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A few weeks had gone by since I last saw Sue. Every Saturday and Sunday I hung around near the barbed wire at the corner of the camp, so that I could see her coming. Today was a beautiful fall day. It was somewhat cool but the sun was out and the country air smelled fresh. I was watching a cat with her three kittens, belonging to a fellow prisoner from the next barracks, playing around a large cardboard box. The farmer he worked for had given them to him. There were other spectators besides myself and it was very entertaining to watch the kittens play. While I walked up and down along the fence, listening to the camp choir practicing, I could hear Seppie singing *Oh solo mio* in his beautiful tenor voice.

Finally I saw two people walking along the railway lines towards the camp, Sue and another girl. I looked behind me to see if anyone was close by. Seppie and Heinz were not around and I did not have much time. It was too late to go and find them so I just had to hope for the best. The thought of seeing Sue again after so many weeks dispelled all fears of being caught so I went as close as I possibly could to the barbed wire.

Sue told me she didn't have much time today and introduced me to her friend, Betty. Then there came flying over the fence a letter, sandwiches, and an envelope with writing paper and postage stamps. The letter disappeared quickly under my jacket. Sue said that she had been ill with an inner ear infection, and that was why she hadn't been to see me sooner.

Suddenly Sue spotted two guards coming our way, and warned me of them. I said, "I love you, darling. You'd better go and be careful." Then I threw the food and the envelope next to me in the grass, hoping

the guards wouldn't see me do it.

It was too late for me to get away. They called out, "Stay where you are," and marched me off, one guard in front of me and one behind me, to the guardhouse.

I was taken to the camp sergeant, who asked me, "Do you speak English?" I just shrugged my shoulders. He then called for an interpreter to be brought in, one of our men, and asked if I knew that it was not allowed to fraternize and that I had to keep at least ten feet away from the fence. I asked the interpreter to tell him that I didn't realize I was that close to the fence. He responded by shouting at me that he would like to put on boxing gloves and punch me on the nose.

I couldn't help laughing at that, so he realized that I understood English. This made him even more furious. He jumped up, throwing his desk over in front of me. For a moment I thought he was going to come for my throat. Instead, he threw his arms up in the air and told me that he was going to report this incident to the camp commander. Instead of going to work next day, I would receive my punishment.

Back at the barracks, Heinz and Seppie had already heard that I had been caught and were anxiously waiting to hear what I had to tell them. They said that anyone who was reported to the camp commander received a very severe punishment. Now I really wished that I had taken the time to look for Heinz. He could probably have prevented me from being caught.

I could not change what had happened, so I had to get a letter to Sue quickly. Since I was not allowed to go to work, I was hoping that either Seppie or Heinz would mail a letter for me.

But first the sandwich and the envelope had to be retrieved before nightfall. Luckily, the guards had not seen me throwing them away. Before it was too dark my two friends accompanied me to retrieve everything. While they were on the lookout, I retrieved the items. We moved to a different area to share the food. Then I went to my barracks to read the letter from Sue.

I had to destroy the letter after I had read it, so it would not get into the hands of anyone else. We never knew when the guards would be conducting a search. I was just about to lie down on my bunk when the interpreter came in to tell me that the sergeant wanted to see me again.

As we walked to the guardhouse, the interpreter had some good

news for me. The sergeant's wife was visiting him when I was caught. She was Austrian, of German descent, and she wanted to know what had happened at the fence. He told her about me and that he was going to have to make a report to the camp commander. She persuaded him not to report me, but to find another way to deal with the situation.

At the guardhouse the sergeant told me, in a much softer voice, that he had a relative with a son in a German prison camp, and so he had decided not to report me to the camp commander. However, I would have to be taught a lesson. Starting the following day, for seven days, I would be locked in the coal enclosure and spend the day shoveling coal from one side to the other. With this I was dismissed.

Walking back to my barracks, I was immensely relieved. Now I had to get a letter off to Sue to let her know that I was all right. I hoped that Seppie could mail it. He was working for a farmer and hopefully there was a mailbox nearby.

