

Nové Město na Moravě, May 1942

41

ONE DAY, A NOTICE WAS DELIVERED to Aunt Hedda and Uncle Ludvik's house. Hana and George Brady were ordered to report to a deportation center at Trebic, fifty kilometers away from Nové Město na Moravě, on May 14, 1942. This was what Uncle Ludvik had feared. He called Hana and George into his study and read them the letter. Then he tried to put the bad news in the best possible light. "You're going on a trip," he told them. "Together! You'll be going to a place where there are lots of other Jews, lots of other children to play with. Maybe there you won't have to wear the star!" George and Hana said very little. They were both unhappy about being uprooted again and leaving their aunt and uncle.

Hana was scared. When Boshka came to help them prepare for this strange trip, Hana peppered her with questions. "Where are our parents? When will we see them again? Where will we end up? What can we take with us?" Boshka didn't have any answers. The housekeeper told Hana that she, too, would be leaving Nové Město na Moravě to stay with a brother who lived on a farm.

JUDISCHE KULTUSGEMEINDE IN PRAG
 ŽIDOVSKÁ NÁBOŽENSKÁ OBEC V PRAZE

Herrn, Frau, Frl. oder
 Pan, pani, slečna

Grady Kavana

100.436

Kruskaldt 44b.

13

Diese Einladung ist mit Genehmigung der Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung Prag (Dienststelle des Reichshauptkommissars der Sicherheitspolizei beim Reichsprotektor in Böhmen und Mähren) als Reiseangehörigkeit anerkannt.

Über Weisung der Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung Prag haben Sie sich

Tato služba platí za cestovní povolení na základě schválení Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung Prag (Dienststelle des Reichshauptkommissars der Sicherheitspolizei beim Reichsprotektor in Böhmen und Mähren).

Z národní Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung Prag dostává se

am - dne 30. IV. 1942
 um - v 10 Uhr - hod.
 in - do Třebíč

Einladung:

Jede vorgeladene Person hat mitzubringen

1. Geburtschein,
2. Bürgerregistration (Kontakte oder einen anderen Beleg über die Staatsbürgerschaft),
3. diese Einladung.

Neben diesen Personaldokumenten hat jede Person sämtliche Lebensmittelkarten mitzubringen.

Každá předvolaná osoba přivést s sebou

1. rodný list,
2. občanskou registraci (spíše totočnost nebo jiný úřední doklad o státní příslušnosti),
3. tuto předvolání.

Kromě těchto osobních dokladů, přivést každá osoba všechny potravinové lístky s sebou.

Um die vorgeschriebene Verladungstermine einhalten zu können, werden Sie den

29.4.42 um - v 18:03 Uhr - hod.
 von Kruskaldt 44b. Prag

abgehenden Zug benutzen.

Zur Rückreise müssen Sie, dem

um - v 16:38 Uhr - hod.
 von Verladungsport abgehenden Zug benutzen.

Kinder bis zu 4 Jahren müssen nicht persönlich erscheinen, doch müssen ihre Eltern oder verantwort. Aufseher, sowohl die Personaldokumente, als auch diese Einladung und die Lebensmittelkarte vorlegen. Kranke und alle Personen, die nicht persönlich erscheinen können, müssen neben allen Dokumenten ein ärztliches Zeugnis vorlegen lassen. Dieses Zeugnis muß eine genaue Diagnose der Krankheit enthalten.

Abgabe der/die(r) Ladung, zu dem/zu der/die(r) Vorladung(s), per Eisenbahn, welcher Abgang

K návratu musíte nastoupit do vlaku, který opouští

zde předvolání.

Děti do 4 let se osobně osobně dostavit, avšak jejich rodiče nebo jejich zodpov. dozorce musí předložit jak jejich osobní doklady, tak i tuto předvolání a všechny potravinové lístky. Nemocní a staré osoby, které se z nemocí osobně dostavit, mají se sebe předložit všechny doklady a mimo to vyvěšené úřední lékařské. Toto vyvěšení musí obsahovat přesnou diagnózu nemoci.

JUDISCHE KULTUSGEMEINDE IN PRAG
 ŽIDOVSKÁ NÁBOŽENSKÁ OBEC V PRAZE



This document orders Hana to be deported from her uncle's home on April 30, 1942. In fact, she was sent to Theresienstadt on May 14.

Hana took out the large brown suitcase with the polkadot paper lining from under her bed. She packed a sleeping bag that she hoped would give her the smell of home, no matter how far away they were sent. So did George. There was salami and sugar to tuck in amongst the clothes, as well as a few keepsakes.

