*We Were Children Just Like You*

by Yaffa Eliach

We were children just like you,

a million and a half young innocents

among the Six Million souls

martyred during the Holocaust.

We were children just like you,

 the pride and promise of

 flourishing Jewish communities

throughout Europe and North Africa,

our parents' joy, our people's future,

and gift to mankind.

We were children just like you, the children of wealth

and the children of poverty.

We laughed, we played,

we went to school and summer camp, we sang and danced and dreamed;

but we never grew up.

Our world was suddenly engulfed

in flames of hatred so vicious that it demanded our deaths -

only because we were Jews.

Just like you,

we wanted to live.

We clung to life and faith and

we fought, body and spirit,

for physical survival and Jewish identity, with partisan and resistance groups,

in ghetto and camp uprisings,

participating in clandestine

schools and prayers.

We were smugglers and couriers,

and many of us died

at the sides of our adult comrades.

We suffered the hunger and misery

of the ghettos, the fear of betrayal of

 our hiding places and false identities,

 and the barbarism and the horror of

 the concentration camps, dying alone

 or in the trembling arms of mothers

in gas chambers and mass graves.

We were the children of smoke and ash and flame.

Some of us were fortunate.

We, young survivors, brands plucked

 from the consuming fire, are links

in the chain of Jewish continuity.

We built new lives, in Israel, America

and many other countries.

we overcame the burden of

our experiences to enrich the world

with our talents and achievements.

We are all the children of yesterday.

But one and a half million of us

live only in the images of memory -

forever children - a million and a half promises never to be fulfilled.

Remember us !

By Yaffa Eliach, author of *We Were Children Just Like You* and *Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust.*

Re­printed with permission.