Monday morning came far too soon. Promptly I reported at the guardhouse for my special duty. The coal enclosure consisted of a concrete base, approximately 15 feet square. An eight-foot high chain-link fence surrounded it.

Before the guard on duty locked me inside, he ordered me to take off my shoes and socks, which he kept. He wanted me to be barefoot. Then he handed me a shovel. As he closed and locked the gate behind me, he called out in broken German, "Mack snell, mack snell" [Hurry up, hurry up]. He then went back to the guardhouse, about 20 feet away.

Most of the guards were young soldiers about my age. Every so often, one of them would call through a small window in the guard house, "Mack snell, mack snell."

By the end of the first day I had just about shoveled the whole pile of coal, about ten feet high, from one end of the enclosure to the other. I only got two slices of bread with some water for the whole day. My feet ached, and they were black with coal dust. I was not used to working barefoot, on top of pieces of coal on a cold concrete floor. At dusk, one of the guards let me out, handed me my shoes and socks, and told me to report back the next day.

When I got back to my barracks I was weary, tired, and hungry. Seppie came over to see me and told me that he managed to mail my letter. That kind of news made me feel better.

I went to the washhouse to wash the dirt and coal dust off my sore feet. When I climbed into my bunk at night I felt depressed and hungry. I just lay there feeling sorry for myself. Then I reached for my dictionary and leafed through it, looking for words I wanted to learn. It helped me to take my mind off the unpleasant day I had experienced. I thought of Sue saying, "Oh Karl I will never stop loving you."

Some time later, Heinz came to keep me company and to cheer me up a little. He also brought me a potato, which he had smuggled into the camp and baked for me on the potbelly stove. It was nice and hot and tasted as good as the best steak.

Although I was very tired, I didn't sleep much that first night. I was reliving the moments with Sue on that memorable Sunday afternoon, when I daringly climbed down into the quarry to spend the afternoon with my darling.

In the letter, which Seppie had mailed for me, I asked Sue not to come to the camp for at least two weeks, even though I wanted to see her more than ever. I told her that I was OK and that I had special duties to perform in the camp, but I didn't go into details.

The next day, when I reported to the guardhouse, there was a different guard on duty. He was middle-aged, and to my surprise he did not ask me to remove my shoes and socks before he locked me in the enclosure. Apart from bringing me bread and water, I never saw him all day. Neither did he call out, "mack snell, mack snell". I felt like saying to him, God bless you, you are a good man. But I couldn't bring myself to do it.

As the second day of my special duty came to an end, I did not feel as tired and I was in somewhat better spirits than the day before. Also, I did not re-shovel the whole pile of coal from one end to the other, as on the previous day. I hoped that the same guard would be on duty for the rest of the week.

As the week progressed, I experienced only two more days like that first Monday. Each time, the same young soldier was on duty, ordering me to take my shoes and socks off. However, as the week wore on, I became wiser. When he called through the little window, "Mack snell," instead of actually shoveling coal, I only moved my shovel back and forth, making enough noise that it could be heard in the guardhouse. Once in a while of course, when he came to check up on me, I had to shovel coal. Experience had taught me some survival techniques over the

years.

Thinking of Sue, and not being able to hold her in my arms, hurt me more than shoveling coal in my bare feet all day. My heart longed to find a permanent solution. However our love for each other was stronger than the prison camp and the barbed wire, which surrounded it. Maybe it was because of all the obstacles that our love grew so strong.

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Two weeks after my special duty was over, it was Sunday afternoon again, I was watching for Sue. Both Seppie and Heinz were close by, looking out for me, in case she appeared. This time we wanted to be prepared.

There was no soccer game because it was getting close to Christmas and almost everyone was busy, making toys. I had finished my bracelet for Sue. It was made from clear plastic; the center was heart-shaped with the letters U and K engraved in the middle. I had it in my pocket, ready to give to her if she came. I was feeling uneasy, because of what happened three weeks ago, so I intended to go through the barbed wire as soon as I saw her coming, before she even got close to the camp.

Heinz caught sight of Sue first and as soon as I got the signal I was outside and on my way to the railway lines. Before long we were in each other's arms. As we hugged and kissed I could feel her shaking. She