42

Uncle Ludvik was heartbroken about sending his young niece and nephew away. He asked a driver to take them to the deportation center. Uncle Ludvik just couldn't face it himself. He and his wife did their best to hide their tears as they said goodbye to Hana and George. They promised to wait for their return to Nové Město na Moravě after the war was over. When the driver rang his bells, and the horses pulled away from the house, no one spoke a word.

A few hours later, the driver dropped Hana and George off in front of a huge warehouse. They joined the lineup near the entrance. When they reached the registration desk, they gave their names to a frowning soldier. He waved them into the dark, airless building.

The floor inside the building was covered with mats. Hana and George found two mats together in a corner and sat down. When they looked around, they realized there were hardly any other children. But there were hundreds of Jewish men and women, waiting to be sent to a place called Theresienstadt. They were all being deported.

For four days and four nights, Hana and George stayed in the warehouse, eating the food from their suitcases, sleeping on the mats. Though some of the adults tried to be kind to the children, Hana and George were not in a mood for company. They had each other and they passed the time reading,

talking, napping and thinking of home. It was in this warehouse on May 16, 1942, with a few candies and a stub of a candle, that Hana Brady celebrated her eleventh birthday.

Tokyo, June 2000

43

THE EXHIBITION “THE HOLOCAUST SEEN THROUGH CHILDREN’S EYES” drew more visitors, adults and children alike, than Fumiko had dreamed possible. The story of the Holocaust was new to many of the people who came to the Museum. As Fumiko had hoped, its tragedy was made real for them by the objects she had gathered and the story they told.

Though they were interested in the shoe, the can of Zyklon B gas, and the little sweater, it was the suitcase that became a magnet. Children and their parents constantly gathered around it and examined the writing: Hana Brady, May 16, 1931, *Waisenkind* — orphan. They read the poems written by the members of Small Wings. And they admired the drawings Hana had made in Theresienstadt. “Do you know any more about her?” they asked. “What happened to her? What did she look like?” Fumiko decided to re-double her efforts to find a picture of Hana. Somewhere, someone had to be able to help them. Fumiko wrote back to the Terezin Ghetto Museum. No, came the answer. We already told you. We know nothing about a girl named Hana Brady.

44

Fumiko just couldn’t accept this. She decided to go to Terezin herself.

Deportation Center, May 1942

ON THE MORNING OF THE FOURTH DAY, a loud whistle blew, and a Nazi soldier marched into the warehouse. Hana and George huddled in their corner as he barked out the orders.

“Everyone is to appear at the train tracks in one hour. Each person is allowed one suitcase. Twenty-five kilos. Not a gram more. Form straight lines. No talking. Do as you are told.”

The voice was so harsh, so scary. Hana and George quickly got their things together. Adults tried to help them, making sure the children were ready. Poor little ones, they thought. Such a hard journey and alone, with no parents.

Under the threatening eyes of the soldiers, they all left the warehouse in single file and lined up at the tracks. From the brilliant sunlight of the morning, Hana and George stepped into the dark train, carrying their suitcases. More people piled in after them, until it was full. Then the doors slammed shut and the train began to move.

Terezin, July 2000

46

THERESIENSTADT. The name the Nazis gave the Czech town of Terezin. Fumiko knew that to solve the mystery of Hana's suitcase, she had to get there. But how? The Czech Republic was thousands of miles from Japan and a plane ticket would cost a lot of money that Fumiko didn't have.

But this time luck was on her side. Fumiko was invited to attend a conference on the Holocaust in England. From there, it would only be a short plane trip to Prague, capital of the Czech Republic. From Prague it was just a two-hour drive to Terezin. Fumiko couldn't wait to leave.

On the morning of July 11, 2000, Fumiko got off the bus in the main square of Terezin. At first glance, it looked like an ordinary pretty town. There were wide streets lined with trees and well-kept three-story houses with flowered window boxes. But Fumiko hardly noticed. She had exactly one day to accomplish her mission. That night she would have to go back to Prague. Her plane for Japan was leaving the next morning.

47

Fumiko hadn't phoned ahead. She had no appointment at the Museum. But directly across from the main square, she saw a long two-story pale yellow building. This was the Terezin Ghetto Museum.

Fumiko opened the heavy front door and entered the cool foyer. It was eerily quiet. Where was everybody? She poked her head into a few of the offices off the main entranceway. They were empty. There seemed to be no one in the building.



