

“Survival is a Curse, not a Gift”
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The sunrise settles over the horizon, the orange-gold stretching far and wide.

The rays of sunshine are filled with gentle passion and joy.

I am sitting alone outside.

It seems as if nature’s bright and cheerful mood does not match mine.

I am silently drowning in grief.

My eyes are obscured with pain.

The date is March 26.

The day brings back memories that replay in my head like a broken record.

I remember life before the concentration camps.

I remember when Jews weren’t considered rats;

when the world wasn’t wounded by hate.

I remember when the Star of David didn’t determine my fate.

I remember when the sun’s rays never failed to bring warmth and prosperity.

But after a while, even the light at the end of the tunnel of inevitable death was difficult to see.

March 26.

I remember my family and me hiding in a friend’s basement;

hiding from the world that deceived us with its hospitality.

They had risked their lives in the hope of saving ours.

Every day, the seed of doubt in our minds grew a little more.

Worry and fear controlled our thoughts, our actions,
and our life.

Then one day, the silence of the house was broken by a banging on the door.

We knew who it was.

The Nazis had found us.

It was as if death had come knocking on the door itself.

The streets of Dachau had been silent.

But at that moment, it was as if the silence was the loudest thing on earth.

The man who had tried to save us was now a casualty of the Nazi's guns.

The curtains of his life had abruptly closed.

Words escaped us as we watched as death arrived to claim the man's innocent soul.

I remember my family and me being in the grasp of the Nazis.

Our lives were like elevators, slowly descending until they hit rock bottom.

Except, the Nazis were the ones pushing the buttons.

I remember my family and I being dragged away to a concentration camp in Dachau where death was waiting for us with open arms.

How quickly we had gone from citizens to outcasts in our own country.

I remember the tragic death of my infant sister.

The Nazis.

So cruel.

They took her life before she had even experienced it.

She was like a flower that had just bloomed but was plucked right out of the ground, killing it.

How I wish it had been me instead of her.

I remember life at the concentration camp.

We were living beneath a dark cloud.

The smell of corpses always lingered nearby,

reminding us every day of what would eventually become our fate.

It was there I realized what the dreadful extent inhumanity could reach was.

We were stuck in a maze.

They said the only way out was through work.

We believed that lie was leading us out of the labyrinth,

but it was just guiding us to death.

I remember how the Nazis took away the unique characteristics that made us human;

how they replaced our self-identity with numbers.

The black ink inscribed on my arm, my old identity, brings back memories I wish I could forget.

They treated us as if we weren't human.

As if we were less than human.

The people at the camp,

our hunger slowly ate up the remaining fat in our bodies.

Our skin draped over our bones as if it were oversized attire.

Were we humans or coat hangers?

One day, although, remains vivid in my memory.

The day we had escaped death.

I remember my father and me breaking into an SS storeroom.

We stole uniforms, weapons, and a vehicle from the SS motor pool.

We were prisoners as we broke in, and survivors as we drove away.

The shadow that was cast on our life had vanished.

Living in tranquility.

Perfect at last.

It was just half our family that made it out that day.

My mother had died the night before our escape.

But she died many months ago.

She had died when we went into hiding.

She had died when my sister was ruthlessly murdered.

But her corpse just wasn't disposed of until that night.

I snap back into reality.

I notice that even the sky has started to mourn.

The clouds have started crying.

I notice I have too.

The songbird's beautiful tune has died as well,

just like the light inside of me that has kept me going for this long.

My crooked fingers, twisted from old age, reach for the picture frame resting in my lap.

Inside is a picture of my family.

They're all dead now.

I now wish that I had valued them enough whilst they were still alive.

For regret is stronger than gratitude,

as we live more in the past than the present.

I begin to realize that my survival is a curse and not a gift.

I may be living, but without my family, I am dead inside.

Every day I am reminded of the 11 million innocent souls lingering near the remains of concentration camps.

The feeling of regret is following me everywhere I go.

I regret not sharing my story.

And soon, I will fall into death's arms,

as every other Holocaust survivor will follow.

We will not be here to tell our stories,


but maybe other people will.

They must promise to never forget;

to never allow history to repeat itself.

Sources

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