

Summary: A young Jew and a German Officer become unlikely allies.

Categories: Slash

Genre: AU, alternate universe, Zinefic

Notes: This is an A/U story set during the holocaust. First appeared in the Zine [Olliethology 1](#).

A Matter of Survival

by **Sparkle731**

Author's Note: This was a hard story to write due to the subject material. I did extensive research into the conditions in the Nazi concentration camps and the atrocities the prisoners were subjected to. Although this story is a piece of fiction and is intended to entertain the readers, I wanted to ensure that the background surrounding this story was accurate since one of the main characters is a prisoner at Auschwitz. Please note that any anti-Semitic views expressed in this story are not the views of the author but are those supported by historical fact. In this A/U story, Michael David Starsky is the current day Starsky's father and Karl Bruner is actually the current day Hutch's father. (He legally changed his name after he immigrated to America.)

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Michael David Starsky stood in a long line with his fellow countrymen waiting to receive his evening ration of food. On his left arm he wore an armband with a yellow Star of David on it, designating him as a Jew. The ghetto in Warsaw had been his home for almost a year, ever since all the Jews in his village had been rounded up and deported.

The Nazi occupation authorities claimed that Jews were natural carriers of all types of diseases and that it was necessary to isolate them from the Polish community. The ghetto was closed in with stone walls and barbed wire defining the boundaries. Guards were strategically placed at gateways and other boundary openings. Jews were not allowed to leave this so-called "Jewish residential district" under the penalty of death.

Michael resented the restrictions. He hated the feeling of not being able to move around freely. He hated being held prisoner. But, he did well at hiding his anger at his situation. To object to the rules would mean his death and he didn't want to die.

Life in the ghetto was wretched. The entire area was filthy with poor sanitation and extreme overcrowding. This ghetto, one of the largest in Poland, housed over 400,000 souls. Large numbers of men, women and children, were forced to share one room in poorly constructed buildings. Disease was widespread and it was difficult to stay warm in the bitterly cold winter months without adequate clothing and fuel to heat the rooms with. Even with the daily rations, food was in such short supply that many people slowly starved to death. Since he had been here, Michael had watched his mother, his three sisters, and several friends die from the horrendous conditions they were forced to live under. Thankfully, Michael was young and strong and that had allowed him to survive. He had turned nineteen shortly after being sent to this place but the circumstances surrounding his present confinement had forced him to mature quickly. He missed his family but he held their memory in his heart and thought about them everyday.

Because of his youth and good health, Michael was forced to work in a factory making wooden shoes. With the aid of practically unpaid Jewish slave labor, ghetto factories filled orders for the German war economy. The slight wage he made was paid in substitute bank notes for use exclusively in the ghetto. This ghetto "money" had no value outside of the gates.

As he waited in line, Michael noticed the restlessness of those around him. For days there had been rumors flying throughout the ghetto that the Germans were planning to liquidate the ghettos and send the Jews to one of the work camps that were scattered throughout Poland. Michael had heard the whispers about the camps, that they were really death camps designed by Adolf Hitler to extinguish the entire Jewish race. In addition, they also had plans eliminate other groups that the German Nazis considered inferior, undesirable or dangerous. The targets for their hatred included prisoners of war, Gypsies, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, the mentally retarded, gay men and transsexuals. Michael didn't understand singling out people just because they were different. He had been raised to be tolerant of other people and their beliefs. His closest childhood friend had been born with a deformed leg but that hadn't stopped the two youths from exploring the countryside and playing the rough and tumble games that boys love to play.

Better educated than some of his peers, Michael had followed the rise of the tyrant that now ruled Germany. He had convinced his family to try and escape from Poland as the persecution of the Jews had intensified but their attempt had been thwarted by someone they had considered a friend who had turned them into the authorities. Although he had been angry at the betrayal, he understood the terrible fear that had prompted it.

When they were arrested, Michael and the rest of his family had been forced to watch as his father, Nicolas, was executed by the soldiers that had captured them. As additional punishment, his youngest sister, Ruth, who was only eleven, had been viciously raped and beaten. She was the first one to die after they were imprisoned at the ghetto. Michael had also been brutally beaten since he was the oldest son in the family. Now, he was the only one left from his immediate family to carry on the Starsky name.

Receiving his meager portion of rice and bread, Michael quickly ate his supper and then made his way back to the tiny room he shared with fifteen other people. After working for 12 hours in the dirty, airless confines of the shoe factory, he was exhausted. When he returned to his abode, he made his way over to the corner where he slept and crouched down, trying to ignore the crying of the babies, the smell of the unwashed bodies, and the loud voices of the other occupants in the room. Faced with the harsh reality of his daily existence, his former life now seemed like nothing more than a pleasant dream.

Michael's childhood had been a happy one. His father was one of the few Jews in the Poland that had a college degree and worked in a high level position in the community. As a result, Michael had grown up with more privileges and advantages than some of his peers, including a better education. In the beginning, the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany had not affected their way of life in the village. It had been a good life and Michael sorely missed it.

Sarah, a petite sixteen-year-old with freckles and a turned up nose, crawled over beside him and huddled up against him for warmth. Michael raised his arm and let it rest on her shoulders, pulling her closer to share his body temperature with her. With winter coming on, it was always cold in their sleeping quarters. Blankets were in short supply and the ones they did have were worn and threadbare. With no family of his own, Michael had unofficially 'adopted' Sarah as his little sister. He looked out for her and helped to protect her as much as he could from the harsh life in the Ghetto. In a voice that was barely above a whisper, Sarah said, "Do you think the stories are true? Will they come for us and take us to the camps?"

"I don't know." Michael told her, his sapphire eyes clouding uneasily at the thought. "There's nothing we can do to stop them if they do."

"I'm frightened."

"So am I." Michael admitted. He leaned down and brushed his lips across the top of her head. "Try not to worry, little one. Keep the faith. God can't have forsaken us entirely."

"God..." Sarah said in a bitter voice that sounded much too old for her tender years. "There is no God in this place."

Michael kept silent. Although he had been raised in a family where the teachings of the Jewish faith were strictly followed, he had to admit that there were times that he agreed with Sarah. There was no God in this place. Only pain, misery and despair.

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Michael felt himself being pushed along with the crowd of people that surrounded him. He fought to control the fear that he could feel trying to claw its way out of his throat. Earlier that morning, he had been rudely awakened by the shouts of unfamiliar voices. Moments later, the door to the room had slammed open and several armed guards had rushed in, herding everyone into the hallway to join the other inhabitants of the building. They had been forced outside where more armed guards were shouting orders for everyone in the ghetto to start marching through the gates into the streets of the city.

Like cattle, they were herded through the city to the railroad tracks at the edge of town. There, they were separated into smaller groups and forced into railroad cars, so many people were crammed into each boxcar that there was no room to sit down. So they were forced to stand, pressed up against one another with barely enough room to breathe. Several of the women in the car screamed as the doors were slammed shut, leaving them in total darkness. Pressed against the back wall, Michael tried to stay calm and not panic. It appeared that the rumors had been true. They were being moved, in all probability to one of the concentration camps somewhere in the north.

