

“Promise me,” I cried to my parents that night, “promise me this won’t be the last time!” Fifteen years ago that was the last thing I said to my parents through a barbed wire fence. My parents didn’t promise anything, and I knew then that we would never see each other again.

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“Anika, aufwachen (wake up),” my mother whispered. I looked around and saw everyone was still asleep.

“What’s wrong?” I asked curiously wanting to know what was happening. She put a finger to her lip gesturing to me to be quiet and handed me a rucksack. I put it over my shoulder and stood up. She took my hand, and we tip toed around all the bunks toward the opening; that’s when we heard footsteps in front of the barracks. One of the Nazi soldiers, no doubt. We froze in place and held our breath. Once the steps faded, mother walked outside.

“What are you looking for?” I whispered after Mother came back in. She didn’t answer and waved me for me to follow behind her. Outside the wind was blowing, and the moon shone bright. As we quietly walked through the camp using the light from the stars to navigate, mother stopped every few seconds looking around before proceeding. Walking around that night reminded me of the old days when Mom and I used to walk and talk about our day every night before Dad came home.

After arriving at the concentration camp, all those memories started to fade, and all we thought about was surviving. We stopped walking when we reached the red brick, three story buildings where all the Nazi officers stayed. The buildings were five-star hotels compared to where we had to stay. Our barracks were held up with pieces of wood and covered with muddy, torn fabric that once was white.

“If you hear anything, you must run for cover because there is a greater chance we will run into a Nazi,” Mother warned before we started walking again. I didn’t understand then why Mom was so worried, but after fifteen years, I see the pressure she was feeling. We walked a couple meters, and I saw two people standing in the distance. I couldn’t make out their faces: one of them was standing right at the fence and the other was on the opposite side, outside the fence. I tugged on my mom’s hand and pointed toward the people.

"Just keep going," she told me. So we walked right toward the figures. I didn't get why we were walking toward them. I thought they could be Nazi officers, and if they saw us outside at that time, we could have gotten beaten. Once I got closer, I could see that the one on the inside of the fence was my papa. I ran to him and gave him a big hug. I hadn't seen him in two weeks.

"How are you, dear?" he asked with a smile but the deepening crease between his eyes told me he was concerned.

"Fine, but what are we doing here?" I said still holding on to the hug.

"Walter, we must hurry," interrupted a young woman with blonde hair and blue eyes from outside of the fence. After staring at her for a second, I realized that it was Edith, our neighbor (or at least until we were brought to the concentration camp).

"Edith, what are you doing here?" I asked still trying to piece together what was going on.

"Anika, your mom and I have something to tell you," Papa said looking toward my mom who was behind me. "Edith is here to take you."

"What do you mean by *she is here to take me*?" I asked looking at Edith.

"Just do as we say and crawl under the fence. We are coming right behind you," Papa ordered while pulling up the barbed wire. He held it just enough for me to crawl through. Once I was on the other side, a dark figure came walking toward Mother and Papa. It was a Nazi, and I felt then that this was the end for us all. He came and stood right beside Papa, but to my surprise, he didn't say anything; instead, he just nailed the fence back in place. I started to scream, but Edith quickly covered by mouth with her hand.

Once the Nazi made sure the fence was secured, he stood up and put his hand in front of Papa. Father gave him his gold watch. Mother had sewed it in his clothes before we came here just in case we needed it. Once the Nazi was out of sight, I bit Edith's hand, and she jumped.

"What are we going to do now?" I asked holding my mother's hand through the barbed wire. "How are you going to come out?"

"Look, Anika, we are not coming with you," Mother started but then broke off into tears.

“Edith will take you to Great Britain, and you will be safe,” Papa continued for mother.

“I’m not going anywhere without you,” I started to cry. “I don’t want to be safe when you are fighting every day to survive here.”

“Anika, honey, we need you to go now before we all get caught,” Papa said while Edith took off the Star of David that was attached to my muddy shirt. She handed it to my father through the fence. He tied it to the barbed wire and tears started to roll down his cheeks. “Edith, we need you to take care of Anika.”

“I will,” Edith reassured my parents. “We must go now,” Edith said turning to me and taking me by the wrist. I burst into tears.

“Promise me,” I cried to my parents, “promise this won’t be the last time!”

“Anika, we love you!” my mother said trying to get a hold of herself.

“Remember that we are always with you. Look for two brightest stars and think of them as me and your mother. You will never feel alone,” my father said before he motioned for me to go, and I knew that I had to.

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Now, fifteen years later, I have come to face the truth that if my parents hadn’t sent me with Edith, I wouldn’t be alive. Back then I was angry that my parents separated me from them, but all they did was make sacrifices for me so I could get to Great Britain.

Tonight I look up at the sky and see the two brightest stars are next to each other. I know that they are my parents.