



Auschwitz Lullaby

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"I open a smile in his neck the size of a summer squash and he'll be dead in a minute... The life is oozing out of him and I feel good," states Dr. Isaac Jonah in this audio play, which retells the story of the malignancy that was the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. The unembellished emotional pull of this drama allows the listener to feel how swiftly and jaggedly evil will travel from the mind to the gut.

Michael Kingsley sets the mood with a piano playing softly, tenderly, in search of an ear to appreciate the gentle notes. The next sounds reach the gut before the first word is uttered.

Auschwitz Lullaby originated from the actual Auschwitz diary recordings of Dr. Miklos Nyiszli. The play begins with Jonah establishing the time, place, and mayhem. In late September 1944, Jonah is interred with his wife, Miriam, and daughter, Sarah, at Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp in Poland. Jonah, a pathologist, is assigned to work in the laboratory of the sadistic Nazi, Dr. Josef Mengele.

Jonah, who constantly fears for himself and his family, is presented with an additional life-threatening predicament. He is asked to help a 16-year-old girl who was miraculously found alive in the gas chamber where her mother and father lay dead. Jonah looks for the courage to help this young woman while agonizing over the retribution that he and his family may incur as a result of his compassion.

Themes run uncomfortably through this audio play. Definitions lose clarity. "Fear and courage are similar emotions, I imagine," Captain Hans Gunter tells Jonah as the Nazi drinks and orders the Jew to drink along with him. Impenetrable fear and courage, fear and shades of hope, and just plain fear resound through this carefully crafted drama that portrays the unholy birth of the monster insanity.

"I know that killing is wrong. I am a doctor. Everything in my life, my profession, my religion, my upbringing... everything I believe tells me that killing is wrong." Jonah's words define his character. The audio play's last sounds chillingly define his courage.

VYVYAN LYNN (July / August 2001)

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