

TRIGGER WARNING

Ruby's Ring

June 19, 2015

Dark clouds gather in the small porcelain cup. I reach out a shaky hand to stir it with the spoon beside the saucer. Too quickly and it will spill over. The wrinkles etched over my skin only remind me of my past, dark and clouded with guilt.

It was my idea to cross over. My idea.

I slump back and remember the gunshots and screams of the seven-year-old girl who ran before me valiantly. Who risked her life for me to live. And now she was probably dead. I can do nothing but remember.

I fiddle with the ring on my index finger, rubbing my thumb over the dark red gem embedded in the middle of the silver clasp. Along the side of it are her initials:

R.F.

I sigh, leaning back on the wooden café chair. I stare longingly out the window, watching people pass by happily. I close my eyes. Banging echoes forever in my ears, her shriek repeating in an endless loop, the scene always replaying in my head.

January 25, 1945

She had gifted me the ring to always remember her after we crossed the battlefield to the American troops. The empty trench was uninviting and dark, crumbling stones silently falling onto our heads.

Ruby's family met the same fate as mine. Taken away to concentration camps just for being Jewish, leaving us alone to fend for ourselves. After we had met, we were inseparable. We were like family. We had planned to cross the battlefield and get to the Americans, hoping they would take us in and call us their own. We just had to get there first.

We waited for the moment when the gunshots had subsided before she sprinted across. But she didn't make it five metres before falling to the ground. She screamed my name as she was dragged back into the German trenches, but I couldn't hear her.

The last I saw of her were her icy blue eyes before black splotches danced across my eyesight. The world was spinning, down, down, down into the darkness as I was dragged away into unconsciousness.

I woke up in striped uniform. A concentration camp. Life there was dreary and horrible. There was little food, and the guards treated us like vermin, beating us and calling us awful names. I saw too many people die. After we were liberated, I searched for Ruby, never finding her. I migrated to America for several years and when it felt safer, I moved back to my hometown, Berlin. I married and had children, eventually grandchildren.

I am happy now, but I can't stop thinking about what would've happened if Ruby had been by my side, if we had been liberated together.

June 19, 2015

I stare at the coffee before me. My shaky breath grows heavier and faster. I reach a quivering hand out to the small milk jug and pour it into the coffee, splashing it over the saucer in the process. My breath slows as the liquid turns from dark black to a milky white. Better.

A woman with long, light grey hair and a soft face enters the café and sits at the table next to me. She stares at my ring for a few minutes before a waiter comes to take her order. I see her glance at me again before ordering.

I sigh, quickly drinking my coffee before getting up to leave and feel the grey-haired woman grab my wrist.

"Excuse me but are you... Theodore... Abeles?" her voice is croaky and looking at her face I could see a long scar stretch across her face leading to ice blue eyes.

"How do you know me?" I ask.

She points to my hand. "Your ring, it has my initials on it. I believe it is mine."

"Ruby?" I ask in disbelief as she stands up to face me, nodding and pulling me into a hug.

"I thought you were dead!" she sobs as fat tears roll down our cheeks as we cry and embrace,

"I finally found you!" I cry, holding her tighter.

We had found each other. It would all be ok.