

## Hillel's Secret Diary (Wimpy Kid Style)

-- A Dramatic, Totally True Diary of Growing Up Under Communism --

Sunday, October 1st

Today Mommy said we're starting a 'new project'--me writing down everything I learn about why I can't go to school like normal kids. She calls it 'preserving history.'

I call it 'writing in secret' because I'm sweet toast if anyone finds it.

Apparently, most kids forget their earliest years, but not me. Living under Soviet rule is like having the world's longest, worst field trip--except you never see the bus or get back home.

Unfairness Rating of Today: 100 out of 10 (because I have to write a diary AND keep hiding it).

Monday, October 2nd

This afternoon, Tatty told me about the 'new regime' after 1917. He said the communists started a 'ruthless battle to eradicate religion.'

Me, lying on the couch: 'Erase religion? That's like erasing soccer balls from playgrounds! Impossible!'

Tatty looked grave. 'They said "freedom of religion" was law, but if you didn't

follow communist rules, you were in serious peril.†

I tried to imagine being in peril† and nearly fell off the couch. Peril sounds pointy.

Mommy shouted from the kitchen: †Hillel, don't imagine sharp things.†

So on the unfairness scale, 1917 was at least 90 out of 10. (Way worse than eating cold cholent.)

Tuesday, October 3rd

Grandma (Zeidy's wife--not to be confused with Zeidy) visited and whispered about the 1930s. She said when the government was at its peak,† people were shot in NKVD cellars and sent to Siberia to dig holes in the Arctic.

Me, whispering back: †The Arctic? Like penguins and polar bears? But isn't that where mom's ice cream comes from?†

Zeidy gave me a dirty look. †No, Hillel, penguins live in Antarctica. And this isn't a joke.†

I got that chilling shiver--like when you open the freezer door for too long.

Also, they call the secret police by scary nicknames: †drei osiyos† (three letters--GPU, NKVD, KGB) or the †knepl† (button). I think a knepl might be a giant button that SHOOTS you if you press it. Unfairness Rating: Arctic level--99 out of 10.

Wednesday, October 4th

Today I pretended to nap while Mommy told me about orphans being sent to "reeducation" homes. They called Torah and mitzvos "poison of the masses." Eww-- poison!

Me, daydreaming: "So they teach poison for breakfast? And feed you broccoli?"

Mommy: "It's not funny, Hillel."

I know it's serious. But "orphanage reeducation" sounds like a really weird summer camp--with no fun, just lectures about why Hashem isn't real. That must be the world's worst camp ever.

Unfairness Rating: 88 out of 10 (some things sound worse than others, right?).

Thursday, October 5th

Tatty introduced me to the Yevsektzia--the "Jewish section" of the secret police.

Me: "Yev-sek-tzee-uh? Sounds like a sneeze in Yiddish!"

Tatty laughed. "It was no joke. These were Jews who abandoned Judaism and turned into the biggest enemies of Jewish life."

I tried to imagine someone switching from eating matzah to eating treif and saying, "Blech, tastes like defeat."

Then I realized: these Yevsektzia guys arrested Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson in 1927! That's the Lubavitcher Rebbe! Arrested by fellow Jews who forgot what being Jewish means.

Unfairness Rating: 10 million out of 10. Because arresting the Rebbe is just... the worst.

Friday, October 6th

Today was 'History Details Day.' I had to sit through a 45-minute lecture on how all Jewish schools and yeshivas were closed. ALL of them.

Me, doodling on my notebook: I drew a giant X over every yeshiva, then labeled one 'Public School of Weird Lies.'

Mommy: 'Stop drawing during Mommy's lecture.'

Me: 'Sorry, but how do you draw 'Marxism-Leninism' anyway? It's not like it has a cool symbol.'

Afterward, Tatty said, 'All Jewish children had to register in those new government schools.'

Registration sounded harmless until he explained: teachers would knock on neighbors' doors asking, 'Are there any school-aged children here?'

My head started pounding. The Goldberg kids might squeal on me if they saw me.

Unfairness Rating: 200 out of 10 (because you could get snitched on by your neighbors, of all people).

Motzei Shabbos, October 7th

Post-Shabbos thoughts: I dreamed of a hide-and-seek game, but the seekers had clipboards and badges. I woke up sweating.

