



Drawing: Beate Schützmann-Krebs

I meet the only Girl from Krynkí

ot azoy zaynen vider farlofn tsvey vokhn fun shverer arbet. tsey vokhn fun peynikn dem guf un di neshome; on a hofenung, az der morgn vet far mir brengen epes besers. di tsayt derfilt ober ir misye, epes naves mir tsu brengen. un ot iz geshen dos umdervartete, dos naye vos hot baloykhtn mayn vayterik shver leben in katset un dervekt mut tsum oysdoyer.

ikh shtey oyf mayn postn vi ale teg. far mayne oygn bavegn zikh blase farshvartste froyen, firndik erd- ver veyst tsu vos un far vemen?... plutsung derze ikh epes umgloyblikhes, epes vos ken zayn bloyz a kranke forshtelung. a meydele in a tserisn hemd, fun velkhn s'kukt aroys teyln fun kerper oyf der fardorbener velt. fis-farbundene mit papir un blut rint fun unter dem aroys. der kop iz opgeshoyn. dos poniml-kleyn un blas. zi shlept a groysn emer tsum aroysshitn.

So another two weeks of hard work went by. Two weeks of tormenting body and soul, with no hope that tomorrow would provide something better for me. But anyhow, time still fulfilled its mission to bring me something new. And something unexpected happened, something new, which illuminated my further hard life in the concentration camp and awakened courage in me to endure.

I'm standing at my post as I do every day. Before my eyes, pale, mournful women are moving around and carrying earth - for whom and for what, who knows?...

Suddenly, I see something incredible, something that can only be some sick perception: There's a girl in a torn shirt, from which parts of her body look out on the corrupted world. Her feet are bound with paper, and blood is trickling out from underneath. Her head is shaved, her face small and pale. She drags a large bucket to pour it out.

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di oygn-azoyne bakante. kh'hob moyre far zikh aleyn tsu trakhtn, az z'zol nit zayn mayne a shul-khaverte, Rokhele Zakheym. kh'teyl zikh mit mayne hashores mit khaver Pinyen. mir bashlisn zi ontsurufn baym nomen, ven zi vet zikh tsurikkern fun ir arbet. es farlofyn eynike minutn. mir shteyen bayde shtark umgedulgik.

ot bavayzt zikh dos kleyne, vi a tsen-yorik nebekhdik kind. zi trogt shoyn a leydik emer. ire trit zaynen langzame. men zet az di koykhes hobn zi shoyn shtark farlozt. dos ponim iz ober dokh enlekh tsu dem fun der amoliker Rokhelen. ikh bin geblibn shteyn in der ofener tir oyf mayn postn. Pinye iz opgegangen in a zayt un ven er hot gezen, az zi dernentret zikh tsum barak, hot er shtil oysgerufn: Rokhele!

Her eyes are so familiar to me. But I am afraid of my own imagination - maybe it is only me who thinks it is my classmate Rochele Zakheim! I'm exchanging ideas with my friend Pinye about my assumption. We decide to call her by name when she gets back from work. A few minutes pass. Standing there, we are already very impatient.

At that moment, the little creature, like a pitiable ten-year-old child, shows up. The bucket she is carrying is already empty. She walks with slow steps; we can see that she is at the end of her strength. And yet! The face is similar to that of Rochele at former times. I had stopped at the open door at my post. Pinye was going off sideways, and when he saw her approaching the barrack, he called softly, "Rochele!"