As time passed with nothing happening, panic began to set in among the mass of humanity. Some of them closer to the doors began banging on the metal, begging to be let out, while others simply started crying or praying. Their screams and pleas were ignored. Michael was thrown forward, almost losing his balance, as the train suddenly started to move with a sharp jolt. He closed his eyes and choked back the bile that rose in his throat as the swaying of the boxcar made him feel nauseated. Combined with the stifling heat generated by so many bodies crammed into such close quarters, he fought to keep his wits about him and to remain conscious.

As the journey continued towards their unknown location, other people in the car were not so lucky. Some of the older and weaker ones collapsed and died. The unbearable heat, the stale air, thirst and hunger, the swaying motion of the train, lulled the others into a lethargic state. Held upright only by the bodies surrounding him, Michael barely noticed the sweat that poured down his face.

After what seemed like hours, the train came to a grinding halt, jarring Michael back into alertness. The doors finally opened to reveal a dozen armed guards pointing their rifles into the boxcar. "DON'T MOVE!" someone yelled in a heavily accented voice. When a young girl, disoriented and confused disobeyed the order and started to climb down from the train, she was immediately shot. Michael looked away, bitter tears stinging his eyes, when he realized that the girl was Sarah. Panic set in among the other prisoners and five more were ruthlessly shot before the others finally obeyed the command to stay where they were.

Finally, they were allowed to disembark from the train. They were ordered to form two lines, women and children in one line with the men and teenage boys in the other line. One guard, who appeared to be in charge, barked the order for them to start walking to the east. Blinking his eyes against the glare of the sun, Michael

saw a large fenced in compound in the distance. They had arrived at the camp. With heavy steps, he followed the others towards his destiny.

As he got closer, Michael saw that the camp was surrounded by double rows of barbed wire fencing with signs clearly posted warning that the wire was electrified. As the masses of new arrivals struggled through the main gate, Michael saw words written in German above the gate that read "Arbeit Macht Frei" (Work Means Freedom). As they entered the main gate, some sort of selection process appeared to be going on. Most of the able bodied men and boys were sent off in one direction, while the elderly, the women and the children were sent off in the opposite direction. Michael had no idea where the other prisoners were being taken or what their fate might be.

Michael held his head high as he followed the other men through the camp into a large wooden building where they were immediately stripped of any valuables they might have had on them and then ordered to remove their clothes. Michael stood proudly, unashamed of his nudity, as the men were then ordered to keep their shoes in their hands and forced into an enormous room. There were several signs on the wall, in various languages, that identified the room as a 'shower'. Almost immediately, cold water began to fall on the prisoners. They had no towel, no soap, nothing to bathe themselves properly. After a few minutes of the icy blast, they were ordered to leave the room by another door and they found themselves in a large open area between the buildings. They were ordered to stand at attention, still naked. The only thing they could do was wait until the wind and the sun dried their bodies.

After standing in the open for almost an hour, they were herded in groups of 100 or more into another building where they were disinfected with a retched smelling powder that stung Michael's eyes and nose. Then each of the prisoners was shorn of all their body hair, their head, their armpits, their groins, arms, legs, anywhere they had any hair. The whole process was deeply humiliating and some of the older men objected strenuously to having their beards shaved only to be beaten into submission for their act of rebellion.

Michael was given a striped prison uniform that was too large for his slender frame. The yellow Star of David was sewn on the back of his shirt. None of the men had received anything to eat since they left the ghetto and everybody was hungry. Even their meager rations from the ghetto would have been welcomed. After the last man was shaved, they were marched across the camp to several large tents that were big enough to hold 300 prisoners. They finally received some watery soup and a cup of water. The guards warned them not to try and leave the tent. There were no beds, just the hard ground to rest on and it was very crowded inside the tent but Michael was too exhausted to care. He slumped down to the ground and curled up into a fetal position, closing his eyes and trying to sleep.

The next morning, they were given a small bowl of watery gruel and another cup of water. Then each man was given a tattoo on his left forearm. Michael's number was B19544. The guards told them that they had no names anymore. They were just numbers. The men spent one more night in the tent before they were finally integrated into the rest of the population at the camp.

New arrivals were immediately recognizable. They were still in fairly healthy condition compared to the older inmates who resembled walking skeletons with their eyes sunken deep in their skull and all hope gone from their dull, flat expressions. Very few of the other prisoners talked and when they did, it was in stilted, hurried whispers. Michael soon learned that he was in Auschwitz, one of the most notorious and well known of all the 'death camps' in Poland. A helpful prisoner pointed out the large brick buildings at the end of the compound where thousands of prisoners were sent to their deaths each day.

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Over the next few months, Michael struggled to adjust to life in the camp. Even if he had thought that life in the ghetto was harsh, it was nothing compared to his life in the camp. At night, he was in a wood framed barrack that housed approximately eight hundred men. Their 'beds' were bunks of slatted wood three tiers high. Three to four prisoners shared each bunk, not allowing them enough space to stretch out for a normal sleep.

His day began at four a.m. when he was awakened by the *kapo*, another prisoner who was in charge of the barracks. The men tumbled from their bunks, ignoring any bunkmates that had died during the night, and stood at attention. The men were taken by groups to one of the latrines, which consisted of a long row of double holes cut into a piece of wood sat over a long trench in the ground that could seat up to 500 men at one time. Since many of the men were infected with typhus or dysentery, the disease was easily spread throughout the rest of the inmates because of the poor sanitary conditions.

After being allowed a few brief minutes to use the latrine, the men were then taken to another building for breakfast, which consisted of a thick slice of bread and some 'coffee'. The bread would be the only solid food the prisoners would receive all day. The coffee did not have much taste and contained no sugar or milk. When Michael was first brought to the camp, each prisoner was issued his own mess-tin. It was his responsibility to make sure he had the tin with him at all times. No mess-tin, no food. Meals were a good time for the guards to have some 'fun'. Sometimes they would throw the bread into mud before serving it, other times they would deliberately push a prisoner while serving the coffee, knocking it to the ground. The prisoner would receive nothing more and would risk punishment for wasting food.

After breakfast, the men were ushered outside in the huge courtyard and lined up in rows of ten. All prisoners had to be present for roll call, including the ones who had died during the night. The other prisoners had to carry the dead bodies of their fellow inmates out into the compound to be counted along with the living. During roll call, which could take hours, the prisoners had to stand at attention. It was forbidden to move or talk during roll call. After roll call, the bodies of the dead were sent to the crematories.

After roll call, each prisoner had an assigned work detail. Most of the men, Michael included, worked in the fields surrounding the camp. Their days were long, stretching out from 12 to 14 hours with only a short break for lunch. The work was hard and mindless, extracting and moving heavy stones from one spot to another or digging trenches. Everything had to be done as quickly as possible and always under the watchful eye of the armed guards, who looked for excuses to insult and beat their prisoners. Finally, they would return to the camp, the survivors carrying the bodies of the prisoners who had died during the day.

