

JOHN BOYNE

The boy in the striped pijamas





- The novel is based on the true story of the Holocaust but it tells the story of two children, Bruno and Shmuel, from two completely different families, who become great friends in a context of hatred and racism. The characters, although invented, make the drama of a sad period in the history of humanity resurface through the genuine friendship between two children, unaware of the wickedness that hovers around them. All this emerges from the cover of the book in which the two children, although separated by the iron wires of hatred, play and overcome this division thanks to friendship, represented by the sun of hope behind them.



- ▣ “It is useless to say that an imaginative work set in the period and territories in which the Holocaust occurred is controversial and any screenwriter who faces stories of this type must be aware of his intentions before starting. This is particularly important. in the case of a children book, "says John Boyne, the author of the successful novel *The Boy in the Striped Pijamas*. "For me, a 34-year-old Irish writer, the only respectful way to approach this topic was through innocence, thanks to a fairy tale told from the point of view of a decidedly naive child, who obviously cannot fully understand the horrors that surround him. I think this naivety is very similar to the one that other people of my generation can have towards the darkness of that period. "
- ▣ Boyne goes on saying "'what's going on in this place?' Bruno wonders. "Why are there so many people on the other side of the fence? They are simple questions, but in an elementary form, they aren't the same we continue asking ourselves nowadays? Perhaps the task of a writer or artist is to continue to look for answers, to make sure these questions continue to be asked, so that no one forgets why they need to be asked. "

**BRUNO: "POTRESTI VENIRE A CENA
DA NOI UNA SERA, TI VA?"**

**SHMUEL: "NO, IO CREDO DI NO,
COME PASSO LA RETE?"**

**BRUNO: "MA QUESTA È PER NON
FAR SCAPPARE GLI ANIMALI, NO?"**

**SHMUEL: "GLI ANIMALI? NO, È PER
NON FAR SCAPPARE LE PERSONE!"**

**BRUNO: "CIOÈ, VUOI DIRE CHE TU
NON PUOI USCIRE? PERCHÉ?
HAI FATTO QUALCOSA CHE NON VA?"**

SHMUEL: "IO SONO EBREO"

IL BAMBINO CON IL PIGIAMA A RIGHE

BRUNO: «WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE
DINNER WITH US?»

SHMUEL: « I DON'T THINK SO. HOW CAN I
PASS THE NET?»

BRUNO: «BUT THIS ONE DOESN'T ALLOW
ANIMALS TO ESCAPE, DOES IT?»

SHMUEL: «THE ANIMALS? NO, THIS
DOESN'T ALLOW PEOPLE TO ESCAPE!»

BRUNO: «ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU
CAN'T GO OUT? WHY? DID YOU DO
SOMETHING WRONG?»

SHMUEL: «I AM JEW»



- ▣ He walked slowly towards it, hoping that from here he might be able to see all the way back to Berlin and his house and the streets around it and the tables where the people sat and drank their frothy drinks and told each other hilarious stories. He walked slowly because he didn't want to be disappointed. But it was just a small boy's room and there was only so far he could walk before he arrived at the window. He put his face to the glass and saw what was out there, and this time his eyes opened wide and his mouth made the shape of an O, his hands stayed by his sides because something made him feel very cold and unsafe.



- Everywhere they looked they could see people, tall, short, old, young, all moving around. Some stood perfectly still in groups, their hands by their sides, trying to keep their heads up, as a soldier marched in front of them, his mouth opening and closing quickly as if he were shouting something at them. Some were formed into a sort of chain gang and pushing wheelbarrows from one side of the camp to the other, appearing from a place out of sight and taking their wheelbarrows further along behind hut, where they disappeared again. A few stood near the huts in a quiet groups, staring at the ground as if it was the sort of game where they didn't want to be spotted. Others were on crutches and many had bandages around their heads. Some carried spades and were being led by groups of soldiers to a place where they could no longer be seen.