<p>Avroheml! hot zikh derhert ir entfere un zi iz glaykh gefaln oyf der erd. farbay undz hobn zikh arumgedreyt SS-layt. kh'hob zikh nisht getort rirn fun ort. kh'hob gut gevust, az mit mayn tsugeyn tsu ir, farlirn mir bayde undzere lebns.</p> <p>Kh'bin geblibn shteyn oyf mayn plats, kukndik vi Rokhele ligt a gekhaleshte oyf der erd, azoy nont fun mir.</p> <p>-harts, tsi kenstu take azoy fil fartrogn?-trakht ikh tsu mir haynt vegn yenem shoyderlekhn moment. kh'shtey bay der tir un ze dos eyntsike meydele fun Krinik, mayn khaverte fun mayne zise shul-yorn, shpeter hobn mir tsuzamen aktuirt in a kinder-un yugnt-organizatsye, Skif.</p> <p>tsuzamen genumen lektsyes fun kamf far a shenern, yoysherdikn leben. tsuzamen farbrakht zumer in lagern, tsuzamen gegangen oyf oysflugn un undzere gezangen flegn ophilkhn in vaytn arum. itst ligt a shotn fun der shtendiker lakhndiker Rokhelen.</p> <p>a shvakhe, an umbaholfene un ikh hob nisht dos mentshlekhe rekht ir tsu helfn oyfshteyn fun der mit blut ongazpter erd. a por meydlekh heybn zi oyf un firn zi arayn in barak. far mir antplekt zikh a groyser, heyliker tsil, kh'muz helfn dem eyntsikn lebngelibnem meydele fun mayn geburts-shtetele Krinik.</p>	<p>"Avroheml!", we heard her answer, and then she immediately fell down to the earth. SS men walking past us turned around. I did not dare to move from my place, because I knew all too well that it would cost us both our lives if I walked toward her.</p> <p>I remained in my spot and watched Rochele pass out on the floor, so close to me!</p> <p>"Heart, can you really bear so much?", I think today, remembering that shuddering moment. There, I am standing at the door, seeing the only girl from Krynki, my comrade of my sweet school years! Later, both of us were active together in the children and youth organization "SKIF" ('Socialist Children's Union').</p> <p>Together we attended lectures on the struggle for a finer, fair life. We spent the summer in the camp, went on trips together, and our songs used to echo in the wide surroundings. Now, there lies a shadow of the always laughing Rochele.</p> <p>Now she is weak and helpless, and I do not even have the human right to help her up from the blood-soaked ground. A couple of girls pick them up and bring them to the barracks. In front of me reveals a great sacred goal: to help the only surviving girl of my native town Krynki.</p>
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<p>Pinye bashlist dos zelbe. kh'koyf unter mayn Kapo. er brengt mir dem numer fun ir hant un informirt mikh, az zi gefint zikh in blok numer 9. dos badayt, az es zenen ir geblibn getseylte teg tsum leben.</p> <p>der Kapo iz gevorn der farbinder tsvishn mir un Rokhelen. er hot ir avekgefirt mayne ershte por verter: „halt zikh, mir veln dir helfn kolzman mir veln leben.“</p>	<p>Pinye decides the same. I bribe my capo. He gives me the number on her arm and informs me that she is in block number 9, that is, that her days of life are numbered.</p> <p>The Kapo became my liaison between me and Rochele. He delivered my first few words to her, "Hang in there, we will help you as long as we live."</p>
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tsurik hot er mir gebrakht a shtikele papir mit ir oyfshrift „kh'bin geblibn aleyn gun gantsn transport.“

itst hot men ir gedarfht gebn mamoshesdike hilf. koydemkol zi ontun, zi zol krign a beser oyszen, vayl in dem tsushtand vi zi gefint zikh itst- iz zi fun di ershte kandidatkes in krematoryum arayn. mir hobn far ir geshafn ontun gedarfht gut batsoln dem Kapo az er zol es bazorgn tsu ir.

bazunder hobn mit im gemuzt batsoln, az er zol poyeln bay di daytshishe froyen, velkhe zenen geshtanen in shpits fun lager, az zey zoln zi lozn aroysgeyn fun blok. di dozike „froyen“ hobn mir bazunder opgekoyft mit gute tsigaretn, zeydene zokn un andere luksus-artiklen far velkhe mir flegn aynshteln undzere leben baym avektrogn es tsu zey.

in eynike teg arum gelingt undz aroystsunemen fun blok numer 9 un Rokhele bakumt arbet oyf der „Kanade“. do flegt shoy nisht keyn ontun (1). zi bakumt esn durkh mir un Pinyen, vifl es lozt zikh nor ibertrogn. ir lage besert zikh fun tog tsu tog. mir zeen zikh zeyer oft fun der vaytns. mir shraybn zikh briv. zi vasht far mir eyberhemder keday ikh zol oyszen reyn un „oyfgefast“. dos gute oyslerlekhe oyszen farlengert dos leben fun di arestantn. ikh fil zikh oykh mutiker un epes loyfn di peynlekhe teg shneler durkh.

Kh'veys nisht tsi kh'bin dan geven farlibt in mayn itstiker froy un tsi es ken beklal hershn libe in aza shreklekh gehenemdiker lage, kh'veys ober, az zi hot mir gegeben a sakh koykhes oystsuhalt n dem shoyderlekhtn peryod fun mayn leben.

dos glik fun tsuzamenzayn in dem zelbn lager mit Rokhelen hot ober lang nisht gedoyert. oysgeshtelte in „finftelekh“ hot undz der Kapo aroysgefirt fun froyen-lager. Rokhele hot mikh shtum bagleyt fun der zayt. mayne letste blikn zenen gevendet tsu ir. kh'hob gezen in ire oygn groyse trenn.

When he returned, he brought me a piece of paper on which she had written, "I remained the only one of the whole transport."