Back at the camp, the prisoners were once more lined up in rows of ten for the evening roll call. It was during this roll call that the SS doled out punishments or conducted public hangings as a warning to the other prisoners of their fate if they stepped out of line. After roll call, the inmates are served supper, a watery soup. After eating, they are returned to their barracks for the evening. Exhausted from the hours of forced labor under grueling conditions, each prisoner welcomed a few stolen hours of sleep.

This had become Michael's life. Like the other prisoners in the camp, he had lost weight since his captivity and his face was gaunt with his ribs showing through his tightly stretched skin. In spite of the atrocious conditions in the camp, Michael had struggled to maintain some sense of his own humanity. He often shared his own rations of food with a weaker prisoner or came to the aid of a comrade in the fields who needed some help to complete their task and avoid a beating from the guards. Michael knew that he was running the risk of punishment himself if he was caught but he ignored the danger. He refused to allow himself to lose hope.

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As Michael struggled to move the large rock from the ground at his feet, he noticed one of the new guards nearby watching him closely. Like the rest of the Arian Brotherhood, this man was tall and handsome with pale blue eyes and neatly trimmed blond hair that shimmered like sunlight. He appeared to be close to Michael's age and did not yet have the hard, unforgiving expression on his face worn by most of the guards.

When a man nearby stumbled and dropped his load of rocks, Michael immediately turned to help him pick them up. The watchful guard yelled at Michael, in German, to return to his own work assignment. When he complied without any further prompting, the guard frowned slightly and continued to watch him carefully. Michael had wisely decided to keep it to himself that he spoke fluent German, as well as Yiddish, Polish and a bit of Romanian. It gave him the opportunity to know what the guards were saying when they talked quietly among themselves.

Over the next few days, he noticed the new guard watching him almost constantly. The man's gaze made him nervous and uneasy but he tried to ignore it. Finally, the guard approached Michael one afternoon and said; "You speak German, do you not?" his question was asked in poorly spoken Polish with a heavy accent.

"Yes." Michael admitted, knowing that to lie could mean certain death.

The guard smiled and immediately reverted to his native tongue. "How fluent are you in the language?"

"Fluent enough." Michael replied, wondering what the guard why the guard was asking.

"What other languages do you speak?"

"Polish, Yiddish and some Romanian."

"I could use a man like you to translate for me. Would you be interested?"

Michael hesitated. He did not trust this man any more than he trusted any of the guards. He shrugged his thin shoulders with disinterest. The man stepped forward and cupped Michael's chin in his hand, looking at his features closely. The expression in those pale blue eyes was unreadable and his scrutiny made Michael vaguely uneasy.

"How old are you?"

"I turned twenty last month." Michael said cautiously, trying to keep from appearing too nervous and apprehensive under the guard's intense gaze.

"How long have you been in the camp?"

"Almost three months."

"That explains why you are in better shape than most of your friends." The guard said. He nodded slightly as if he had made up his mind about something. "You'll do nicely. When we return to the camp, you will come with me to my quarters. We need to clean you up if you are going to work for me."

"What if I don't want to work for you?" Michael asked defiantly. Michael had never liked being told what to do and he resented this German's arrogant attitude. He knew he was treading on dangerous ground by talking back to one of the SS guards but there was a part of him that no longer cared. He would rather die while he was still a man and not one of the hopeless souls that made up the general population of the camp.

"You have no choice." The guard said with an indulgent smile "Or have you forgotten that I can have you killed anytime I choose like the animal you are?"

"I haven't forgotten anything." Michael said, still defiant. "Including the fact that I am still a man despite your attempts to take away my humanity." To his amazement, the guard threw back his head and laughed heartily at his remarks.

"I can see that your spirit hasn't been broken." He said smugly. "I'm going to enjoy seeing what I can do to remedy that." His voice turned cold and unfriendly. "Get back to work before I decide to teach you some manners."

Michael lowered his eyes and returned to the task at hand. His mind was a jumble of disorganized thoughts and concerns. *What did this guard really want from him? Why did this guard make him so uneasy when the others did not?* With no easy answers to his questions, he continued working, carefully avoiding looking at the guard in question. When his day in the field ended, he joined the other men and marched back to the camp, lining up just inside the gate for the nightly roll call.

After roll call was over, he wasn't surprised when the guard he had spoken to earlier suddenly appeared before him and grabbed his arm. "This one belongs to me." He told one of the other guards as he pulled Michael away from the other men and began walking across the compound with him. Michael had to step up his pace to keep up with the big blond's longer stride. Without a word, he led Michael to the newer brick barracks at the far end of the compound that housed the guards and other camp personnel.

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Once they reached his private room, the guard locked the door securely behind him and turned to stare at Michael. "There's a pan of water on the stand over there. Wash yourself. You stink."

Michael found the pan of cold water sitting on a stand in the corner of the room. Sitting beside it was a towel, a washcloth and a small bar of soap. Slowly, Michael began to strip off his hated uniform, letting the rags fall to the floor at his feet. He could feel the guard's eyes on his back, watching him, as he bathed himself for the first time in months. He began to feel more human as he rinsed away the accumulated grime and dirt from his captivity. Even though the water was cold, being able to wash himself was a luxury he had been denied for too long.

"Turn around." The guard ordered brusquely "I want to take a look at you."

Taking a deep breath, Michael did as he was ordered. He tried not to blush self-consciously as the other man's eyes swept over his emancipated body, seeming to linger a bit longer than was necessary on Michael's flaccid genitals. "Are all of your people cut?" he asked curiously.

"Yes." Michael said somberly. For Jews, the Bris, or ritual circumcision on the eighth day of his life is a time honored tradition that symbolizes the entrance of a male child into the traditional covenant with God. The ceremony had two parts: the actual circumcision and the naming of the child. The naming of the child is the most emotional part of many Bris ceremonies. Depending on the traditions represented, the child is either named after a living or a deceased relative. A child may have one or more names in accordance with the parents' wishes.

The guard raised his head to look into Michael's smoldering dark blue eyes. "What is your name?"

"Michael. Michael David Starsky."

"My name is Karl. Karl Bruner. You are to refer to me as Herr Bruner and I will call you Michael." He smiled thinly as he sat down on the edge of the thin bed. "Would you like to be called by your name again instead of a number?"

"Yes."

"Very well. You will find a clean uniform in the closet. Put it on."

Michael crossed the room to the tiny wardrobe and opened the door. Inside he found a fairly new striped uniform with the Star of Michael pinned to the left sleeve. Pinned below the star was a pale Blue B. At his questioning look, Karl smiled and said, "The W lets the other guards know that you belong to me. You will still be subject to their orders but you will be turned over to me for punishment if you need it." He leaned back against the headboard of the bed, folding his arms across his chest, as he continued to explain the new rules to Michael. "You will stay here in my quarters with me at night and stay by my side during the day. You will act as my official interpreter with the other prisoners who do not speak or understand German. In return for your services to me, you will be given better living conditions and better food than the other prisoners. Displease me and you will be sent to the gas chamber. Understood?"