Fumiko went to modern-day Terezin.

What has happened? Fumiko wondered. Could it be that everyone is out at lunch? No, it's only ten o'clock in the morning. Fumiko went back out into the square and tapped the shoulder of a friendly looking man on a park bench. "Can you help me?" she asked. "I'm looking for someone to help me in the Museum."

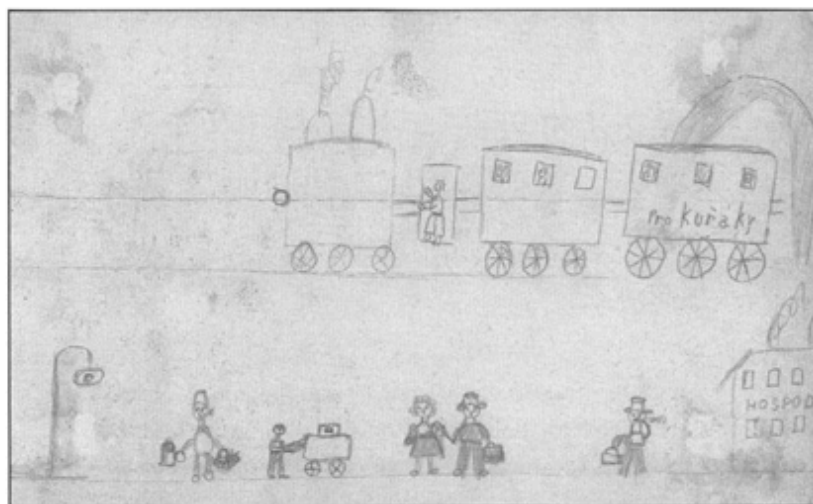
"Oh, you won't find anyone there today, young lady. It's a holiday and all the people who work there are away celebrating," the man replied. "I'm afraid you're out of luck."

Theresienstadt, May 1942

THE TRAIN TRIP WAS QUIET, UNEVENTFUL. People seemed to keep to themselves, lost in their own thoughts and fears about the future. After a few hours, the train came to an abrupt halt. The doors were flung open and the frightened passengers standing nearest to the doors could see the sign reading "Bohusovic Station." Hana squinted in the sunlight as she and George lugged their suitcases off the train. There, at the station, they were instructed to walk the rest of the way to the Theresienstadt fortress.

It was only a few kilometers, but their suitcases were cumbersome and heavy. Should we leave some things here, Hana and George wondered, to lighten our load? No, everything in their suitcases was precious, the only reminders of the life they used to have. George carried one suitcase. The other one they put on a moving cart, pushed by prisoners.

Hana and George approached the entrance to the walled fortress and joined a lineup. Everyone was wearing a yellow star, just like them.



Hana drew this picture of people getting off a train while she was at Theresienstadt

At the front of the line, a soldier asked people for their name, age and place of birth. Boys and men were being sent in one direction, girls and women in another. “Where are they going?” Hana asked George. More than anything else, she was afraid of being separated from her brother. “Can I stay with you?” she pleaded.

“Be quiet, Hana!” George told his sister. “Don’t make a fuss.”

When they reached the front of the line, the soldier stared at them. “Where are your parents?” he demanded.

“They are, uh, in another, uh, camp,” George stammered. “We hope that here we might be reunited.”

The soldier wasn't interested in conversation. He wrote down their names on index cards and searched their suitcases for money and jewellery. Then he slammed the bags shut. "To the left!" he ordered George. "To the right!" he ordered Hana.

"Please can I stay with my brother?" Hana asked.

"Move! Now!" the soldier ordered. What Hana feared most was about to happen. George gave her a quick hug. "Don't worry," he said. "I'll find you as soon as I can." Holding back tears, Hana picked up her suitcase and followed the other girls to *Kinderheim* (children's home) L410, a large barrack for girls that was to be Hana's home for the next two years.

Terezin, July 2000

50

FUMIKO COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. She was very upset — with herself and with her bad luck. I've come all this way and everyone who might be able to help me is on holiday. How did I manage to pick such a bad time to come to the Terezin Museum? How could I be so stupid? she thought. What do I do now?

As the hot sun beat down on her, a tear of frustration rolled down Fumiko's cheek. She decided to go back inside the Museum to try and collect her thoughts. Maybe she could come up with a different plan.

