

*Like Ashes in the Falling Snow*

*(Disclaimer: This story contains themes that might be sensible to some readers such as graphic violence and suicide. Reader discretion is advised)*

I don't know if it was the sounds they made, or if it was the look on their faces, but ever since then, I must confess, my mind has not been fully there...

Least that's what the doctors would tell me, though I know that they could never understand. They read about things in their textbooks but they've never truly felt. They try... they really do, but they cannot truly relive the memories you've experienced and seen – as much as they try to.

I have seen things that most people could never conjure up. Mankind's imagination is a powerful tool but its reach is preceded only by its inherent limit; human morality. Morality, though one would think is a good thing, can be used as a weapon. It is humanity's most dangerous self-made construct due its inherent lack of true boundaries; despite the illusion that they are there. There is no line or border that dictates when one has crossed into what is beyond human morals. This is due to the fact that much of humanity solely believes what they are told to be true and vitreous thus making true morality, obsolete. I too, sadly experienced this blind adherence to something I believed true, that is, until my eyes were finally opened... Opened to the true nature of humanity's pitiful existence...

*How I wish I had seen sooner... how I wish my eyes had never been formed...*

\*\*\*\*

I had always wanted to be a lawyer. The idea of putting the criminals of this world away for good and advocate for law and order, was something that I had always envisioned myself

doing. But life had another destiny for me and when I first saw him on the television, I knew that my life and my world, would never be the same.

He spoke with such a vigor and eloquence that had he asked of it personally, I would have jumped into the freezing waters of the Spree without hesitation. I remember listening to him live for the first time when I was about 17 in the central plaza of my city. Hundreds upon hundreds of people gathered to listen to him speak. Policemen and soldiers all stood guard in their freshly ironed uniforms.

*If only they knew that their mint, new uniforms would soon be soiled by the countless gallons of innocent blood they'd spill...*

The man spoke of a new world and of social progress where we would all live free of corruption, free of inequality, and most of all, free of impurity. My dreams of becoming a lawyer, immediately went out the window as I felt compelled to take part in this new world of peace and prosperity. I enlisted later that week and received my freshly washed and ironed uniform, just like the soldiers I'd seen in the plaza.

*Oh, how innocent I was in those days... how pure. How truly blind...*

Years passed and I soon began to climb the ranks and ultimately, I became a Captain. Eventually, I was given my own special regiment which my commanding officers said would be one of the most prestigious honors in the entire army. Naturally, I gladly accepted this position and made my way to headquarters to await the details of my deployment.

When I arrived, they told me that they were glad that I had agreed to take on the new position and that I would be one of the first of many of a new kind of soldier – little did I know what this truly meant...

*I should have turned back... I should have declined it...*

I was given a new uniform with different insignia and cap which confused me at first, but the officers assured me that it was a brand-new branch of the army and hence, we would need new uniforms. They went on to say that they had selected me due to my leadership prowess and the number of kills already under my belt. Having heard them say this, any doubt of the new position was quickly swept under the rug as I began to feel that I would be a pioneer for their new branch – I was right, though not in the way I had envisioned.

My first deployment was to a neighboring country where it was still incredibly cold despite it being nearly spring. We were instructed to raid a nearby neighborhood of *müll* which had taken refuge near the heart of the city. Our orders were simple, arrest every able-bodied man of working age, and divide the women and children into separate vehicles from the men. The commanding officers made it clear that we were to “do away with” any insurrections and resistance presented by the rebel *müll*.

We arrived with a large garrison of nearly 200 men in the early morning so as to surprise the “unwanted intruders.” “Far too long had they leached off of our country” we unanimously thought...

*Instead, we leached closer to the gates of hell...*

In addition, we were given instructions to burn their shops which surrounded much of the neighborhood so as to send a message to the other *müll* in the surrounding areas.

After burning most of the shops, I made my way to the buildings where the *müll* were being vacated. As I approached, I noticed one of the privates who was struggling to detain a man of around 60 years of age. He must have surely been a metal worker in his youth as he was still rather lean and muscular individual for his age. The private, noticing my presence began explaining how this man was refusing to be separated from his wife and kept pleading to see his

wife. Soon, the man in question turned to me and, perhaps noticing I was of higher rank, began to make his case to me all the while he continued to struggle with the private. I listened intently but with no intention of paying him any heed, until finally I interrupted him asking him what his name was and where his wife was. He responded with his name – how I have strived and spent many a sleepless night trying to recall that name – stated that his wife was taken earlier and that he hadn't seen her since the beginning of the raid. Hearing this and not even letting him finish his account, I began making my way to the trucks where they had begun to load the *müll* shouting the last name of the man. Eventually, a small petite woman of around 50 years of age made her way through the crowd of wailing individuals. I asked her if she was indeed married to the man in question to which she stated yes. I instructed two nearby soldiers to grab her and bring with her with me as we made our way back to the man who was still shouting and resisting being put onto the truck without his wife. His resistance immediately dwindled once he saw his wife which was being held firmly by the two soldiers. I then asked the man if this was indeed his wife to which he responded, yes. Why I did what I did next, I do not know...

*Maybe it was because of my irritation at the fact that the whole raiding was taking longer than expected. Perhaps it was because I was annoyed with the incessant screams of the wife or maybe it was solely because the whole ordeal seemed like such a bore...*

But as soon as he confirmed that this was indeed his wife, I took out my pistol and shot the woman in the head, right between the eyes. Immediately she fell to the floor lifeless and limp having covered the two soldiers restraining her in a face-full of blood and brain matter. The man immediately let out a gut-wrenching cry and lunged at me with all his strength, screaming.

*That scream... I shall never forget that scream... how could I? It still haunts me in my dreams...*

As he glanced at his wife, who's small pretty face, was now all over the cobblestone street, he fell to his knees in utter despair and sorrow. Seeing that he would no longer resist us any longer, I stooped down...

