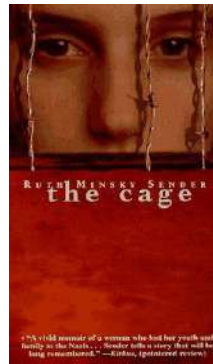


Chapter summaries of.....

The Cage by Ruth Minsky Sender

Part II

Chapter 25



Riva and her brothers are separated in the madness of the crowd as they are pushed along by the Nazi guards. Riva's cries to her brothers are matched by the horrifying cries of mothers to their children and husbands to their wives as families are torn apart and separated. Riva hopes that this is a nightmare and that she will wake up. Riva is forced to drop her belonging and her eyeglasses. Her head is shaved and she is taken to a cold shower with the others. Riva and Rifkele leave the showers and are rushed to the barracks. There, Riva hears talking about the smoke from the chimneys and the smell of burning flesh. Rifkele finds Tola in the barracks and they sob about what has happened to them and their family.

Chapter 26

Everyone is called out of the barracks for a head count. The guards count the living and the dead. The women are forced to stand there for hours. A voice on the loudspeaker tells them that they *"are lucky to still be alive"* and that if they do not follow orders they will *"end up in the smoke."* Riva watches as the guards pour hot soup on some of the women for amusement. The women are made to use an open hole as a bathroom as the Nazi guards rush them along. Riva is ashamed but she follows through with encouragement from Tola.

Chapter 27

Once again the women are called outside for a head count. Riva watches as a young girl pleads with her mother to get out of bed. The mother is too weak to move and she tells her daughter to go without her. The woman dies as her daughter is pulled from her side by others in the barracks. Riva and the other women are brought to an open field where they are given bread and water from a hose. They are sent back to the barracks as the dead are taken away and the empty places are filled by new arrivals.

Chapter 28

Riva wonders about the chimneys that are in the distance and the horrible smell that goes through the camp. She wonders if it is true, what she is hearing about the Nazis burning people. Riva's thoughts turn to Mama and her brothers. She is hopeful that she will find them and that they are safe. The thunderous sound of bombing sends the women in the barracks into a panic. Dr. Ginsburg pleads with the women to remain calm. She tells them that the

sound of the bombs falling is the sound of freedom calling, the sound of someone fighting for them. Dr. Ginsburg is stopped when a kapo with a club hits her and knocks her to the floor.

Chapter 29

It has been seven days since Riva's arrival at Auschwitz. She searches the crowds of women for her mother, sometimes running up to someone only to realize that it is not Mama. A young woman pleads with Riva to stop searching, explaining that those people that were brought here in 1942 are either dead or at another camp. The women are separated into two lines, those that are sent to the right will live, and those that are sent to the left will die. Riva is sent to the right and to another cattle car headed for another labor camp. Riva thinks about her brothers and how they gave her a feeling of hope. She is alone now and feeling that she has nothing more to live for. Rifkele puts her arm around Riva's shoulder and reminds her of her mother's words, *"if hope is lost, all is lost."*

Chapter 30

The cattle car arrives at its destination and the women are rushed off the train. Riva admires the majestic mountains in the distance and thinks about how wonderful it is to be free. The Nazi commandant welcomes the women to Mittelsteine. She threatens the women with her whip and with her dog. The commandant selects a young woman named Helen to be the camp elder. She is responsible for carrying out the commandant's orders and giving the women numbers. The commandant tells the women to forget their names and remember their numbers.

Chapter 31

Riva tries hard to memorize her number as she enters the new barracks. She finds Tola, Rifkele and Karola in the barracks. The guards order the women out of the barracks and they are given new shoes and clothing. The guards call out numbers, line the women up and march them away. The women return in the darkness of night. Riva and the other women are lined up and marched toward the open gates.

Chapter 32

The women are made to march down the road in their wooden shoes. Riva can feel the blisters on her feet and watches as a woman tries to take off her shoes, she is almost struck by a guard. They march through a small village toward a row of buildings, Riva notices there are no chimneys. The buildings are factories; the women are led inside and shown how to operate the machinery. A guard shows Riva how to use a drill but he decides that she is too small to use such a machine. Riva and the other women not able to use the machinery are led into a tunnel. They will be emptying buckets for the French tunnel diggers who are slave laborers. The Frenchmen digging the tunnel begin to hum the French national anthem.

Chapter 33

The days working in the clay pit are very long and very difficult. The guards do not allow the women in the tunnel to use the bathroom. Riva is embarrassed when she must relieve herself right in the tunnel. It is dark and the women are called out of the tunnel and lined up with the women from the factory. Riva begins talking to a tall, brown-eyed girl named Rosa. She is also in barrack two, with her sister. She explains to Riva that the foreman secretly gives her bread in a brown paper bag. Rosa saves the bread to give to her sister. Riva asks Rosa if she could have the paper bag and explains that she wants to write her poetry on it. They are hopeful that the foreman will give them a pencil to write with. Riva's feet feel lighter and her stomach feels less empty.