"Yes." Michael said quietly. There was really no other acceptable answer, not if he wanted to continue to live. Michael had made a solemn vow on his father's name that he would do whatever it took to survive this place, even if it meant submitting to the whims of his new overseer.

"Good. At night, you will sleep on the floor beside my bed. You will not speak unless you are spoken to and you will obey all of my orders without question." His speech was interrupted by a light tap on the door. He shoved himself to his feet and crossed the room to open it, speaking to someone in the hallway briefly. He accepted a tray of food and closed the door, locking it securely and pocketing the key. He carried the tray of food over to the thin single bed and sat down, balancing the tray on his lap. Without a word, he began to eat.

Michael stood at attention, his mouth watering at the aroma of the food that drifted through the air. He waited patiently without speaking until Karl had finished his share. Finally, the blond sat the tray down on the floor beside the bed and waved his hand disinterestedly. "You can eat now."

Michael hurried to the tray and sat down on the floor. Karl had left him a bowl of rich soup with chunks of meat floating in the broth, a slice of thick bread with butter, and a glass of milk. Michael began to eat greedily, trying not to reveal just how hungry he really was after all those months of barely being given enough food to stay alive.

"Don't eat so fast." Karl warned him "Or it will all come right back up. After your stomach gets used to food again, you can have more choices but for now you need to stick to the bread and the soup. When you are finished, put the tray over by the door and go to bed."

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Over the next two weeks, Michael began to slowly adjust to the sudden changes in his life. His life in the camp had definitely improved since the young SS officer had taken a sudden interest in his welfare. His days still began at four in the morning, but now he was able to enjoy a leisurely breakfast before joining Herr Bruner the fields overseeing the other men as they worked. Some days, he accompanied his new companion to other parts of the compound, even the woman's side of the camp, where he acted as an interpreter for the SS officer and the inmates who didn't speak or understand German. He knew that his new status as an unofficial aide to the young

officer made his fellow inmates both envious and jealous of him. There were a few that openly resented him and called him derogatory names to his face. The names hurt. Just like his peers all Michael was doing was trying his best to survive. He knew he was lucky to be in the position he found himself in but he felt guilty because of the suffering the other prisoners still had to endure.

As he slowly regained some of the weight he had lost, his face filled out, losing the gaunt, skeletal look and redefining his rugged, handsome features. Bruner also allowed him to grow his hair back out so that the soft sable curls clung tightly to his head and the soft brown fur decorated his torso. Sometimes, Michael thought he caught Bruner looking at him intently with a speculative expression on his face. The looks made him uneasy but he wasn't quite sure why. Bruner made relatively few demands of him other than keeping his mouth shut about some of the things he saw and heard throughout the camp. Some of the other guards had their own 'personal' slaves chosen from among the inmates and Michael knew that the majority of them were treated far worse than he was. Most of them were still treated with no more compassion or kindness than their peers in the barracks. Michael knew that he was the lucky one to have been chosen by a guard who seemed to have a sense of honor when it came to the treatment of the prisoners.

Six weeks after the sudden change in his circumstances, Michael had just eaten his supper and was getting ready for bed when Bruner startled him by saying, "Tell me something, Michael...a good looking young man like you...have you ever been with another man?"

"No..." Michael said quickly, lowering his head to hide the sudden flash of fear in his eyes. He knew what Bruner was referring to. Michael had not lied, he had never been with another man but that didn't mean he hadn't thought about it the past. It was his most closely guarded secret, a forbidden desire that he had never acted on.

He stiffened as he felt Bruner reach out and run his fingers through the short dark curls on Michael's head. "I could teach you many things, Michael...if you'll let me."

"I can't stop you if that's what you want me for." Michael said flatly, trying to quiet the frantic pounding of his heart. He couldn't be sure if it was from fear or a wild anticipation, maybe a bit of both.

"I want you...I won't lie about that. I don't want to have to force you into anything but I will if I have no choice." Bruner told him with certain coldness in his voice as he looked down at the man on the floor beside his bed. "I can make it very, very good for you or I can make it very, very bad. It's all up to you." Without waiting for Michael to answer, he barked, "Stand up and take off your clothes. I want to see your body."

Slowly, Michael rose to his feet and began to do as he was ordered. He unbuttoned his shirt and let it slide over his shoulders to fall in a heap on the floor behind him. He focused his gaze on a spot on the wall above Bruner's head and stared at it to avoid looking into those crystal blue eyes. He could feel Bruner's hungry eyes sweeping over his lean muscular build even as he hooked his fingers in the waistband of his pants and pulled them down over his hips. Kicking them aside, he stood rigidly at attention with his hands locked behind his back and hoped that Bruner was enjoying the view.

Karl leaned back against the headboard of his bed and looked at the man standing before him. The handsome face of his companion was set in stone, those sapphire eyes stormy and defiant. The big blond hid a tiny smile. This was a man who would never be broken, not entirely. He would never bow to any man without a fight. He would continue struggling to survive with his dying breath.

Michael Starsky didn't have the classic good looks and refined features of Karl Bruner. His nose was slightly crooked, his chin a bit too sharp, and his neck too short. But his features blended together to make an interesting contrast. His best features were his sapphire blue eyes fringed with thick dark lashes that any woman would have killed for and a lush full mouth that turned up into a crooked smile when he was pleased.

His body was compact and muscular with well defined abs and pecs. Tiny brown nipples nestled in the soft fur that covered his torso, hair that tapered to a thin line that ran down his stomach to his groin. A thick heavy cock hung between those muscular thighs, a cock that was impressive in size even when it was flaccid. The legs were short and slightly bowed but well muscled and strong. Karl felt a stirring in his own groin at the sight of that naked body standing before him. He longed to touch the man, to make him his own, but he wanted Michael to be a willing participant. He didn't want to take him by force. If that meant going slow and taking his time to introduce Michael to the pleasures of loving another man then Karl was prepared to do that.

He shifted around so that he could swing his long legs over the side of the bed. "Come here." He ordered "Stand in front of me. I want to touch you."

Michael stiffly moved so that he was standing in front of the SS officer. He tried to still the wild beating of his heart as he waited for that first touch of another man's hand on his body. He was mildly surprised when Bruner reached out to rub the palm of his right hand over his chest first instead of grabbing his cock. He jerked involuntarily as those long fingers brushed over a nipple, the tiny nub of flesh hardening almost immediately. He had never thought of his nipples as being particularly sensitive but beneath this man's touch, they suddenly became a highly receptive erogenous zone.

Karl leaned forward and Michael suddenly felt a warm wet tongue swiping across his chest, stopping to latch onto the nipple those fingers had been touching just moments before. Involuntarily, Michael moaned softly and leaned into the touch. The sensation was overwhelming, sending a charge of electricity straight to his groin.