*If only I could stop myself then...*

and rather sarcastically muttered: "Go ahead, I'll allow it... join your wife now" after which I shot him in the back of the head. As we stood over both lifeless bodies, I'll never forget the look on the faces of the foot soldiers there. The mixture of stun, guilt, and confusion in their eyes was a look that I had not seen before but one that I would soon become familiar with.

*I wonder if I had had the same look when I first killed a man... such a ghastly look...*

I then ordered them to get back to work and attempted to wipe of some of the grey matter that had gotten on my trousers.

That night was only one of many. I was given orders to conduct similar raids all over the country and place the *müll* in trucks bound for one of the more remote regions of the country. The events of that first night were often repeated as I had received word that the trucks and detention centers were getting filled beyond capacity, and thus, I needed to thin the prisoners out, singling only those who would be of use for manual labor in the prisons. This meant that the elderly and those with handicaps or birth defects were no longer desired in the prisons and would only take up more space in the trucks headed there. My regiment was instructed to go through the lines of prisoners and select the individuals deemed unfit for manual labor. Like the husband on the first night of the raids, there were many individuals who met their loved ones in the afterlife as well...

We continued these raids for almost 9 months until I received a letter from back my commanding officer stating that I had been transferred, yet again, to a new post. This time, I

would not be seeing as much action as I craved. I was being transferred to a prison and scientific research facility in one of the more remote regions of the country. Naturally, to me this felt like a demotion and I initially resisted the idea of being simply a commanding guard at a prison however, the officers yet again stated that it would be a tremendous honor for any soldier to not only be stationed there but witness some of the most cutting-edge advancements in the world of science. Having never been truly fond of the sciences in school, what sold me on the transfer was the sense of honor that I would possess after the war... I never fulfilled or received that honor... quite the opposite...

*I wish I had never gotten on that train...*

It was the end of January when I arrived at the prison. Despite what the officers told me, this facility did not look like one that was on the cutting edge of science; quite the opposite actually. It looked rundown and devoid of any sense of pride or life. In fact, the very sign of the prison had fallen off and what was left merely read "*Birkenau*." I was greeted by one of the head officers of the prison as well as the head warden. They then showed me to my office and my living quarters which were rather nice considering the overall state of the place. Being that it was night when I arrived, they officer and the warden suggested that we should take a tour of the grounds the following morning. I agreed and proceeded to head to bed, eager to get a tour of my new station.

*That would be the last sane night of my life... everything changed after that. I have never been truly the same...*

\*\*\*\*

Alas, dear reader, now, as I write in the final pages of my journal, do not bother convincing me otherwise, I know what I must do... it is inevitable. Though, I do not deserve to ask anything of you, please allot me this final act.

My eyes were opened that day and my life was never the same. There are no words under the sun nor in God's heavenly kingdom which could tell of the horrors I witnessed and partook in...

*How I wished I had arrived to my decision sooner... the lives that could have been spared...*

Some might argue that my decision is a mere demonstration of cowardice, but dear reader, you would do the same had you seen what I've seen, or committed the atrocities I have committed... Every waking moment of your life, after witnessing what I have witnessed, is a perpetual torment which Dante himself could have never conjured up in his *Commedia*. Dante himself, would find my deeds too gruesome and horrid to even garner space in between his pages.

*All this, because I was given sight... my eyes were opened. I wonder if that is how the beggar at the side of the road felt when the Christ restored his sight? What was it like for him to see the light? Did he ever miss the darkness?*

Join me dear reader, as I walk to the field of wheat; covered in snow. Witness the divine justice which God Himself withheld from me time and time again. The Creator spared me many a time from enemy fire, knowing full well the atrocities I'd commit.

*Oh how I wish one of those bullets would have lodged itself deep into this troubled, fractured mind of mine...*

If He would not do it, I shall put His justice into my own hands...

*I shall do what He should have done long ago...*

If God truly created man with a purpose, then why am I alive? Why did He not strike me down in the womb? The Creator spared me many a time from enemy fire, knowing full well the atrocities I'd commit.

*Oh how I wish one of those bullets would have lodged itself deep into this troubled, fractured mind of mine...*

It would have been better to never had been brought to this world and spare humanity of the horrors I have committed.

It is cold; very cold and quiet. Oddly enough, I feel at peace. Perhaps it is because of the numbness I feel around my bare skin. I figure that I should endure but a fraction of what they had to endure every day for years.

*They were so frail... so very frail... devoid of any human quality. The life sucked out of their shivering bodies... they begged for death, but death wouldn't hear their plea.*

I arrive at the middle of the field and get on my knees.

*How many times had I ordered and made people do the exact same...*

I stand naked like the way that I came into this world; likewise, shall I leave it. I lay the letter to my side, making sure that it will not get soiled by the blood which has lost its color and turned black with guilt and grief. Dear reader, if there is truly a heaven, may the Good Lord not receive me into the gates of His paradise lest I turn the celestial heavens grey with my sins. Despite my countless confessions and penances, I know that the atrocities I have committed are far beyond the understanding and forgiveness and even the Most High.

Alas, dear reader, I must bid you adieu... May I, in death, serve this world a better purpose. I reach for the instrument of my alleviation.



I caress the trigger... *it is heavier than I remember...*

It is time, it must be done... I take a final glance at the snow falling down around me...

*So innocent... so white and pure...*

*The horrors I've lived, the nightmares, their screams, the looks on their faces...*

*I shall finally be free of them...*

*Of it all...*

*My existence...*

*My life...*

*My soul...*

*Will all blend into the fabric of time... Like a final breath in the howling wind... Lost in time and space... like ashes, in the falling snow...*