I decided to make a *Hide Better Plan*:

- Learn every hiding spot in the house (even behind the water heater).
- Create decoy stuffed animals that look like me in my hiding spot.
- Develop a silent hand signal with Yankel for *it's safe*.

Project *Hide Better* has begun. Unfairness Rating: minus 10 (because at least I get a new mission).

Sunday, October 8th

Mr. Daniel Borisovitch came today--remember him? He's the gentle Yiddishist who first believed the communists would help everyone, then realized they were liars.

His apartment smelled like old books and black tea. He told us how, once parents refused to send kids to government schools, the schools said *Fine*. You choose the teachers.

Parents cheered--then *\*thud.\** the schools quietly replaced each teacher with a

communist agent. ONE BY ONE.

Me: 'That's like if you pick vanilla ice cream, but someone swaps it with pickled herring ice cream while you blink. No thanks.'

Daniel's eyes filled up. 'We forced kid after kid to eat treif bread on Pesach. They clamped their lips shut tight like steel doors.'

I nearly spilled my matzah ball soup. How do you force-feed \*Pesach\* treif bread?! That's next-level cruelty.

Unfairness Rating: 777 out of 10.

Monday, October 9th

I had an idea: what if kids formed their own secret teachers club? Then the communist teachers wouldn't know any of us.

Tatty said, 'Some families did just that--secret yeshivos in basements.'

Me: 'Basement yeshiva.' That's like a superhero lair but for learning Torah.'

Mommy: 'Yes, but super dangerous.'

So now Project 'Basement Yeshiva' is on hold, thanks to Danger Levels.

Tuesday, October 10th

Today we learned about the government's final move: closing down almost all the shuls except one or two in big cities. Even then, each shul needed twenty committee members, most loyal to the secret police.

Me: "Twenty people just to say hello in shul? My tzedakah box has more people than that!"

Mommy giggled (quietly, of course).

Those committee members would report anyone who brought \*children\* to daven.

Imagine going to shul and seeing someone scribble your name in a giant red book labeled "Future Traitor Candidates." Eek.

Unfairness Rating: Shul version of "49 out of 10."

Wednesday, October 11th

Chaim Tchernovitzer day--ugh. He's the big Committee Guy in our one permitted shul.

Every tourist from abroad has to be "greeted" by Chaim. He yanks them aside and says, "I'm KGB. Without me, this shul is closed. Don't help anyone else, or I'll have you deported."

Me, imagining: "I came all the way from Texas to daven, and this guy tells me to scram. Texas barbecue won't help me here."

Tatty once told me, "Most people who dare go to that shul are old people with nothing to lose."

Me: "Zeidy, I think losing your lunch counts as 'something to lose,' right?"

He just winked and changed the subject.

Thursday, October 12th

Today I heard Mommy say "chinuch" and got excited. Chinuch means "education," but so much more--spiritual, emotional, religious. It's like a full-body, all-over-your-noggin kind of teaching.

Mommy said Jewish parents had to hire melamdim (teachers) or do it themselves \*several times a week\*--and keep neighbors from noticing.

Me: "Mommy, I think my best chinuch idea is to teach the dog Torah. Then no one would suspect \*him.\*"

Mommy gave me that "Oh, Hillel" look and shook her head. Guess "Dog Rabbi" won't fly.

Friday, October 13th - Erev Shabbos

Tatty got home from work looking like a wet challah--more tired than after racing Yankel around the courtyard (I lost, obviously).



He told us Chabad Chassidim were risking everything to teach kids in secret yeshivos. "They summoned their innermost souls and fought with courage."

Me: "Fighting with courage? That sounds like sword fights!"

Tatty laughed softly. "More like sword fights with doubts and fear."

I decided my sword is a pencil--and I'll keep writing, no matter what.

Motzei Shabbos, October 14th

Shabbos is over and I realized something: even when everything is stacked against us --closed schools, no shuls, spies everywhere--our parents \*still\* found a way to keep Torah alive.

It's like they have hidden fuel tanks under the floorboards, full of secret strength.

I might be a kid stuck in a hiding game, but I'm also part of that secret fuel tank.

Unfairness Rating: Can't measure it--because sometimes unfairness itself fuels the best kind of triumph.

--End of Chapter One Notebook--

(Next: Operation Stealth Alef-Beis, where I test whether the walls really do have ears--stay tuned.)