"You like that?" Karl asked with a soft chuckle as he continued to suckle at the nipple.

"Yes..." Michael admitted breathlessly. He reached out and grabbed Bruner's shoulders to balance himself on suddenly weak knees. He closed his eyes and gave himself over to the unfamiliar sensations surging through his body.

"Sit here beside me." Karl ordered, scooting over to make room for his potential new lover. Michael sank on the bed beside him, feeling vaguely self-conscious since he was naked while Bruner was still fully clothed. Karl smiled and brushed his fingers across Michael's cheek. In a soft, quiet voice, he said "Don't be afraid of me, Michael. I'm not going to hurt you and I'm not going to force you into doing anything you don't want to do. Do you trust me?"

Michael trembled as he looked into those ice blue eyes. He could not readily identify the emotions running through him but he knew that he trusted this man for some unknown reason. Not trusting his voice to speak, he simply nodded his head. Karl smiled and leaned closer, taking that lush mouth that had fascinated him from the beginning in a gentle kiss. Michael melted into the kiss, leaning against Karl as the other man wrapped his arms around that slender waist and pulled him close. When Karl ran his tongue over Michael's bottom lip, the brunet opened his lips willingly, sucking on the tongue that slipped into his mouth. When they finally came up for air, Michael was panting breathlessly, his cock suddenly as hard as a rock.

"Pleasure yourself." Karl whispered hoarsely into a curl covered ear. "I want to watch."

Michael reached down and took his cock in his hand, hissing through his teeth as he began to stroke himself firmly. With his other hand, he fondled the heavy fur covered sack between his legs as he brought himself closer and closer to the edge. He ran his thumb over the heavily weeping slit in the head of his erection, rubbing the pre-cum over the hard, throbbing shaft. His hips began to buck involuntarily as he felt his balls tightening up as that familiar tingling started deep inside of him. Throwing his head back with a growl, he cried out as his body exploded, splattering his stomach with his own seed. He collapsed on the bed, his head spinning from the intensity of his orgasm. He felt the mattress shift as Bruner stood up. A few minutes later, he felt the wetness of a cloth that gently wiped him clean. He opened his eyes, smiling faintly as Karl Bruner finished washing him and then stretched out on the mattress beside him.

"I want you to sleep here beside me tonight." Karl said, gathering the smaller man into his arms and covering them both with the blanket. Within minutes, they both drifted into a deep slumber.

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Michael was surprised to see the sunlight streaming through the window when he opened his eyes the next morning. Karl was still sleeping beside him, his long arms wrapped about him possessively. As if sensing that he was awake, Karl opened his eyes and smiled at him. "We're staying in today." He told him "Today I want you all to myself."

"Won't you get in trouble?" Michael asked, overstepping his boundaries by speaking without permission. But he figured that that the things he had allowed the night before gave him some rights.

"No. I have more influence here than you think." Karl said evasively. "How do you think I managed to lay claim to you so easily?" Karl didn't elaborate. He didn't like to elaborate on the fact that he had been given special privileges because of his father's military rank and years of service to the cause. It wasn't something he was particularly proud of.

"Why did you choose me? It's not just because I can speak German."

"No. I wanted you from the minute I saw you. Even out there in the fields with the other prisoners, there was something about you that stood out."

"Even if I am a Jew?"

"That is unfortunate...an accident of birth." Karl said "But as long as you are with me, you will be safe from the gas chambers. You must admit that things are better for you now than they were before I found you."

"Perhaps...but I'm still your prisoner. That hasn't changed."

"No. It hasn't. Does that bother you?"

"Wouldn't it bother you if you were in my position?"

"I suppose it would but then I don't have to worry about that happening, do I?"

"Why do you hate my people so much? Why do you wish to exterminate my race?"

"I don't hate your people. But to my people you are and always will be an inferior race. Your religious beliefs are too different from ours...that makes you dangerous."

"How? Is it wrong to believe something different or is it wrong to be different?"

"I'm not exactly the right person to answer that question. My sexual preferences would make me as much of an outcast as you if it were to be discovered that I prefer men to women." Karl had struggled for years with his own sexuality, knowing that his sexual orientation would brand him as an 'undesirable' if it became common knowledge. His own father didn't know about his sexual urges.

"So what you're really saying is that you are willing to kill my people just because the mighty Fuhrer decided that we don't deserve to live?" Michael said, distracting Karl from his dark thoughts.

"It's the law. I have no control over what the law decides is best for the nation."

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of their breakfast trays. Karl rose gracefully to his feet and brought the food back to the bed. The two men ate their meal in silence, each of them lost in their own thoughts. When they were finished eating, Karl sat the trays aside and stretched back out on the bed beside Michael. He reached out and caressed a bare hip, running his hand down the outside of the brunet's thigh. He leaned in for a long, lingering kiss, exploring the inside of Michael's mouth as their tongues playfully teased each other. Karl didn't seem to be in any hurry to remove his own clothing, preferring instead to spend his time enjoying the naked body lying beside him in the bed.

"Can I touch you?" Karl whispered, looking deeply into his companion's eyes. "Can I make you feel good?"

Michael nodded slightly and closed his eyes, embarrassed at how much he wanted to feel this man's touch. He sighed in contentment as he felt that big hand slide between his legs, the fingers trailing up the inside of his right thigh. His cock twitched with interest and began to rise to the occasion. His heart was pounding with excitement and he found himself overwhelmed with desire. He had never felt this way before about anyone, man or woman. His whole body seemed to be sensitized to touch, his skin tingling with excitement and anticipation. Michael arched his back and thrust his hips forward but, despite his best efforts, Karl's nimble fingers avoided the place that wanted to be touched the most. Michael moaned in frustration, squirming around on the bed, his cock was as hard as granite and throbbing almost painfully, begging for attention. .

His eyes flew open and a yelp of surprise escaped his lips as he felt a warm, wet tongue licking the underside of the steel shaft. Michael's body trembled as his gaze focused on the blond head nestled between his legs. No one had ever done this to him before, not even the local whore that his father had paid to teach him the joys of sex on his thirteenth birthday. He whimpered softly as his hips began to buck under the onslaught of that talented tongue and mouth. He shivered as Karl nuzzled his balls, and then sucked one of the tender orbs inside.

"Agggghhhh..." he cried out, reaching down to grab those locks of blond silk and pull him closer. His entire system felt as if it were on overload and ready to explode at any second. "Please, please, please..." Michael chanted breathlessly, not even sure what it was exactly that he was begging for from Bruner.

That devilish tongue was licking the thick vein on the underside of the shaft again, trailing a path of wetness up to the crown. The tongue swirled around the ridge beneath the crown, pausing to pay special attention to the tiny scar at the back. Long, sturdy fingers wrapped around the base of the shaft and squeezed. For a moment, Michael was confused at Bruner's actions but soon realized why he had done it when his cock was suddenly swallowed in the sweet vacuum of that hot, wet mouth. If Karl hadn't been holding his cock so tightly, he would have lost it right then and came.

