

Captured

“Drei! Three minutes!”

Endlessly, the rusting bucket trundled on towards – I haven’t got a clue. I had been sat in this pit of misery for what felt like days. The incessant hum of the engine had pierced my thoughts. I hadn’t heard my own voice for hours. I swayed lazily left and right with the motion of the lorry. What awaited us at the end of this journey? I brushed ran my numbing fingers through my greasy hair, down the back of neck and held onto my shivering shoulder. I grasped it tightly trying to stop myself from shaking.

“Zwei! Two minutes until arrival!”

Rapid and destructive winds slammed into the side of the sordid lorry. The force made the cavernous container shake. Howling, the gusts climbed through the tiny holes of the lorry and screamed into my frozen ears. Pouring rain hammered the top of the vehicle and echoed inside like a whaling mother who cried for her dead child. Silently, I inhaled and exhaled the icy air; clouds of condensation exited my mouth.

“Eins! One minute until arrival!”

Steel chains bolted my ankles together. Each chain connected to the foot of another comrade. We had become a trapped centipede with metal, impenetrable joints. The cold iron was tightly compressed, reducing the blood flow to my feet – it was impossible to ignore. However, combined with the cold, my feet were quickly becoming numb. Would I lose my feet as a result of all of this? What else would I lose?

I looked over to Adam; his moustache had tinted white in the chilled air. I didn’t dare to speak to him; not with our captors turning around every 30 seconds to check on us. As I gazed longingly at my good friend, my life flashed before my eyes. As children, Adam and I would celebrate Hanukkah together every year in our tiny community with our families. We got our first jobs together in the local shop and completed all of our learning together. He acted as best man at my wedding. We’d been through it all. Whatever this was, we would handle it... together.

The sound of loose gravel crunched under the tyres and the lorry stopped.

Adam looked back at me, a frozen tear sitting on his left cheek. In his eyes I saw more fear than I had ever seen before.

The lorry doors opened and a dark figure stood holding them. A black uniform with a red armband stared at us.

“Ve are here. Get out in zingle file and vait over zhere. Do not talk. Do not look at anyone.”

A tall and dilapidated rusting black gate towered over us as we stood shackled together. At the top I could make out one word: *Auschwitz*.