

Number the Stars

There are soldiers everywhere. On every street and every corner are heartless-looking soldiers armed with rifles, patrolling here and there. Any disturbance could catch their attention, even if it's just you racing your friend to the corner or gathering with your family members in your house. Can you imagine that? However, it's just what took place in the story Number the Stars, and actually, is a true situation of World War II .

The author took the readers back to the last few years during World War II in Copenhagen when the German army took over the country. The story started with the terrifying scene of two girls, Annemarie Johansen and her friend Ellen Rosen, running down the street and confronting two German soldiers. But there's something special about Ellen--she's a Jew, and that's why later when the Nazi started to "relocate" the Jews, it meant the beginning of escape for them. Thankfully, their friends, the Johansens were willing to help out. They planned to take in Ellen, pretending she is part of their family and took her to their original place on the border of Denmark near the harbor. There, Ellen's family-and perhaps many of the Jews-could take a boat to the adjacent country, Sweden, which was still free from the Nazi's domination. However, the journey wasn't easy. They had to hide themselves from the soldiers whom they could bump into anywhere. They had encountered several dangerous conditions and had a narrow escape each time. At last, the final step of the whole plan was actually the most dangerous one: to transport the Rosens to the harbor from their house, and the path between was tangled with tree roots. Although they had to run as fast as they could, they had to watch their steps to avoid getting hurt. After the long, crisis-hidden night passed, daybreak finally came and the Jewish family was finally on board, safe and sound. The war ended two years later and the tale ended with a relieved atmosphere.

I was impressed when I read that the Nazi began to capture the Jews. It leads me to think about the question: Would I run the hazard if I were Annemarie? At that time, all the Nazi soldiers spared no effort looking for the Jews, and the whole monitoring system was all-pervasive. Undoubtedly, it would be very dangerous if any of them found something strange. If that ever happened, not only the Rosens but also the other family would be embroiled. To avoid getting into such trouble, the Johansens could just take the easy way out and turn their back to their friends. Instead of doing that, they chose to stay and take the risk, going through the difficulties for their friends. I was deeply moved by the strong friendship between the two little girls when I see them lying cheek by jowl with each other like real sisters when chilly nights came and even when a frightening soldier appeared.

As the saying goes, “A friend in need is a friend indeed. It dawned on me what true friends are like. A person you can live a life of pleasure with is not a friend. A friend is one you can rely on, and one that would support you regardless of the danger when troubles come, without asking for anything in return.

The author portrays the nation’s heroism using those ordinary characters. They’re like an epitome of the wide circumstances then. Again and again, the story brings in the question: What does it truly mean to be brave? Obviously, the characters had provided the specific answer: Bravery is the will to protect the beloved ones, and of course, the beloved country when they’re in peril. As Annemarie’s uncle said,” That’s all that brave means-not thinking about the dangers. Just thinking about what you must do.” After finishing the story, I feel glad to live here in Taiwan without the threat of wars. Wars are terrible and cruel especially the tragic genocide done on the Jews during World War II. Hopefully through this book, all we humans could remember the tragedy in history and make sure that it’ll not happen again on earth.