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**First Place High School Essay**

**A Child's Story**

I don't take anything for granted anymore. There was a time when I thought adults knew everything and would take care of me. I thought the grown-up world was a place that made sense. Now I know better.

I was one of the lucky ones. World War Two began when I was eight, and I was Jewish. Hide and Seek was my favorite game. The day they came to take my family away I was hiding inside the spooky tree, waiting for my sister Brigitte to give up and holler for me to show myself. I was trying to keep a daddy long legs from getting any closer when I heard Brigitte scream. Peeking, I saw my family violently herded into a windowless van. Brigitte had screamed because the van door was slammed on her fingers. Terrified, my parents bade her shush. Her agony did not matter. She was a Jew. She was nothing.

Night's chilly fingers crept into my oak. Numb, I stumbled out of my sanctuary. Normally, Mother would be fussing over me and Brigitte, pulling leaves from our hair, scolding us for running in the dirt before dinner. The kitchen would be filled with savory smells. I was so hungry, I made for our garbage can and bolted down stew-soaked bread pieces I'd abandoned at lunch.

For two days I huddled in my tree, listening to neighbors chatter about their son Stephan. He was so patriotic, so wholesome, so handsome in his Hitler Youth uniform. Did they know what had happened to my family?

On the third night, I sneaked behind nearby restaurants and went through their garbage. As I scavenged, I heard a noise behind me. I froze, terrified. Then I heard the commanding voice of a child, his belligerent tone masking fear.

"That trash is ours! Have you been sent to find us? Who are you?" Three more ghostly figures, wisps of children, crept out from behind the first. They were shivering, like me.

I was so happy to see other children, I cried. I saw weakly, "My family was taken away. Please, I am hungry." The child who had addressed me nodded to the rest and came over and put his arm around me. He stank. He said, "The same happened to us. If you want to, come with us."

And so I did. We hid during the day, and foraged like rats at night.

The adults we glimpsed seemed indifferent to closing shops and disappearing people. Later on, when the world asked how it could have happened, those same adults pleaded ignorance and decried the atrocities.

Years have passed. Many still choose to be unaware. People discuss Nazi Germany and are glad they live in modern times, where such monstrosities are dated – we are too advanced as

a civilization now. Yet individuals always exist who hate people they have never met. That is where the danger lies.