

High School Poetry, Second Place

Letters of Aspiration

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Teacher: Megan Enger

Survivor: Regina Lewin

Each day, she awoke to frigid barracks and silhouettes,
to walls that whispered how many lives were taken daily.
Hunger grasped at her body,
and the smell of despair ambushed her with every breath she took.
Yet she sought for flickers of hope,
for reassurance that there is still light.

A quiet promise, a quick glimpse,
slips of paper she clung to,
little notes from friends in Polish,
priceless memories she cherished,
small flashes of humanity in a reality overpowered by gloom,
reminding her that she isn't just a number,
but someone who's seen and who matters.

Those notes anchored her through the toughest nights,
through moments when giving up felt like the only choice,
through the endless hours of working,
through the fear that latched onto her.

I see that same resilient bravery today,
in families hiding from the violence,
Hispanic immigrants waking up with the fear of being ripped from their families.
Threats, bullets, and the unknown
attempt to shatter them.
Yet they grasp onto the hope of a better tomorrow like Regina did,
carrying it through every breath they take.

Regina Lewin's bravery reminds me,
that even the slightest glimpses of hope
can support me through the fear, cruelty, and injustice we as immigrants face.
Her determination motivates me to act,
to protect those whom I love, what I believe in, and who I am,
to advocate for what's right—despite the trials I have to face.