

2026 Elie Wiesel Competition

2nd Place Senior Poetry

Serine Oh, 10th Grade

Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, Lindsey LeCroy

The Manual Remains Unfinished

Part I – Instructions for Hatred

Start small.

One percent is enough—

A decimal can be rounded down to zero.

Paste a hook-nosed caricature on the newsstand, and hang it low enough for children—

a shrewd smile, the mask of shylock

a puppet in the hands of dreyfus' enemies

the "eternal jew" bleeding through the centuries

the scapegoat in the marketplace of hate.

Feed it at the kiosks where *Der Stürmer* grins like a subhuman controlling the world from the gutter;

The homes where the *Volkssempfänger* hums into kitchens, igniting lies that become weather;

Teach the child a rhyme where blame rhymes with blood,

hebrew letters red with violence.

Demand blue eyes, then keep measuring until the lie survives the evidence.

Call them bolsheviks and capitalists in the same breath, and punish them for both.

The work is easier when people are problems awaiting solutions.

Laws follow words.

Train follow laws.

Ash follows silence.

II. what is broken is counted

Salty tears wait in a small bowl, measured carefully—
Bitter herbs to remind that suffering must be tasted
not rewritten.

Lift the matzah

Flat, unleavened constraint forged under pressure

Break it—

The middle piece disappears first; history always knows where to strike.

One half hidden, one half exposed,
neither whole again.

Crumbs scatter in exile across the tablecloth

Each shard remembers

Egypt, Babylon, Spain, Poland.

A population reduced to fragments

A people surviving as pieces

Broken, yet still bread.

Zero-point two percent but still counted.

Why is this night different from the other nights?

Because we must refuse to forget.

Tikkun olam does not begin with hope.

It begins with refusal.

Refusal of the caricature.

Refusal of the euphemism.

Refusal of the silence that disguises itself as peace.

Because breaking is witnessed.

Because crumbs are not dismissed.

eichmann göring mengele goebbels priebke goth himmler koch, those who stood and watched
every clerk doctor broadcaster architect employee perpetrator bystander
their hatred, thousands of years old, settled in outliving its authors
living unchecked and ingrained like a sickness
but permission.

As long as that hatred continues learning new accents and borrowing new uniforms
neighbors will still become categories—
and categories will become cargo—
and what begins with decimal rounded down to zero
will end as a system no one claims to run
and by the time the smoke rises
everyone insists the bloodbath was inevitable.

That is the warning, that is the work.

We must remember,

Or we become the lie.