Michael's eyes rolled back in his head and a deep groan was pulled from his throat as he gave himself over to the sensations swirling around him. Michael knew he was lost. Lost in the magic of this man's touch, the power of his kiss, the incredible pleasure he was bestowing on him. And it was pleasure beyond his wildest dreams. It no longer mattered that it was a man between his legs pleasuring him instead of a woman.

As Karl began sucking harder and combining the actions of his mouth with a steady, firm stroke of his hand, Michael screamed as he felt his balls tightening up and drawing in closer to his body. Then he was falling over the edge, filling that warm, wet mouth with his seed. Karl continued to suck, pulling everything Michael had to give from his body until he was drained. Then the big blond licked him clean. Exhausted and sated, Michael drifted into a lethargic slumber induced by post climatic bliss.

When Michael opened his eyes, Bruner was standing by the window gazing outside, the rays of sunshine surrounding him and highlighting the gold in his hair. He had finally removed his own clothes and stood there looking like a Nordic God in all his splendor. His left hand was stroking the massive cock that hung proudly between his legs, not enough to bring him over the edge but just enough to keep the fire kindled. Unobserved,

Michael let his hungry gaze examine the long, sleek lines of that lithe body with its smooth, almost hairless chest, and the long legs that seemed to go on forever. Everything was in perfect proportion with the man's size and just as beautiful as his classic features. As if he had sensed that Michael's gaze, he turned his head and smiled fondly.

"Did you enjoy that?" he asked softly

"Yes, very much." Michael admitted without any shame or hesitation. "I've never had anyone do that to me before."

"That is only a taste of the things I can show you...the pleasure I can give you." Karl took a step closer to the bed and stood there, his cock jutting out proudly. "Will you give yourself to me willingly? Will you let me show you how good it can be between us?"

"Yes..." Michael said shyly, examining the thick hard cock bobbing in front of his eyes. The tip of his tongue darted out to lick his lips nervously as he wondered what that velvet steel shaft would taste like. He had a vague idea of how two men made love to one another. While the thought itself was arousing, the idea of allowing the SS officer to shove that monster cock up his ass was equally terrifying. It would rip him apart. He did not see how it could even be done.

As if he had read his mind, Bruner whispered, "Go ahead...touch it. Taste it. I want you to."

Michael reached out and tentatively ran his fingers along the smooth, yet hard, shaft of the other man's cock. The two men were both well endowed, although Bruner's cock was longer and a bit thicker than Michael. He was also uncut, a fact that fascinated the young Jew. He let his fingers gently slid back the foreskin to expose the smooth head with the tiny slit in the middle. Karl moaned softly as Michael gently ran the pad of his thumb over the slit, spreading the hint of moisture that was gathered there over the crown. It felt strange to be handling another man's cock, yet it wasn't an unpleasant experience.

Michael let his fingers close around the shaft, experimenting with different strokes and rhythms until he found the one that Bruner seemed to like the best. He felt the shaft grow even harder and thicker beneath his fingers. Leaning closer, he let his tongue dart out to taste the other man for the first time. The scent of musk and arousal was strong and Michael felt his own cock stiffening in response. He felt long, slender fingers tangling in his thick soft curls, pulling him closer and encouraging him to take the head of the cock into his mouth. Closing his eyes Michael took a deep breath and sucked in the crown.

Bruner roared his approval, his body trembling with the effort it took to keep from driving the shaft deep into that warm, wet cavern. He knew that this was all new territory to the young Jew and he didn't want to do anything to discourage him from exploring the possibilities. Karl's greatest virtue was his patience. He felt a strange connection to this Jew, almost a kinship that troubled him deeply. He'd had many sexual partners in his lifetime, both male and female, but none had broken through his cold, arrogant exterior the way this man had. He knew the other guards often used the Jews for their own pleasure but the thought of another man touching this one made Karl's blood boil with rage. A part of him screamed that he needed to stop this madness while he still could, while another part of him demanded that he continue and brand this man as his for all eternity.

Unable to hold back any longer, Karl began to thrust his hips, driving his cock in and out of the willing mouth before him. He kept his fingers tangled in those dark curls to keep Michael from pulling away until Karl satisfied his need for completion. With a sudden roar and a powerful thrust of his hips, he poured his seed down the smaller man's throat. His own inexperience made Michael gag and choke, instinctively trying to pull away so he could breathe. Finally, Karl regained his senses and gently pulled out his softening cock. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he gently gathered Michael in his arms, rubbing his back soothingly as he coughed and tried to regain his breathe.

"It's all right, little one." He whispered into those chocolate colored curls. "I'm sorry. I got a little carried away. It won't happen again."

"S'okay" Michael said when he could speak again. "I just didn't expect there to be so much, so quickly."

"You'll get better. All it takes is some practice."

"It tastes stronger than I thought it would. Tart and thick."

"You mean slimy, don't you?" Karl said with a chuckle. He remembered the first time he had tasted another man's semen. He had been fourteen and scared to death. "You get used to it."

The two men stretched out together on the bed, wrapped in each other's arms. They cuddled close, relaxing and enjoying the afterglow. Karl was pleased with how responsive Michael was turning out to be. There was a childlike innocence to the young Jew that was both refreshing and charming. Like many of his countrymen, Karl had been raised surrounded by the propaganda spread by the SS, that his race was the superior race and that Jews, the disabled and other selected minorities should be eliminated for the good of mankind. They were not necessarily beliefs that Karl claimed as his own. Now those ingrained beliefs were being badly shaken by his budding relationship with one Jew in particular. If Michael David Starsky was an example of his race, then maybe the fatherland was wrong in their views of what was best for Germany. Karl knew that such thoughts were treasonous and he could be executed as a traitor to the cause if anyone ever found out he was having doubts about his role in life.

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Michael lay on the bed and watched as Karl paced the floor restlessly. He had been on edge for several days, his mood fueled by the persistent rumors that allied forces were preparing to invade Poland to free the Jews from their captivity. Under direct orders from headquarters in Germany, more Jews were being sent to the gas chambers daily. The smell of burning flesh from the crematoriums hung heavy in the air throughout the camp. The bodies of the dead were also being buried in mass graves just outside the gates. The order and structure of the camp was being seriously compromised by the impending invasion.

"I don't know how much longer I can keep you safe." Karl said, glancing worriedly at his lover. "The Fuhrer has decreed that all the Jews should be killed before the allied troops come. I have to find a way to get you out of here...to somewhere safe. I won't let them send you to the gas chambers."

"They'll kill you too if you try to help me escape." Michael said trying to unsuccessfully argue with the big blond. "It's not worth the risk."

"To me it is!" Karl growled "I'm in love with you, Michael...I won't let them hurt you!" He stopped and stared at his lover, appearing to be just as shocked by the words he had just spoken as Michael was. In the past few weeks, they had continued to explore their newfound relationship but neither one of them had ever voiced their true feelings for one another. No words of love or affection had ever passed between them.