Chapter 34

When the women return to the labor camp they are met by the commandant and the camp elder. The commandant demands that anyone who stole be brought forward. Two sisters from barrack two, Faige and Chane, are marched forward. The sisters are forced to admit that they stole potato peels from the garbage while they are struck by the commandant's whip. As the whip hits Chane, Faige screams to the commandant, *"Please don't hurt my sister!"* The commandant stops and hands the whip to Faige ordering her to give her sister twenty lashes or she will do it. Faige does not want to do it. Chane tells her to do it because if the guard whips her it will be worse. As Faige gives in and whips her sister, she starts speaking about her mother coming and about her sister dancing. The guards say that she has gone insane and they take her away. Chane tells her sister that she is better off now. The commandant orders that the women will be given no food today.

Chapter 35

Riva is approached by Rosa in the barracks. She has stolen a pencil from the foreman's desk and gives it to Riva. As the guards take a head count Riva finds happiness in knowing that she can write again. She returns to the barracks and quickly writes the name of the labor camp, the date, her name and the number given to her on the folded paper bag. Riva writes a poem and reads it to the women in the barracks. They tell Riva that she speaks for all of them and that their spirit to survive cannot be killed.

Chapter 36

Riva says that some days she is filled with hope, other days she is filled with despair. She continues to write her poetry on the paper bags. One of the older girls named Sara tells the women that it is Hanukkah. They think about their families and the Hanukkahs of the past. The women begin to sing a Hanukkah song. A guard pounds on the door yelling at the women to be quiet. Riva tells a girl next to her that *"we, too, have just won a victory."*

Chapter 37

Riva's is awakened by a pain in her hand. She cut her finger several days ago on a nail and it has gotten worse. Although she feels light-headed and has a fever, Riva tells herself that she must hold out and it will get better. The commandant asks the women if there is a doctor among them. At first, no one speaks up, but a young woman tells the commandant that she is a two-year medical student. The commandant makes her the doctor of the group. As Riva becomes weaker the doctor determines that she must operate on Riva's infected finger. After the surgery Riva's condition does not improve. The doctor tells the commandant that Riva must be taken to the hospital in town in order to survive. When the commandant refuses, the doctor explains that it is Riva's poetry that helps the morale of the women and gets them to work harder. The commandant listens and says that she will see about it.

Chapter 38

Riva is awakened by the doctor with the news that she will be taken to the hospital in town. A Nazi guard accompanied Riva out of the barracks and toward the train station. Riva admires the snow covered mountains as she stops to sit down in the road, too tired to continue on. The Nazi guard stops and helps Riva up, asking her what her name is and about her family. Riva feels that the guard is human underneath that uniform. On the train Riva looks at the happy, cheerful families. She is made to stand in the corner while the other passengers ignore her. The train arrives at its destination. Riva sees the people around her ignoring her and the children staring at her. She wonders if she is the children's "boogeyman". When they arrive at the hospital the doctor tells the guard that they do not treat Jews and they must leave. Several other clinics in the town tell the guard the same thing. Riva wishes that the guard would give up looking for help and take her back to the camp.

Chapter 39

Riva sits on the stone steps in front of another hospital. The guard says, "*Riva, get up please.*" Riva is shocked that the guard has called her by her name. She informs Riva that the doctor inside will see her. While in the waiting room the air raid siren sounds and everyone heads for a shelter. Riva thinks about how she is there, hiding from the bombs, with the Germans. When the air raid is over the doctor sees Riva. The doctor makes it clear that they must be careful because some people there would object to helping Riva. The doctor says she must operate on Riva's hand immediately. After the operation the guard helps Riva get up and out of the hospital. The guard helps Riva stay on her feet as they head back to the train station. Once back at the camp, the guard, whose name is Lotta, tells the women to take Riva back to the barracks slowly and carefully.

Chapter 40

The camp doctor tells Riva that she must go to the hospital in Glatz to see the doctor. The camp doctor accompanies Riva and Lotta, the guard, to the hospital. The doctor at the hospital examines Riva's hand and sees that the poison is still spreading. He tells the camp doctor that if the infection does not get better he will have to amputate Riva's arm. Hearing this, Riva faints. Riva asks the camp doctor to make a promise to her. She asks the camp doctor to not let her arm be amputated. The camp doctor agrees.

Chapter 41

On Riva's third trip to the hospital the doctor finds that the infection has improved and that her arm will not have to be amputated. The camp doctor tells Riva that when she get out of this place she will have the scar on her hand to remind her that someone here cared about her. Riva is upset that she will not be able to write with her right hand because of the surgery. The camp doctor gives her a pencil and begins to teach her how to write with her left hand. Riva listens from the sick room as the head count whistle is blown and the women line up outside. She writes a poem with a message in Yiddish and reads it to the camp doctor. Anna, the camp doctor, tells Riva that she is married. Her husband, who is not a Jew, was sent away by the Nazis to heal the German soldiers. Anna says that if she survives she will never go back to her husband, the *"barbed wire will always be between"* them.