As she sat on a bench in the foyer, she heard a rustling sound. It appeared to be coming from one of the offices at the end of the hall. Fumiko tiptoed in the direction of the sound. There, in the last office on the right, she found a woman with glasses perched on the end of her nose, sorting through a huge stack of papers.

Startled, the woman almost jumped out of her chair when she saw Fumiko. "Who are you?" she asked. "What are you doing here? The Museum is closed."

51

"My name is Fumiko Ishioka," she replied. "I have come a long way from Japan to find out about a little girl who was here in Theresienstadt. We have her suitcase in our museum in Tokyo."

“Come back another day,” the woman replied politely, “and someone will try and help you.”

“But I don’t have another day,” exclaimed Fumiko. “My plane to Japan leaves tomorrow morning. Please,” she pleaded. “Help me find Hana Brady.”

The woman removed her glasses. She stared at the young Japanese woman and saw how anxious and determined she was. The Czech woman heaved a sigh. “All right,” she said. “I can’t promise anything. But I’ll try and help you. My name is Ludmila.”

Theresienstadt, 1942-43

KINDERHEIM L410 WAS A LARGE PLAIN BUILDING with about ten dormitory rooms. Twenty girls slept in each room, on burlap mattresses filled with straw in three-tiered bunk beds. Before the war, the town had been home to 5,000 people. The Nazis crammed ten times that number of prisoners into the same space.

There was never enough room, never enough food, never a chance for a private moment. There were too many people, too many bugs and rats, and too many Nazis who patrolled the camp with cruel discipline.

In the beginning, Hana, as a younger child, was not allowed to leave the building. That meant she couldn't see George. He lived in Kinderheim L417, which was just for boys, a few blocks away. Hana missed him terribly, and constantly asked the older girls, who were allowed outside, for news of him. They took Hana under their wing. They felt sorry for her, alone in the world, without her mother and father, away from her brother.

Hana made friends with an older girl in the next bunk. Ella was short, dark and very lively. She had a ready laugh and was happy to spend time with a younger girl who looked up to her and whom she could comfort in difficult times.

The man who gave out tickets for food took a liking to Hana and worried about her health. He knew that Hana was always hungry. He kindly offered to sneak her extra tickets, for another ladle of watery soup, another hunk of black bread. Hana's stomach growled and her mouth watered at the prospect of more food. But each time the offer was made, she politely said no. She'd been warned by Ella and the other older girls that she would be in big trouble with the guards if she was caught breaking a rule.

Torn from their families, crammed into small spaces, with barely enough to eat, the girls set about trying to make the best of a very bad situation. The ones over fifteen worked in the garden, where fruits, vegetables and flowers were grown for the Nazi soldiers. Once in a while, Mr. Schwartzbart, who ran the garden, allowed Hana to come out with the working group and enjoy the fresh air and sun. Hana loved the chance to work in the garden with the older girls. And there was an added bonus. A green bean here, and a strawberry there, always managed to find its way into a hungry girl's mouth.

But for the most part, Hana had to stay with girls her own age or younger, and obey the supervisor assigned to her room. Every day, they dusted, cleaned and swept under the bunks. Dishes, as well as faces, were washed under a pump. And every day there were secret classes held in the attic of Kinderheim L410.

In music classes, the girls learned new songs. They sang softly so they wouldn't be heard by the guards. At the end of each class, one child was chosen to sing a favorite song from home. When it was Hana's turn, she always sang a song called "Stonozka," the centipede song.

*Her life is not a piece of cake.
Imagine how she suffers when
She walks until her tootsies ache.*

*She's got good reason to complain.
So when I want to cry the blues
I just recall the centipede.
Consider walking in her shoes
And then my life seems sweet indeed.*

There were sewing classes, too. Hana had never sewn a stitch in her life, and she had a hard time with the needle. The teacher often had to ask Hana to stop giggling when she made a silly mistake. Nonetheless she managed to finish a blue blouse of which she was very proud.

But Hana's favorite class was her art class. Painting and drawing supplies were hard to come by. Some people had smuggled them into the ghetto in suitcases. Paper had been stolen, sometimes at great risk, from the Nazi storerooms.



Hana's drawing of people having a picnic under an umbrella, beside a river.

Plain wrapping paper was used when nothing else could be found. One way or another, in the early days, there were always crayons and colored pencils.

The art teacher, Friedl Dicker-Brandeis, had been a famous painter and was now a fellow prisoner at Theresienstadt. Friedl taught her students about serious things like perspective and texture. And sometimes the girls drew pictures of serious subjects: the ghetto walls, people waiting in line for food, inmates being beaten by Nazi soldiers.

