

# Janina

A FEW weeks ago, I purchased the book: 'Run Janina run!' by Marjan Brouwers and Jeanette van Ditzhuijzen. I had read about the book in the *Nāpa* and it peaked my curiosity. There have been many books and movies made about the second World War and I've read and seen my share of them; I can honestly say however that none of them touched me as much as this story did. It could be that I'm now at a more 'mature' age; I can appreciate and relate better with the characters. But I also think it has to do with the fact that it felt closer to home. The mere fact that Janina, the main character in the book, resides in Curaçao, somehow made me feel like I wasn't just reading a story about a girl during the war, instead I felt as if the story was about someone close to me, my own relative. It somehow made all the

atrocities her family endured more real and I found myself constantly flipping back to the first page where there is a time-line indicating the dates of birth and death of each family member. Whenever it became certain that a family member was not going to make it, I would flip back to the timeline hoping in vain to discover that, no, her mother, brothers, sister, cousins, aunt and uncles or her grandparents weren't going to die yet, that they still had a few years left. And each time it was a blow to me because I would discover that, yes... they would die. I can only imagine the heart-break that Janina must have gone through losing all her loved ones one by one and the amount of courage it took for her to survive this ordeal... she was only ten years old! But what touched me most in this story, was seeing how

much the Katz family loved each other and all the sacrifices each made to ultimately keep Janina safe. How Bertha even through the tragedy of losing little Moshe to typhoid and Chaskel in a freak accident, she still found the courage, strength and love to protect her remaining children; prodigious Blima, who would have for sure become a scholar, constantly with her nose in books, cheerful Bumek, the joker of the house, who would've become a doctor if he had only been given the chance to live and of course, little Janina, the joy in her life and the only child she was ultimately able to save. Then there is unforgettable bobbe Dwora, who in her special way managed to keep the family going through it all. The book tells a story not just about the ravages of war, but more importantly, about a fa-

family's courage, love and heart-break. Most of them didn't get a chance to live a full life, but I feel honored to have read about them. I never personally met Bertha, Leon, Chaskel, Moshe, Blima, Bumek or bobbe Dwora, but after reading the book I did have the pleasure, through a friend who surprised me by arranging a visit, to meet Janina. I was so overcome with emotion that I could barely get a word out. All I managed to ask her was if I could give her a hug, which I did! So, now that my feelings are back under control I can finally say what I wanted to tell her that day: Janina, I want you to know that thanks to you, I will always remember your beautiful family. Thank you for sharing your story...

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