

FIRST PLACE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROSE

An Apple for the Three of Us

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Survivor Testimony: Bertha Haberfeld

Empty. Heartbroken. Lonely.
Nightmare.

Bertha Haberfeld never imagined she'd be using those words to describe her youth. Never did she imagine the pain and loss that would surround her, and the strength and courage she would need to survive the unthinkable.

Bertha was born on May 29, 1929 in Hungary. Her father owned a grocery store and a dress making shop. Bertha and her five siblings helped in the family businesses. Their home was happy, filled with love and laughter. They weren't rich, but it didn't matter because they were together. Before the war, Bertha was a young and capable woman who dreamed of starting a family. Those dreams were shattered in 1944 when her family faced the hatred of the Nazis and the nightmare of the ghetto.

Bertha's memory of the ghetto is filled with pain. She recalled seeing the Nazis beating people on the street to death or leaving them bruised and bloody. Eventually, Bertha and her family were taken to Auschwitz. As soon as they arrived, Bertha was separated from her parents. Tears ran down her face as she remembered turning to say goodbye to her mother and realizing she was no longer there. Bertha never saw her mother again.

Even though her family was torn apart, Bertha was fortunate to have two of her sisters by her side. All around them was hunger, death, pain, and sickness. How does a human being survive such hardship and not give up?

We survive with love. We survive together.

Bertha told the story of a time when she and her sisters were working in the fields. They were cold, hungry, and tired. Suddenly, a French prisoner tossed them an apple when the guards weren't looking. The three sisters held the apple and couldn't believe what this man had given them. It may seem insignificant, but to them, this apple represented hope and love. Bertha recalled: "We held that apple...the three of us." This simple act of kindness reminded them there was still love in the world. Holding the apple together represented the hope that they shared and gave to each other.

I know that I could never truly comprehend the pain that Bertha lived through. I felt the sadness that Bertha still carries as she described her last moments with her mother, or the nightmares she still has about the war. I felt pain in my heart at the thought of my family being ripped apart. But their story also fills me with hope. The story of the apple reminds me of how the smallest acts of love and kindness can bring hope to those who need it the most. It also reminds me how the support from the people you love can lift you up when you think all hope is lost. Bertha and her sisters survived because they held each other, they shared with each other, and together they never lost hope.