Now we had to give her concrete help: First of all, to dress her so that she got a better appearance. Because in the condition she was currently in, she was one of the first candidates for going into the crematorium. To get clothes for her, we had to hire the Kapo and pay him well, to provide her with them.

In particular, we had to pay him for causing the German women who held a leading position in the camp to take Rochele out of the block. We bribed those "women" especially with good cigarettes, silk stockings and other luxury items, for which we risked our lives each time we **smuggled them in**.

A few days later we manage to have her taken out of Block 9, and Rochele gets work in "Canada". There, she no longer needs clothing (by us) (1). She receives food through me and Pinye, how much we can only bring over. Her situation is improving every day. We often see each other from afar and write letters to each other. She washes my shirts for me so that I look clean and "mannered". A good appearance prolongs the life of the detainees. I also feel more courageous, and the painful days seem to pass more quickly.

I don't know if I was in love then with her, my current wife, and if there could even be love in such a terrible, hellish situation. But I know very well that she had given me a lot of strength to be able to endure the most terrible period of my life.

However, the happiness of being in the same camp with Rochele did not last long. Lined up in "rows of five," the Kapo led us out of the women's camp. Rochele accompanied me silently from the side. I took my last glances at her- and saw that she had big tears in her eyes.

1) My translation of this very shortened sentence is not quite certain.



Drawing courtesy of Zdzislaw Nitka

ikh hob bay undz in lager gemoldn alemen fun undzer shtetl, az es do faran Rokhele Zakheym. un mir darfn ale zen tun vos es iz nor meglekh zi tsu derhaltn baym leben, azoy lang vi mir aleyv veln nokh leben. ikh un Pinye hobn oyf zikh genumen di flikht nisht tsu kargn keyn onshtrengungen oyf aroystsurateven zi fun der itstiker lage. Kh'hob oykh dertseylt dem Kapo, az ikh hob gefunen a shvester in lager, velkhe gefint zikh zeyer in a shlekhter lage.in a lage vos men ken zi yedn tog „tsunemen“ bay a selektsye.

der Kapo hot mir tsugezogt tsu gebn hilf, velkhe hot gedarft bashteyn in protektsye bay di daytshishe froyen vos zaynen geshtanen in shpits fun lager. mir hobn zikh gestaret tsu shafn a kleyd un shikh.

yedn tog hobn mir gebrakht tsigaretn, a tsibele velkhe mir flegn „organizirt“ bay di polyakn vos hobn derhaltn peklekh fun der fray.

vos es iz undz nor meglekh geven hobn mir geshafn un gebrakht in froyen-lager un gegebn mut un gloybn dem eyntsikn meydvl velkhe hot itst derfult, az zi iz nisht mer elnt vi frier un iz gevordn mit yedn tog mutiker.

In our camp, I told everyone from our shtetl that Rochele Zakheim was here. And that we all, as long as we lived, had to see to do our utmost to keep her alive.

I and Pinye pledged to spare no effort to get her out of the present situation. I also told the Kapo that I had found a sister in the camp who was in a very bad situation, as a result of which she could be "taken out" at a selection every day.

The Kapo agreed to be helpful, that is, to effect patronage by the German women who kept a head position in the camp. We made an effort (in return?) to procure a dress and shoes.

Every day we "brought" cigarettes; we received "onions" organized by the Poles, who received a "parcel from freedom" in return.

We procured and brought everything we could to the women's camp, giving courage and hope to the only girl, who now no longer felt so miserable and was gaining more courage with each passing day.

The First Passover in the Camp



Drawing courtesy of Zdzisław Nitka

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dos leben in ale kontsentratsye -lagern hot farvandlt dem mentshn in a tsvey-fisiker khaye mit ale niderike instinktn. der mentsh hot shnel farloyrn zayn mentshlekhe virde, zayn glaykhgevikht, zayne amolike mentshlekhe gefiln.

der eyntsiker ideal un di eyntsike shtrengung zenen geven vi azoy zikh tsu farshafn nokh a shtikl broyt oder a por lefl vaserdike zup tsu shtiln dem khayishn hunger. der toyt velkher hot oyf a yedn geloyert oyf shrit un trit, hot nisht gehat aza virkung vi di shrek far hunger.

der lager-mentsh hot zikh ayngelbilet az nokh a shtikl broyt un a por lefl zup hobn di kraft tsu bahersh dem toyt un men muz tsugebn, az an inerlekher umfarshtendlekher drang un viln tsum blaybn leben un iberlebn dem khayishn hitlerzm, iz geven bay yedn fun undz tif ayngelbakn in hartsn, khotsh der toyt vi a shotn, hot undz umetum bagleyt. s'iz karakteristish az shteyendik azoy nont tsum toyt antviklt zikh bay yedn mentshn a shtarker viln tsu leben.