"You can't love me. I'm nothing but a Jew. You love what we share when we're in this bed together, nothing more." Michael said firmly. Saying the words aloud cut deeply even though Michael believed them to be true. His own emotions were more closely guarded but in his heart, Michael knew that he had fallen in love with the tall blond whose beliefs were radically different from his own. But, he was realistic enough to know that a love like theirs had no future, not in the world outside the gates of this camp.

Michael watched as the big blond lost his rigid control and sank to his knees beside the bed, reaching out to clasp at Michael's hands almost desperately. "I do love you. You must believe that. I saved you from a certain death when I rescued you from the life led by the other prisoners. You owe me for that."

"Yes, I owe you my life...but I am still a Jew. My place is with my people, even if it means that I must die for what I am. My destiny is God's will, not my own."

"NO!" Karl snapped "I WON'T LET YOU MAKE THAT CHOICE!"

"The choice is not mine to make. It never has been."

"I swear I will find a way to save you from the fate of the others."

"Come to bed and let me love you." Michael whispered with a soft smile. "We may not have much time left together. I want to make the most of it."

"Will you let me take you? Make you mine, once and for all?" Karl asked almost shyly. This was the one thing they had not done. Michael had allowed other liberties with his body but not that one. If their time together was coming to an end, Karl wanted that final intimacy to remember him by.

Michael was quiet for several long minutes. He was still afraid of that one particular act of submission but he could see in his lover's eyes how much it meant to the Karl. Finally, he nodded slightly without speaking, giving his consent and bowing to Bruner's desires.

Karl smiled happily and turned to fumble though a nightstand that stood beside the bed. He pulled out a jar filled with lard and put it on the pillow within easy reach. "Lay on your stomach." He ordered the brunet. He waited until Michael did as he was instructed, then crawled onto the bed beside him. Leaning down to nuzzle the side of the smaller man's neck, he whispered, "Don't be afraid, my love. I'm not going to hurt you. Just relax and let me love you."

Michael snorted into the pillow beneath his head. That was easy for him to say. Bruner wasn't tensed up like a virgin on her wedding night. The idea suddenly struck Michael as funny and he giggled. That was exactly what he was right now. A virgin. He felt those strong sure fingers rubbing the muscles of his shoulders and back, expertly working out the kinks. Then those hands were moving lower, caressing the firm cheeks of his ass and his heavily muscled thighs. He felt those same hands pushing his legs wider apart, giving Bruner access to his hidden center, the most vulnerable part of his anatomy.

He jumped, startled, when he felt a long wet tongue lapping at the puckered opening between his legs. He had not been expecting that. It was not an unpleasant feeling. In fact, it was strangely erotic and exciting. As Karl continued to tease the opening, Michael began to squirm on the bed as his body responded, his cock growing painfully hard between his belly and the mattress.

"You taste so good, baby." Karl murmured softly, planting a kiss on one firm ass cheek. "I want you so bad. I'm going to touch you now with my finger."

Michael felt the blunt tip of finger probing against his anus, circling the opening and stimulating the nerve endings until Michael instinctively pushed back against the touch. He hissed sharply as he felt the finger breach the opening, pushing past the resistant outer ring of muscle. It didn't hurt exactly; it just felt uncomfortable and strange. Karl pushed again, his finger sinking deeper into the tight, hot channel until it was completely buried. He paused to give Michael's body a minute to adjust to the invasion.

Slowly, he began to move his finger in and out of the hidden opening. He glanced at Michael's face trying to judge his reactions only to find those sapphire eyes tightly closed. But, his breathing was deep and even so Karl

decided to continue with caution. He would not underestimate the value of the gift he was being given, the level of trust that Michael was showing by allowing him to do this when he still had some reservations.

When Michael whimpered softly and rubbed his ass back against Karl's hand, he slowly added a second finger to the first. He carefully worked at stretching out the muscle, preparing his partner as best he could for the final joining. He met with some resistance when he added a third finger. He felt the muscles clamp down tightly, trying to bar his way. With his free hand, he reached out and gently took hold of the semi-erect cock, stroking it gently. As the cock hardened, he felt the body beneath him relax and the inner muscles eased up their grip. He continued playing with Michael's ass until the brunet began whimpering, his hands clutching frantically at the sheets, as his hips began thrusting trying to ease the throb in his aching cock.

Smiling faintly, Karl positioned himself between the wide spread legs and carefully grabbed his own aching cock in his hand. He pressed the head against the tiny opening and pushed forward, hissing sharply as the head slipped past the outer muscle only to be grasped in a vise-like grip by the inner muscles as they clamped down viciously. Both men moaned from the pain they were experiencing at the moment. "Jesus babe...ease up." Karl whispered, frantically reaching for the dusky cock and pumping fiercely. They both breathed a heavy sigh of relief as the muscles finally released their hold and allowed Karl's cock to sink in a bit deeper. "How you doing, baby?" he whispered in a curl covered ear.

"It hurts..." Michael admitted in a weak, shaky voice, gritting his teeth against the sharp burning pain deep inside his ass. He had expected some pain, but nothing to this degree. His anus felt as if it had a tree jammed up it.

"I know it does, little one...just hold on for a few minutes. It'll get better. I promise." Karl reassured him. Slowly, inch by inch, he continued to bury his cock in the hot, tight virgin channel of his lover. They both breathed easier when his balls finally slapped against Michael's ass. They both paused to regroup but Karl soon felt the instinctive urge to start thrusting.

Michael groaned at the first few thrusts of Karl's hips, still unaccustomed to the invasion of his body by another man's cock. Then the big blond changed his angle slightly and Michael screamed in surprise as a jolt of unbelievable pleasure ripped through his system. He tried to pull away from the over stimulation of his prostate but Bruner had anticipated his reaction and grabbed his hips, holding him firmly in place. Michael began to babble with pleasure as Karl continued thrusting, his cock hitting the hidden gland with every stroke. Michael's roar of pleasure echoed in the room as his cock exploded, spewing semen all over the bed beneath him. The strong muscle contractions in his ass pulled Karl over the edge with him and his own scream of pleasure echoed as he filled his lover's body with his offering. Panting and exhausted, he collapsed on top of the broad, muscular back beneath him.

Finally, he rolled to one side, gently pulling his softening cock out of his lover's body. As soon as he caught his breath, he would get some water and clean them both up but for now, he was too spent to move. He glanced at Michael. He looked just as wasted, his eyes were closed and he was still panting heavily through his open mouth. Stealing a quick kiss, Karl said quietly, "Are you okay? Was it good for you?"

Slowly those sapphire eyes fluttered open and Michael smiled sweetly. "It was great. I've never felt anything like that before. I've never come so hard in my life."

"Good. I wanted it to be good for you." Karl said in a deeply satisfied voice. "I know it hurt but that can't be helped the first few times."