But, more than anything, Friedl wanted her classes to help the children forget their brutal surroundings, at least for a while. "Think of space," she told Hana and the others. "Think of freedom. Let your imagination run wild. Tell me what is in your hearts. Put it down on paper."

For a treat, she would take them to the roof of the building, so they could be closer to the sky. From there, they could look beyond the walls of the camp and see the surrounding mountains in the distance. The girls could dream of birds and butterflies, of ponds and swings. And, using their crayons and pencils, they could bring them to life.

When classes were over and all the chores were done, they played a board game called *Smelina*, which had been invented right there in the ghetto. It was based on Monopoly, created for the children by an engineer named Oswald Pock who had been deported to Terezin. The players would land on properties like *Entwesung*, the de-lousing station where clothes were disinfected, and the guards' barracks. Instead of building a hotel, players built a *kumbal*, an attic hideaway above the barracks. For money, players used the ghetto paper bills called ghetto *kronen*.

55

But no matter what the distractions, Hana always ended up feeling hungry and lonely. She missed George terribly. Then one day there was an announcement that the ghetto rules were changing. The girls were allowed to go out once a week for two hours.

Hana immediately raced across the square to the Boys' House. "George, George Brady!" she called. "Where is my brother? Have you seen my brother?" She ran from room to room, asking every boy she came across. So anxious was Hana to find her brother that she even opened the door to a bathroom. And there was George, working away at his new job as a plumber. What a joyous reunion it was! George threw down his tools and Hana rushed into his arms. They laughed. They cried. Questions tumbled from their mouths. "Are you well? Have you heard anything about Mother and Father? Are you getting enough to eat?" From then on, they took advantage of every opportunity to be together.

George took his responsibility as a big brother seriously. He felt it was his job to protect Hana and to make sure she didn't get into trouble. He wanted to keep her as happy and healthy as possible until they could be with their parents again.

And Hana was equally devoted to George. In Terezin, where there was never enough to eat, residents received a small *buchta*, a plain doughnut, once a week. Hana never ate hers. She brought it to George so he could be strong and stay sweet.

56

In Theresienstadt, it seemed to Hana that more people arrived every day. Men, women and children came from all over Czechoslovakia at first, and then from other European countries. Every time a new group of people got off the trains, Hana would look for familiar faces. And sometimes, when she was feeling strong, she would approach strangers and ask, "Do you know my mother and father? Have you been to a place called Ravensbruck? My mother is there! Do you have any news of Karel and Marketa Brady?" The answer was always the same, but delivered with kindness and a barely concealed pity. "No dear, we don't know your mother and father. But if we hear anything — anything at all — we will find you and tell you."

Then one day, a familiar face did appear — an old friend of her parents who had no children of her own. At first, Hana was thrilled to see her. Anything that reminded Hana of home, that brought her a tiny step closer to her mother and father, was a comfort. But suddenly it seemed that wherever Hana went, the woman was waiting for her. Every time Hana turned a corner, she was there. She pinched Hana's cheek, gave her kisses. And then one day, she went too far.

"Come here, little one," she said, holding her hand out. "Remember all our good times together. Don't be shy. Don't be lonely. You can come and see me every day. You can call me 'mother.' "

“I have a mother,” Hana spat out. “Go away! Leave me alone.” Hana refused to see the woman again. She missed her own mother. No one could take her place.

Terezin, July 2000

57

AT THE TEREZIN GHETTO MUSEUM, Ludmila sat down behind her desk and stared at the young Japanese woman perched on the edge of the seat across from her. Fumiko's strong determination was written all over her face. She liked Fumiko and wanted to help her find out more about this girl, this Hana Brady.

She pulled a big book off the shelves. Inside were the names of the almost 90,000 men, women and children who had been imprisoned at Theresienstadt and transported to the east. They turned to the B's: Brachova, Hermina. Brachova, Zusana. Brada, Tomas. Bradacova, Marta. Bradleova, Zdenka.

"Here she is," cried Ludmila. And there she was: Hana Brady, May 16, 1931. "How can I find out more about her?" Fumiko asked.

58

"I wish I knew," Ludmila replied.

"But look," said Fumiko, pointing to another line in the book. There was another Brady, listed right over Hana. "Could this be her family?" Fumiko wondered aloud. Ludmila looked at the birth dates. Three years apart. "Yes" she said, "chances are very good that this was a brother. The Nazis listed families together."