di alte katsetnikes velkhe zenen shoyrn gezesn etlekhe yor hobn bislekhvayz fargesn, az oyser di elektrizirte lager-drot iz nokh faran a velt vu es leben fraye, virdike mentshn. do hot men oykh fagesn an alte nontste un libste, on alts vos iz geven frier. s'hot zikh oysgevizn, az es zenen shoyrn ariber tsendliker yorn un dos vos geshet do oyf dem shtikl erd iz shoyrn a normale dersheyning un vet shoyrn azoy blaybn oyf eybik.

men hot zeyer zeltn gekont hern fun alte katsetnikes vi a blok-eltster, a shrayber, a Kapo- a dermonung vegn zayn fargangenhayt oyf der frayer velt.

der lager-mentsh hot poshet oysgemekt fun zayn zikorn di fargangenhayt. do hot a yeder gelebt bloyz mitn nisht zikhern haynt. der morgn hot shoyrn tsu undz lekhlutin nisht gehert zeendik yedn tog dem roytn himl un dem shvartsn roykh un di selektsyes, velkhe hobn keynem nisht

Life in all concentration camps transformed man into a bipedal animal with all its base instincts. Man has quickly lost his human dignity, his inner balance, his former human feelings.

The only ideal and effort was to figure out how to get another piece of bread or a few spoonfuls of watery soup to satisfy the beastly hunger. Death, which lurked at every turn, did not affect us as much as the terror of hunger.

The camp man imagined that after a few pieces of bread and a few spoonfuls of soup he would gain the strength to control death. And one must add that an inner, incomprehensible urge and will to live, and to survive the bestial Hitlerism, was deeply rooted in the hearts of each of us, although death accompanied us like a shadow all around. It was characteristic that every person who was so close to death developed a **particularly** strong will to live.

The old concentration campers, who had been imprisoned for several years, forgot bit by bit that outside the electric wire there was another world where free people lived in dignity. They also forgot their former nearest and dearest, and in general everything that had been before. It seemed to them as if dozens of years had already passed, and that what was happening there on that piece of earth was a normal occurrence and would remain forever.

Very seldom did we hear from an old concentration camper, such as a block elder, a clerk or a Kapo, a reminder of his past in the free world.

The camp man simply erased the memory of his past and lived only in an uncertain "today". Whether we would experience the next day was not certain, and with the red sky, the black smoke and the selections that spared no one, the "tomorrow" was no longer in our thoughts. (1) We

<p>oysgemitn (1). s'iz gegangen bloyz in tsayt (1). yedes mol ven der kalter merder Mengelyer flegt zikh bavayzn in lager, hot er shoyn gehat a genoye tsol vifl er darf haynt aroysfirn tsum toyt, megn dos zayn gezunte oder kranke.</p> <p>s'iz gants farshtendlekh, az in azelkhe shoyerlekhe badingungen hot keyner nisht gevust fun keyn date un fun keyn yontev. yontev iz geven dan ven eyner hot ergets gekhapt a shtikl broyt oder a bisl vasedike zup. in lager hobn zikh oykh gefunen religyeze yidn un kristn, velkhe hobn shtil, bigneyve, arayngekhapt a davn, az afile der blok-eltster zol es nisht bamerkn. mit mir in eynem iz geshlofn an elterer yid, velkher flegt yedn tog, say bay der arbet, say in lager, shteyendik baym tseyl-apel, davenen shtil, glotsndik mit di oygn oyf ale zaytn. fun dem yid hob ikh zikh dervust, az haynt baynakht iz peysekh.</p> <p>biz itst hobn mir bloyz gevust fun eyn tog in vokh, in velkhn mir hobn bloyz gearbet biz 12 azeyger. dos iz geven der zuntik.</p>	<p>only lived in the present (1). Every time the cold murderer Mengele showed himself in the camp, he already knew exactly how many people, whether healthy or sick, he would send to their deaths today.</p> <p>So it is quite understandable that in such gruesome conditions no one knew the exact date or even a holiday. A holiday was whenever someone got hold of a piece of bread or a little watery soup. In the camp, there were also very religious Jews and Christians, who silently and secretly said a prayer, so that the block elder could not notice it. My bedmate was an elderly Jew who prayed silently every day, both at work and at camp and roll call, while looking around intently on all sides. From this Jew I learned that tonight was Passover.</p> <p>Previously, we were only aware of one day of the week when we only worked until 12 noon, and that was Sunday.</p>
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(1) translated a little freely