"I forgot how bad it hurt once you actually started fucking me." Michael said crudely.

"That's because I found the magic spot that made you fly." Karl said with a chuckle. He leaned up on his forearm and looked deeply into his lover's eyes. "I can't wait to feel you inside of me like that."

"Right now I'm too wasted to do anything but sleep."

"We have plenty of time later for you to return the favor. Sleep for now, little one. I'll be right here beside you."

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"Michael! Wake up!" Karl's insistent voice pulled the brunet out of a deep slumber. He blinked his eyes and looked at his lover questioningly.

"What is it? What's wrong?"

"We just received word...the invasion has begun. I have to get you out of here while there's still time. The other guards are rounding up Jews and gassing them as we speak." Instantly wide awake and aware of the danger facing him, Michael bounced to his feet and started to reach for his clothes. "No, not those." Karl said sharply, thrusting a bundle of clothes at him. "Put these on."

Without stopping to question the order, Michael quickly pulled on the uniform of an SS officer. When he had finished, Karl put the hat on Michael's head, pulling it down to conceal the dark unruly curls. He pulled a small gun from his jacket and held it out to his lover. "Do you know how to use this?" he asked. When Michael nodded and accepted the weapon, Karl said grimly, "What we're doing is very dangerous. If we are caught, they will kill us both on the spot. Promise me that if I get hurt or we're stopped that you'll leave me behind and save yourself."

"NO!" Michael said just as firmly. "If we go, we go together...if you die, then I die." The two men locked eyes, a silent understanding passing between them in a stubborn battle of wills. Finally, Karl nodded solemnly. They would face their destiny together.

"We must hurry while it is still dark. The chaos outside will work to our advantage and cover our escape." He grabbed his lover's hand and pulled him towards the door. He eased it open just far enough to peer into the hallway and make sure that it was safe for them to leave the room together. He picked up a securely bound bundle from the floor and tucked it under his arm.

They slipped into the hall and made their way out of the building. Outside, guards were yelling orders and shoving groups of prisoners towards the large stone building near the back of the compound. In the confusion, it was simpler than Karl had expected to make their way unchallenged to the front gates. Once they were outside the compound, they began to run, disappearing into the woods that surrounded the area. They ran until they were both out of breath, finally collapsing to the ground beside a small stream.

"I think we're safe for now." Karl said with a smile. He began pulling the extra provisions he had brought with him out of his pockets. He had a canteen of water, some dried fruit and meat, and bullets for both guns. Untying the wrapped bundle he had been carrying under his arm, he handed Michael another change of clothes as well as one for himself. "We need to get out of these uniforms. We won't get far dressed like this." He explained. Both men changed into a pair of dark pants, work shirts and threadbare jackets. The change of clothing made them look like a couple of peasants from the area. This time it was Hutch's hair that needed to be concealed by the cap pulled down on his head.

The two men made their way through the woods following the stream and carefully avoiding getting too close to any signs of civilization. They had no idea who could be trusted and who couldn't. It was safer to stay to themselves and avoid being seen. When they stopped to rest for the evening, Michael looked at the man sitting

beside him and found himself wondering about the drastic changes that had occurred in his life in the past three years. Now, he was once more facing an uncertain future with no family to speak of.

"Where is your family?" Michael asked, suddenly realizing that he knew very little about the man that he had allowed to become his lover.

"My father is in Berlin. He's in the military."

"Where's your mother?"

"She died when I was young. I've been pretty much on my own since then. What about your family?"

"They're all dead. My father was killed when we tried to escape from Poland before the deportations started. My mother and my sisters died at the Ghetto in Warsaw before I was sent to the camp."

"So you are alone?"

"I have you." Michael said with a tender smile.

"I have a friend in Paris. If we can get there, he can arrange to get you on a boat to America. There you will be safe."

"What about you? I don't want to go without you."

"You must go and I must stay here." Karl said with a trace of sadness in his voice. "You must have known that what we have could never last. The world will not accept the way we feel about each other."

"There must be a way." Michael said, a catch in his voice as he thought about facing whatever lay ahead without his lover by his side. "If you come with me to America, nobody will ever need to know..."

"I will not hide the way I feel about you. I will die to protect you but I will not lie about our love."

"So why do you insist on sending me away?"

"Because it is the only way to make sure that you are safe. You are still a Jew and your life is still in danger as long as you stay here!" Karl argued. "I won't allow you to live the rest of your life looking over your shoulder for the Gestapo. What I do for you, I am doing out of love. You must believe that."

"It doesn't feel like it. It feels like you're trying to get rid of me." Michael said in a deeply hurt voice.

"Never." Karl said, wrapping his arms around the smaller man's waist and pulling him close. "If there were a way for us to be together without fear, I would never let you leave my side. But there isn't. This is the best thing for both of us."

"How long before we reach Paris?" Michael asked in a choked voice, knowing that his lover's mind was made up and there would be no changing it. The memories of the love they had discovered and the time they had left together would have to last him for a lifetime.

"That depends. If we have to walk, it could take a few weeks. If I can find us a ride, maybe a few days."

Michael turned away so his lover wouldn't see the tears that flooded his eyes at the short time they had left to share their love.

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Michael stared out the window at the busy street below. In less than four hours, he would board a ship that would take him to America. He would be leaving behind the only way of life he had ever known and venturing into the unknown in a strange new land. He and Karl had been in Paris for almost a week, waiting while Karl's friend made the final arrangements to get Michael safely out of the country. They had not ventured outside their bedroom, spending what little time they had left together making love and making memories. Michael had tried in vain to convince Karl to either come with him or to let him stay behind with him but Karl had steadfastly refused. He continued to insist that leaving the country was the only way to keep Michael safe as long as the war still raged in Europe. As the time grew closer for Michael to leave on his journey, another piece of his heart shattered into pieces. He knew that no matter where he ended up or what he did with the remainder of his life, he would never love anyone else the way he loved the big blond SS officer who had essentially saved his life by taking him as his lover and teaching him all the ways to please a man.

As if drawn by his thoughts, a pair of strong arms circled his waist and a set of warm lips nuzzled the side of his neck from behind. "Soon you will be gone and I will be alone." Karl said sadly. "I'm going to miss you, Michael."

"You could still come with me." Michael said wistfully, already knowing what the answer would be.

"You know I can't. But I am staying here in Paris. I won't be returning to Germany or to Poland."

"Promise that you won't forget me." Michael whispered, leaning back into his lover.

"I could never forget you, my love. Someday we will be together...in the next life perhaps."

"That's too far away. I'll die of loneliness before then."

"I have something for you...so you will always remember the love we shared." He reached for Michael's left hand and slipped a thick golden band on his pinkie finger. "It was my mothers. Now I want you to have it."

"I'll never take it off." Michael promised faithfully. "And if I ever have a son, I will pass it on to him so that our love can continue from generation to generation."

"I'm going to hold you to that, my love." Karl said with a chuckle "Now come back to bed so we can make one last memory before you leave me."

THE END