

My Brother David

From Eva by Lisa Konoplisky

They came to the house. The policemen. There were 4 of them. I remember they seemed very angry and I didn't know why. But we were taught—my parents—they taught us how to behave. We were taught to say that we were a niece and nephew of the woman. Her sister in Antwerp had taken ill. We were staying with them while she recovered. It was supposed to be tuberculosis. They were very specific. They would only believe us if they were specific, mother and father said. But the one man—his nose had tiny veins breaking through, like it was about to go up in flames—he kept insisting. *No, no, they are Jews I tell you they are Jews.* And he grabbed David—he was smaller than me even though he was older—and yanked down his pants. *You see, you see, he yelled, only Jews are cut like this.* There was David, shivering, his pants around his ankles, his schmekie** pink and limp. He threw up right there, all over himself, his pants, his schmekie and the policeman's shoes.

I was mad at him. Why do you have to have this, this mark? They cannot know that I'm a Jew but with the boys they could always tell. It was because of this, I cursed him. I called him stupid. They took us away. He was put in the back of a truck. I was taken in a car. I never saw him again.

Years later of course, I found out, found out what I already knew. What we all already knew. He was small. He wouldn't have made it into the better line. He would have gone straight to the crematorium. Later they told me. The Nazis had run out of pellets...the, I can't remember...they ran out of pellets so they just threw them directly into the fire. They said they could fit five children into the ovens, alive.

More efficient that way. Like when they shot the babies in their mother's arms. One bullet to kill two. They were always very...efficient. But yes, he was small. Very small. I'm sorry. Please. Pardon me. What was your question?

**Yiddish, child appropriate term for penis