There was something else that Fumiko noticed. Beside Hana's name was a check mark. In fact, there was a check mark beside every name on the page — except one. Beside the other Brady, George Brady, there was nothing. What did this mean?

30

an ka studijam učelam PAMÁNIK TEREZIN Vydělovací oddělení						
581	Wolfenstein Hilene	37521 A2-315	Haushalt	18. 6. 1890	Gr. Lezeritsch (Oberstadt 30)	107916
582	Wolfenstein Valter	37523 A2-316	Arbeiter	19. 10. 1913	Gr. Lezeritsch (Oberstadt 30)	107919
583	Wolfenstein Vilma	37524 A2-317	Schneiderin	17. 1. 1911	Gr. Lezeritsch (Oberstadt 35)	107918
584	Schuck Ing. Friedrich	37525 A2-318	Masch. Ing.	21. 6. 1891	Unter Dobrua 81 <i>John Babari</i>	107646
585	Drochdelon Simon	37526 A2-319	Lohnmann	3. 8. 1913	Gr. Lezeritsch Jahresilg. 25	107483
586	Schmabel Ingridine	37527 A2-320	Haushalt	20. 3. 1927	Unter Dobrua 81	107642
587	Schuck Witkar	37528 A2-321	Arzt	4. 11. 1894	Unter Dobrua 81	107649
588	Schuck Adith	37529 A2-322	Haushalt	17. 6. 5 1897	Unter Dobrua 81	107641
589	Schuck Jagmar	37530 A2-323	Schülerin	27. 3. 1897	Unter Dobrua 81	107643
590	Schuck Wladislo	37531 A2-324	Schüler	21. 7. 1928	Unter Dobrua 81	107650
591	Fein An. a.	37532 A2-325	Private	9. 6. 1890	Neustadt 1...13 <i>Note: Mistr. Thaur.</i>	107481
592	Leuer Inna	37533 A2-326	Kasapilfin	11. 8. 1922	Poltsch, Lidekgl 1 dat. Trebitsch Iglauer for 1 <i>gite</i>	107477
593	Thierfeld Ema	37534 A2-327	Haushalt	13. 3. 1897	Stadt Trar 63	107636
594	Schearts Irene v.	37535 A2-328	Fotografin	3. 12. 1815	Stadt Trar 63 <i>Mistr. Laha</i>	107634
595	Thierfeld Paul	37536 A2-329	Arbeiter	16. 2. 1920	Stadt Trar 63	107633
596	Brady George	37537 EK-325	Schüler	9. 2. 1928	Neustadt 1...13	100435
597	Brady Hana	37538 EP-341	Schülerin	16. 8. 1931	Neustadt 1...13	107436
598	Jillitch Anna	37539 A2-330	Haushalt	17. 1. 1901	Lecheritsch, 20. 11. <i>Orszajc</i>	107914
599	Blum Ireco	37540 A2-331	Haushalt	16. 10. 1901	Gr. Lezeritsch Jahresilg. 25	107433
600	Juchstbaum Elma	37541 A2-332	Haushalt	13. 12. 1902	Gr. Lezeritsch Jahresilg. 25	107438

From this list Fumiko learns that Hana had a brother.

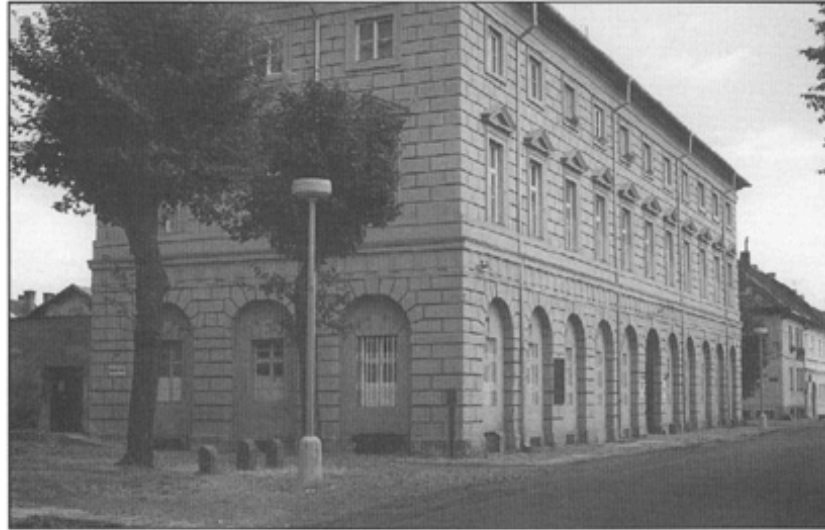
Theresienstadt, 1943-44

AS THE DAYS AND MONTHS PASSED, Theresienstadt became more crowded and cramped. New trainloads of people arrived all the time. This meant that there was less food for everyone and people became weak and sick. The oldest and youngest people were most at risk.

