children busy. George chopped wood for hours on end. Hana read books and played games. She was well liked by her cousins Vera and Jiri. Sometimes she even went to church with them.



Hana and George helping out in the fields.



Later, at Theresienstadt, Hana drew this picture of people working in the fields.

And every day at lunchtime, Hana and George went back to their old home to eat a familiar meal with their housekeeper, Boshka, who pampered them, hugged and kissed them, and reminded them that she had promised their parents that she would keep them healthy by feeding them well.

Every few weeks a letter would arrive from Father, who was imprisoned in the Iglau Gestapo prison. George would read only the cheerful part to his sister. George thought Hana was too young to know the whole truth about the harsh conditions in prison and how desperate Father was to be free. She was not too young, though, to be deported by the Nazis.