

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

whispered, "Oh Karl, I love you so much and I am so afraid for you".

I reached into my pocket and gave her the bracelet, together with a card I had made. It read *'This is for you dear, please don't open it until you get home.'*

Sue had brought a letter, food, and cigarettes. For a few moments the world around us stood still, but all too soon it was time to part again.

As she turned to go, Sue said, "I love you Karl, please be careful, I don't want anything else to happen to you." I stayed until she was out of sight, then made my way back into the camp on hands and knees. Seppie and Heinz were both relieved when they saw me inside again.

Two weeks later, I was assigned to a different commando, a work site about 20 minutes from where Sue lived. It turned out to be the hardest work I had done so far. We had to dig trenches about six to eight feet deep. Whenever we had dug about ten feet of trench, huge pipes were laid in them, and then it was my job to refill the trench with dirt.

One day, one of the men was working a jackhammer deep down in the trench. We had encountered large rocks, which had to be broken up. While he was hammering and chipping away, his jackhammer slipped. Since it was a very heavy tool, he fell forward and scraped both hands against the rocks. The force of the fall pulled out nearly all his fingernails. The pain was so severe that he ran up an almost vertical wall and out of the trench.

After he was taken to hospital, the foreman picked me to replace him. I tried hard to explain that my wrists and arms were too small and too weak to do work like that. I didn't think I had the strength to even lift the hammer.

However it was no use, I had to go down and operate the jackhammer. As I had thought, I barely managed to lift it up. The trench not only had boulders, but also water, which had seeped through and collected at the bottom. After about five minutes of hammering, I was so weak that I lost control, fell over, and ended up lying in a deep puddle. The foreman who was watching me from the top was furious and called, "Get out of there you stupid fool." As I climbed out of the trench, I said a silent prayer of thanks and then reassumed my original job, filling the trenches with dirt.

That evening I was told to report to the camp sergeant again. With dreadful foreboding I made my way to the guardhouse.

The sergeant behind the desk said in a very official manner, "Your

fraternizing behavior has earned you a black mark against your name. Consequently, we have to send you to another camp, far away from here.” My heart sank into my boots. I felt like somebody had hit me with a sledgehammer, though I tried hard not to show it. There would be about a hundred of us from nearby camps boarding a train from the city of Leeds, and we would be leaving in about a week’s time.

If someone had told me that I was going to face a firing squad, I couldn’t have felt any worse. I asked myself, could this now be the end of our romance?

Heinz and Seppie were waiting for me when I got back. They told me that I looked as if I had seen a ghost and were very sorry to hear that I was going to be moved so far away. We had been such good friends. I could trust them as if they were my own brothers.

Seppie suggested I write a letter to Sue and get it in the mail as soon as possible, so there would be time for her to come and see me once more before I left.

I must have sat on my bunk for at least half an hour with my head in my hands, not knowing how to start. It was something I had dreaded for a long time but how was I going to tell Sue that I might never see her again?

Eventually I managed to put a letter together. Now I had to find a way to get it mailed. If only I could find someone who would hand a letter to her personally. Then I remembered that one of the timber-men I used to work with at the Clayton building site had once seen Sue handing a letter to me. She was probably still going to her cousin’s house, using the pathway across the building site, at least, I hoped the pathway still existed.

I wrote another letter, asking Sue to come to the camp and see me on the coming Sunday afternoon. I didn’t go into details; but said it was very important.

I found my former colleague in his barracks and he said he would be glad to give Sue the letter. I mentioned that the best time to see her would probably be on Friday afternoon around 4:30 p.m. and if by any chance he didn’t see her by Friday, would he please destroy the letter.

Seppie and Heinz gave me yet another idea. I should write another note, which they would give to Sue if all else failed and Sue came to the camp after that Sunday. At least she would know that I had been moved

away.

On Friday I went to find my friend the timber-man. He had good news for me. He had given Sue the note and furthermore she asked him to tell me that she had also received my letter in the mail. So in spite of my sadness I could at least look forward to seeing her on the coming Sunday.

By Saturday noon I had my few belongings packed, ready to leave. I looked out for Sue, but she didn't turn up.

Sunday turned out to be a nice day. I expected Sue to come early, so around noon I started watching out for her. My two friends soon joined me. The boys were playing soccer, which captured most people's attention and gave me a much better chance to go outside without being seen. After a while, Heinz came to warn me that there was a guard watching the soccer game. So we would have to make sure he was distracted when I went through the wire.

Around mid-afternoon I saw Sue coming towards the camp. Heinz and Seppie created a kind of shield, to hide me while I went through the opening. Then they stood next to each other facing the playing field and I crawled out.

Sue and I rushed into each other's arms. She was sobbing and kissed me passionately. Neither of us could say anything, we just held each other tight.

After a while Sue calmed down a little. She reached into her handbag and gave me a photo of herself, saying, "Please take this with you." I assured her that I would take it with me wherever I went and that I would treasure it for the rest of my life. It was taken in the garden in front of their house. Sue was wearing a coat with tiny tassels on the collar. I asked her for a tassel to keep with her picture as a reminder of our last moments together outside the camp. 52 years later, I still have the photo and the tassel.

We hugged and kissed until Sue said, "Oh Karl, I have to go." We kissed for the last time. Tears were rolling down her face when she finally turned to leave.

I called out to her, "Please remember, I will always love you."

After she had gone, I stood in the same spot for quite some time, collecting myself. Then I remembered to wipe the lipstick from my face, before I went back inside the camp.

My friends were waiting for me. The soccer game was over, so we

spent the rest of the evening together, talking about the future. We exchanged addresses, they wished me all the best and then we parted company.

That night, I read the letter Sue had given me. She told me she would never love anyone else and no matter what it took she would wait for me until we could be together again.

I pictured Sue sitting in the bus on her way home with tears in her eyes. Now I knew how much she must really love me. No matter how uncertain the future looked, I had a feeling that we would meet again.