One day, after she had been in the ghetto for a year, Hana received an urgent message from her brother: Meet me at the Boys' House at six in the evening. I have a wonderful surprise for you.

George couldn't wait to share the good news. "Grandmother is here! She arrived last night!"

The children were overjoyed at the thought of seeing their grandmother. They were also worried. George and Hana's grandmother had been a refined woman who lived a cultured, comfortable life in the capital city of Prague. It was this generous grandmother who had given them their scooters. When they visited her in the big city, she always gave them bananas and oranges. But in recent years, she had been quite ill. How would she manage in this awful place? Not well, it turned out.



The now-renovated girls' barracks in Theresienstadt, where Hana lived.

The children found her in an overcrowded attic, with only straw to sleep on, one of many old, sick people. It was the middle of July and the attic was boiling hot. They were horrified by what they saw. Their gentle, elegant grandmother looked terrible. Her beautiful white hair, always so perfectly combed in the past, was a mess. Her clothes were torn and soiled. "I've brought you one of my paintings," Hana exclaimed, thinking it might put a smile on the old woman's face. But her grandmother could barely turn her head. Instead Hana folded the coarse paper and made her painting into a fan. "Rest," she told her grandmother as she tried to create a cooling breeze. Hana felt proud to be in charge of trying to help her grandmother feel better.

60

Hana soon learned that old people in Theresienstadt were given the smallest and worst rations. The food her grandmother got just wasn't enough and was often crawling with bugs. And there was no medicine. The children visited as often as they could and tried to cheer her up, bringing

crafts they'd made and singing songs they'd learned. "This bad time will all be over soon," George told her. "Mother and Father are counting on us all to stay strong," Hana said.

But in three months time, their grandmother was dead. Beyond Hana and George, few people took much notice. Death was all around them. In fact, so many people were dying so fast, the cemetery was full. Clinging to each other, Hana and George tried to remember the happy times with their grandmother, and cried together.

As more people poured into Terezin, thousands more poured out. They were crammed into boxcars and sent eastward to an unknown fate. Rumors about the transports spread inside the walls of Theresienstadt. Some tried to convince themselves and others that a better life awaited the people who were sent away on the trains. But as time went on, stories of death camps, brutality and mass murder circulated widely. When people spoke of these things, Hana covered her ears.

Every few weeks, the dreaded lists would be posted in each building. People whose names were on them had to report to an assembly hall close to the railway station within two days.

Lists. Everywhere there were lists. The Nazis were systematic record keepers and they wanted all their prisoners to know it. Through the constant counting and listing of people, the Nazis reminded the inmates who was in charge. Everyone knew that being counted, being noticed, could mean a transport and another separation from family and friends.

One morning, as Hana was doing her chores, everyone in the camp was ordered to stop what they were doing and assemble on a huge field outside the town. Everyone — old and young. They were marched out by Nazi guards carrying machine guns, and ordered to stand there with no food, no water, and a sense that something terrible was about to happen. Hana and the other girls didn't even dare to whisper among themselves.

Hana couldn't bear the thought that she might be separated from George. Or from the girls in Kinderheim L410, who had become almost like sisters. Wasn't it enough that her parents had been taken away from her? Ella stood beside her and tried to cheer her up with smiles and winks. But after four hours of standing, Hana could no longer contain her despair. She began to cry.

Ella slipped her a tiny piece of bread she had hidden in her coat. "Eat this, Hana," she quietly implored. "You will feel better." But Hana's tears kept coming. The big girl then turned to her. "Listen carefully to me," she whispered. "You are unhappy and scared. That's just how the Nazis want to see us, all of us. You can't give them the satisfaction, Hana. You can't give them what they want. We are stronger and better than that. You must dry up those tears, Hana, and put on a brave face." Miraculously, Hana did.

The Nazi commander began shouting out names. Everyone had to be accounted for. Finally, after eight hours of standing in a bitter wind, everyone was ordered to march back to the barracks.

