



Germany 1945

A few times in my life I met somebody who I felt could have been my soul mate, but the circumstances were against us. One of those encounters happened during the last months of the war when I was in hiding and living as a German refugee. My existence was very fragile and vulnerable. I was lonely, afraid to speak to people in case I gave myself away, but longing for companionship. I felt schizophrenic. I hated the Germans and feared them for what they had done to us, but there in that big barn where we all slept, I was one of them. One evening a group of soldiers came to spend the night in our barn. One of them, a young lieutenant, sat down next to me and started talking to me. From the first moment I felt a strong attraction, but at the same time I was completely at ease with him. He told me about his background – he was from Munich and even his accent was the same as mine. We spent the whole night talking in whispers, not to wake the sleeping people around us. It was a magical night. We forgot the war and talked of Vienna and Munich, about books and music, about our yearning for peace and a normal life. We felt we had so much in common and all that time I wanted to tell him the truth about me. I felt so close to this stranger, but self-preservation prevented me from telling him the truth. In the morning he had to leave with his soldiers and we were both sad when we took leave from each other. He wrote down his address and asked me to contact him after the war. I had completely put it out of my mind that he was a German soldier and in fact my enemy. Till today I wonder how he would have reacted if he had known who I really was, a Jewish girl lucky enough to have escaped from a concentration camp. I like to think that he would not have given me away, but I'll never know...

Towards the end of the war the group of refugees I 'traveled' with ended up on a small German Navy boat that was anchored in Flensburg in North Germany. I became friendly with one of the sailors. He was from Berlin and had a great sense of humor. We spent a lot of time together and found many things to talk about. By that time I had gained a little confidence and had lost most of my fears. When no one was listening he made fun of the Nazis. He knew the war was lost and only wanted to go home to Berlin. It was dangerous for him to confide in me, but he must have felt he was safe with me. I had this feeling that he sensed something about me and I was dying to tell him who I was, but again I didn't dare. No matter how comfortable I felt with him, I couldn't trust anybody.

When the radio announced that Germany had capitulated, I was with him. We looked at each other and smiled, although the people around us were in shock. A few days later I left the ship. Even when we said good bye I never told him my secret. He was a lovely person, but he belonged to my German past and I had to get on with my life, now that the war was finally over. Today I cannot even remember their names, but I have never forgotten them.

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