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<p>di nemen fun di andere teg un khadoshim zenen undz gevorn gants fremd. azoy iz geflosn undzer farshshklaft leben.</p> <p>ven ikh hob zikh dervust, az haynt iz peysekh, hot mir a tyokhke geton in hartsn. kh'hob zikh dermont mayn heym fun frier, oyf der frayer velt, ven mir hobn gelebt tsuzamen mit mayn mishpokhe in freylekhn, lakhndikn shtetl, ven mir zenen gegangen in vald raysn nis un geshpilt in gefarbte eyer, getrunkn dem zisn peysekhdikn med.</p> <p>nont far peyselkh hobn di bestyalishe natsis ongehoyn brenge tsendliker toyznter slovakishe tshekhishe un ungarishe yidn fun Karpatn-</p>	<p>The names of the other days and months became quite foreign to us. Thus our enslaved life flowed away.</p> <p>When I learned that today was Passover, my heart throbbed violently. I remembered my former home in the free world, when we had lived together with my family in the happy, laughing shtetl. When we went to the forest to pick nuts, played with dyed eggs and drank the sweet Passover wine.</p> <p>Near Passover, the Nazi beasts began transporting tens of thousands of Slovak, Czech and Hungarian Jews from Carpathian Russia. They had</p>
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<p>Rusland. zey hot men gezogt, az men firt zey in a gan eydn vu zey veln leben vi „Got in Ades“. (1)</p> <p>hart far peysekhn hobn ongehoyn brenen di ershte tsvey krematoryums, velkhe hobn in a mesles farbrent tsen biz fuftsn toyznt gezunte mentshn. di koymens hobn on oyfher, tog un nakht, aroysgeshpign toyznter umshuldike mentshlekhe neshomes.</p> <p>do in dem shoyderlekhestn, groyzamstn toytn-lager vu a mentshns leben hot nisht gehat di klenste vert hobn zikh nokh gefunen mentshn mit libe eyner tsum tsveytn, oyf velkhe s'hot azoy nisht gevirkht der lager-klimat un di minhogim.</p> <p>ven di frume yidn fun Karpatn-Rusland zenen gekumen in lager un hobn gezen dem „gan eydn“ invelkhn men hot zey gebrakht zenen zey in ershtn tog fun peysekhn arumgegangen mit aropgelozte kep un eynike fun zey hobn gehaltn zeyer broyt in keshene un nisht gevolt esn khomets. etlekhe fun di yidn hobn gearbet tsuzamen mit mir un ven ikh hob zey gezogt vegn dem goyrl fun di familyes, velkhe men hot avekgefirt oyf di oytos fun ban-statsye, hobn zey dos nisht gevolt gloybn maynendik, az mir viln bloyz oyf zey onvarfn a shrek.</p> <p>dos eyntsike plats vu men hot zikh gekent fray oysshmuesn iz geven in klozet. dortn flegt men araynkhapn a shtikl shmues gants in der shtil vegn der troyeriker lage un vegn undzer alemens goyrl, velkher iz shoyfn fun frier gevorn gekhasmet.</p>	<p>been told that they would be taken to the Garden of Eden, where they would live like "God in Odessa." (1)</p> <p>Just before Passover, the first two crematoriums began to burn, incinerating ten to fifteen thousand healthy people in 24 hours. Incessantly, day and night, the chimneys spewed out thousands of innocent human souls.</p> <p>Here, in the gruesome, cruel death camp, where human life had not the slightest value, there were still people who could love each other, and on whom the camp climate and living conditions had not had such an effect.</p> <p>When the pious Jews from Carpathian Russia came to the camp and saw the "Garden of Eden" to which they had been brought, they walked around on the first day of Passover with their heads hanging down, and some of them kept their bread in their pockets, not wanting to eat leaven. A few of these Jews worked with me, and when I told them about the fate of the families who had been taken away from the railroad station on trucks, they did not want to believe it and even said that we only wanted to frighten them.</p> <p>The only place where people could talk freely to each other was the toilet. There, in the silence, one carried a little bit of conversation concerning the sad situation and all our fates, which had already been sealed before.</p>
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(1) leben vi „Got in Ades“= living grandly, in the lap of luxury

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<p>der grester teyl transportn fun velkhe getseylte flegn arayngelozt vern in lager un in a por vokhn arum zenen zey oykh avek tsum toyt, ver a tog frier, ver a tog shpeter.</p>	<p>Only a few of the transports were allowed to pass through to the camp, but they too, like the greater part of the transports, would be sent to their deaths in a few weeks, one a day earlier, the other a day later.</p>
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