It was September, 1944. When the Nazis began to realize that they were losing the war they announced that more people would be leaving Theresienstadt. The transports were sped up. Now a new list of names went up every day.

Each morning, her heart pounding, Hana ran down to the main entrance of the building where the list was posted. And one day there it was — the name she dreaded finding — George Brady. Hana's knees buckled. She sat down on the ground and cried. George, her beloved brother, her protector, was being sent away to the east. That wiry boy, now a young man, was told to report to the trains along with 2,000 other able-bodied men.

At their last meeting, on the dirt path between the Boys' House and Kinderheim L410, George asked Hana to listen carefully. "I leave tomorrow," he said. "Now, more than ever, you must eat

as much as you can. You must breathe fresh air at every opportunity. You must take care of your health. Be strong. Here is my last ration. Eat every last crumb.”

George gave Hana a huge bear hug and gently pushed the hair out of her eyes. “I promised Mother and Father that I would take care of you and bring you home safely so that we can all be together as a family again. I don’t want to break that promise.” Then the curfew whistle screamed and George was gone.

Hana became despondent. She couldn’t bear the separation from her brother. First her parents, and now George. She felt so terribly alone in the world. Sometimes, when the other girls tried to cheer her up, Hana turned her face away or even snapped at them, “Can’t you just leave me alone?”

Only gentle Ella could convince her to eat her meager rations. “Remember what your brother told you. You need to take care of yourself and stay strong — for him.”

Four weeks later, Hana learned that she, too, was going east. A reunion! “I’ll see George again,” she told everyone. “He’s waiting for me.”

She sought out Ella. “Can you help me?” she asked. “I want to look nice when I see my brother. I want to show him how well I’ve taken care of myself.” Despite her own fears, Ella wanted to nourish the hopes of her young friend. She smiled at Hana and set to work. She got water at the pump and used her last little square of soap to wash Hana’s face and to clean her knotted, dirty hair. With a piece of rag she tied Hana’s hair into a ponytail. She pinched Hana’s cheeks to bring up a little red. Ella stood back and looked at the results of her efforts. Hana’s face shone with hope. “Thank you Ella,” Hana said, hugging the bigger girl. “I don’t know what I would do without you.” For the first time since George had been sent away, she looked happy.

That night, Hana packed her suitcase. There wasn't much to put into it: a few pieces of pretty worn out clothing, one of her favorite drawings from Friedl's art class, a book of stories that Ella had given her. When she was done, Hana got into her bunk and slept her last night in Theresienstadt.

The next morning, she and many of the other girls from Kinderheim L410 were marched out to the railroad track. Nazi guards barked orders and their dogs bared their teeth and growled. No one stepped out of line.

"Where do you think we are going?" Hana whispered to Ella. No one really knew. The girls boarded the darkened rail car one by one, until there was not an inch of room left in the train. The air turned sour. And the wheels began to turn.

The train chugged on for a day and a night. There was no food. There was no water. There was no toilet. The girls had no idea how long the journey would be. Their throats were parched, their bones ached, their stomachs twitched with hunger.

64

They tried to comfort each other, singing songs of home. "Lean on me," Ella said softly, "and listen, Hana."

*So when I want to cry the blues
I just recall the centipede.
Consider walking in her shoes
And then my life seems sweet indeed.*

The girls held hands. They closed their eyes and tried to imagine being somewhere else. Each girl imagined something different. When Hana closed her eyes, she saw the strong, smiling face of her brother.

And then suddenly, in the middle of the night on October 23, 1944, the wheels of the train ground to a screeching halt. The doors were opened. The girls were ordered out of the boxcar. This was Auschwitz.

An angry guard ordered them to stand straight and silent on the platform. He held tight the leash of a large dog straining to pounce. The guard looked the group up and down quickly. He cracked his whip in the direction of one girl who had always been embarrassed by how tall she was. "You," he said, "over there, to the right!" He cracked his whip one more time at another of the older girls. "You, there too." Then he called over to a group of young soldiers who stood at the edge of the platform. "Take them, now!" he ordered, pointing to Hana and the rest of her group. Huge searchlights almost blinded the girls. "Leave your suitcases on the platform," the soldiers commanded.

Through a wrought iron gate and under the watchful eyes of the surly dogs and uniformed men, Hana and her old roommates were marched off. Hana held on tight to Ella's hand. They passed huge barracks, saw the skeleton-like faces of prisoners in their striped uniforms peeking out the doors. They were ordered to enter a large building. The door closed behind them with a frightening bang.