Chapter 42

The Christmas season has arrived and the factory will close down for the holiday. The commandant wants the women to put on a show to amuse the guards. Although Riva would like to stay in the sick bay, she feels that she needs to be a part of the show in an effort to *"calm the beasts"*. Riva returns to the barracks to the cheers of the other women. She has won a battle for life. The women perform for the commandant and the guards. They perform ballet, they sing, they recite poetry. The guards are amazed. Riva climbs to stage and recites a poem in Yiddish. The poem is about Mama and how she will be reunited with her family. Riva passes out and is carried back to the sick room. The commandant appears in the doorway of the sickroom. She orders the camp doctor to leave. Alone with Riva, the commandant gives her a notebook from her pocket. She tells Riva that she does not need to hide her poetry and that Riva's poem reminded her of her own mother. Riva thinks that she is dreaming and cannot believe the commandant has something human still within her.

Chapter 43

It is January, 1945. Riva is writing a poem when the camp doctor enters the sickroom and tells her that she must return to work at the factory. Riva thinks about how long it has been since she has had to march on the road to the factory. As the women march, Riva is pulled aside. She is led to a white building where she is met by a Russian doctor. Riva is told that she will help with rolling bandages and cleaning the bathtubs and toilets. The doctor explains that the commandant arranged for Riva to work

there instead of in the factory. The doctor, whose name is Katia, explains that her husband was sent to fight for the Germans and that she can never return home.

Chapter 44

Riva returns to the barracks and tells the women of her time with the doctor. She thinks about the Nazi commandant and wonders how she could be human to one person and horrible to another. Katia has been caring for Riva and bringing her food. Katia lets Riva take a warm bath. They are almost caught by a Nazi guard but the doctor is able to convince the guard that Riva only slipped into the tub while cleaning it. Katia also brings news of the war to Riva, telling her that the Germans are beginning to lose.

Chapter 45

The Nazi guards yell for the women to come out of the barracks. They are being moved to other camps. The commandant tells the women that things are not going well for the Nazis. She also tells them that they will never be freed. The women are separated as they are loaded in to the wagons and trucks. Riva and Tola board different trucks. Riva sees the houses of the town as they drive through, wondering if the people that live there know what is happening behind the gates of the camp. The guard at the camp tells the women that they will be digging ditches. Riva does not see any chimneys at the camp and is relieved. Riva is reunited with Tola at the camp.

Chapter 46

As Riva is digging she thinks about how she and the other women are digging the ditches that the Nazis will use to resist the very people that are trying to liberate the Jews. She stops digging in silent protest as some of the other women urge her to keep going. Once again bombs can be heard in the distance. The Nazi guard tells the women that there is no hope for them and that they will not survive. Riva cannot help but think that she is digging her own grave. She hears Mama's voice telling her *"as long as there is life, there is hope."* Karola reminds Riva of the date, May 3, 1945, it is Riva's birthday. They speak of next year and their survival. The guard tells them that *"by next year you will all be dead."*

Chapter 47

The women are called out by the guards. It is May 5th. They are lined up and marched down the road. It is not the usual road that takes them to the factory. The guards seem nervous and hurried. As they approach the woods, the guards shout "the Russians are behind us!" and take off. The women do not move, thinking it may be a trap. One of the women overheard the guards say that their orders were to kill the women in the woods. The women realize that they are now free but are not sure about where they should go. They knock on the doors of the homes along the road, no one answers. The women go back to the cage and wait for their liberators to arrive. On May 7th the Russians arrive. An officer on a white horse leads the Russian troops into the camp. The women cannot believe what they are seeing. The officer tells the women that he is Jewish; he explains that all he has found in the other camps are the dead.

Chapter 48

It is present day and Riva's daughter asks her if this could happen today. Riva explains to her that it could happen if we forget the past and if people remain silent while others are persecuted and suffering. Riva tells her daughter that she did go back to Lodz after the war to search for her family. At her old house, Riva was met by a woman who told her that the Jewish home had been given to the Poles after the war. When Riva asked for her photographs, the women told her that she threw them away along with the books that she found. She told Riva that some of her people came and took the books from the trash in the street. Riva then went to the cemetery to search for Laibele's grave. She found it, cleared the weeds from it and sat down to talk to Laibele. She questioned why she was the one to survive and not Moishele or Motele. Riva then built a tombstone for Laibele's grave. Riva goes on to tell Nancy that she cried for hours at Laibele's grave, thinking about all of the people that died alone in the camps. Riva is reminded by Nancy that she did find her older siblings, Mala, Chanale, and Yankele in the Displaced Persons Camp. Riva cuddles Nancy and whispers to her *"as long as there is life, there is hope."*