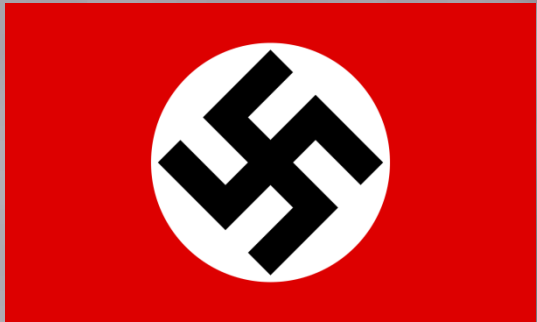


«And then one day things started to change»he continued. «I came home from school and my mother was making armbands for us from a special cloth and drawing a star on each one. Like this». Using his finger he drew a design in the dusty ground beneath him:



«And every time we left the house, she told us we had to wear one of these armbands.»

« My father wears one too »,said Bruno. «On his uniform. It's very nice. It's bright red with a black-and-white design on it.» Using his finger he drew another design in the dusty ground on his side of fence.



«Yes, but they're different, aren't they?» said Shmuel.
«No one's ever given me an armband» said Bruno.
«But I never asked to wear one» said Shmuel.
«All the same» said Bruno «I think I'd quite like one. I don't know which one I'd prefer though, your one or Father's.»



“Ah, those people” said Father, nodding his head and smiling slightly. “Those people...well, they’re not people at all, Bruno” said.

What happened then was both unexpected and extremely unpleasant. Lieutenant Kotler grew very angry with Pavel and no one- not Bruno, not Gretel, not Mother and not even Father- stepped in to stop him doing what he did next, even though none of them could watch. Even though it made Bruno cry and Gretel grow pale.



« It’s history that’s got us here today. If it wasn’t for history none of us would be sitting around this table now. We’d be safely back at our table in our house in Berlin. We are correcting history here.»

...«It's so unfair,» said Bruno. «I don't see why I have to be stuck over here on this side of the fence where there's no one to talk to and no one to play with and you get to have dozens of friends and are probably playing for hours every day. I'll have to speak to Father about it.»..._



«And I'm sorry we didn't really get to play, but when you come to Berlin, that's what we'll do. And I'll introduce you to...Oh, what were their names again?» he'd asked himself, frustrated because they were supposed to be his three best friends for life but they had all vanished from his memory now. He couldn't remember any of their names and he couldn't picture any of their faces. «Actually», he said, looking down at Shmuel «it doesn't matter whether I do or don't. They're not my best friends any more anyway.» He looked down and did something quite out of character for him: he took hold of Shmuel's tiny hand in his and squeezed it tightly. «You're my best friend, Shmuel» said. «My best friend for life».

Shmuel may well have opened his mouth to say something back, but Bruno never heard it because at that moment there was a loud gasp from all the marchers who had filled the room, as the door at the front was suddenly closed and a loud metallic sound rang through from the outside. Bruno raised an eyebrow, unable to understand the sense of all this, but he assumed that it had something to do with keeping the rain out and stopping people from catching colds. And then the room went very dark and somehow, despite the chaos that followed, Bruno found that he was still holding Shmuel's hand in his own and nothing in the world would have persuaded him to let it go.



By Bruno Ventola

That's the end of the story about Bruno and his family. Of course all this happened a long time ago and nothing like that should ever happen again.
Not in this day and age.



“

*L'amicizia può unire quello
che le barriere dividono*

”

Il bambino con il pigiama a righe

TO TELL ABOUT THE HORROR: JOHN BOYNE DANTE ALIGHIERI

- ▣ The Hell described by the Florentine poet is metaphorically far from Nazi concentration camps: if the Lager is the place of absolute injustice and absolute evil, the Hell is the place of disgust and desolation like a necessary and fair consequence of the sins committed by damned people it is the place of God's absolute justice. Dante points out the relationship between guilt and punishment. Instead Nazis judged people like them without any human and divine law punishing them with no moral and legal basis.

Now, I think the appeal that has been made here to the superposition of two terms (hell like a Lager) does not generate confusion but rather it reinforces them in the deepest and most terrible meaning; furthermore, it is highly significant to notice that in this sentence it would be enough to replace the word "sin" with the term "punishment" and "ruthlessness" with "brutality", even if the term "ruthlessness" would not be completely out of place, to notice the almost perfect symmetry between the two places, the imaginary one of Dante's hell and the real one.

