

The silence was broken by a sharp voice in the cool air. All eyes looked up to the same stern face, the one who had spoken. "You, get over there. You, this way. Step to the side. Make a line!" he was giving commands this way and that. People were rushing to their appropriate line, everyone silent. All were making sure they were doing the right thing, even the little ones who didn't know what the right thing was. The stern face reached Jillian and her father. "You," he said pointing at Jillian, "Come this way." She did as she was told, even though it meant walking away from her only friend, her father. Jillian was confused and frightened, but still she watched as her father's long legs limped over to the other line.

Jillian heard a group of men from her line whispering about a shower. She sure hoped she would get to take a shower soon, because she was awfully dirty after the long walk to the camp. Her hope turned to sorrow quickly, and she could tell by the tone in their voices that this kind of shower wasn't the good kind. Jillian squinted to see her father's long patched coat walk off into the air until he was no more than a speck. She stood there until the sun was so far gone that she wouldn't be able to see her father even if he was standing right in front of her.

That night was a dreadful one. Jillian tumbled and turned, constantly removing hay that had crawled out of her bed and up her back. After what felt like two hours of sleep she was shaken by a woman she didn't recognize.

"Get up! Now!" The woman spoke urgently so without question Jillian hopped out of bed. The woman smelled of lavender, and even in the dirty, musty barn Jillian felt comforted and clean. The warmth radiating off the lady reminded Jillian of her mother. She tasted the hot tea that she drank with her mother when she was a young girl. Jillian felt so soothed she almost forgot where she was. As soon as she remembered her heart started pounding in her chest the same way it did when she was in trouble: fast and inconsistent. Jillian wasn't at home, and her mother wasn't with her. She was at a Nazi camp, and she was alone. This was reality.

With fear bubbling inside her she threw on the oversized clothes she was given for she knew by the woman's tone that they needed to get going. The shirt fell over her

knees, making her stumble every step she took, but she ran anyway. The hope and expectation to see her father gave her the power to do anything. She wanted to call out for her father, but she knew better than that. Everyone else stood in stiff rows with only whispers among them. Without anyone to whisper to she decided it was best if she remained silent. Jillian searched the crowd desperately for any sign of her father, but he was nowhere to be found. Her neck became sore from craning it to look around the young boy in front of her. He was nearly two years younger than her, but she was a small fourteen year old and he was very big for his age. Every time she shuffled her feet to look around the boy her XL shirt rubbed against her bare thighs making them sore. After a few minutes her legs were redder than a ripe tomato, and a rash was starting, so without a glance of her father she sulked back into the crowd.

“Oh, I am so sorry, Ms. Aaron,” a woman behind Jillian muttered louder than the whispers.

Jillian turned around to see a older woman comforting someone she guessed was Ms. Aaron.

“I’m sure he is in a better place. Now, stop the crying! It is over and we don’t want the soldiers to see us or we’ll be next,” the woman spoke again sterner now.

Jillian was mortified this woman just lost someone dear to her and this other woman tells her to stop crying! *I know if I lost my father I would be absolutely devastated*, she thought. *I would much rather die myself then have to live without him. That poor woman. Good thing I have my father. I can’t wait to see him.* All these thoughts filled Jillian with happiness from head to toe, but moments later that happiness was drained out of her just as quickly as it filled her.

A middle aged man with a thick mustache hollered at another man in uniform, “Charles, you gather all the orphans and take them to their new quarters, it may be a long stay for them here at Mauthausen.”

“Ben and Frieda Abrams, Daniel Broder, Esther Breuer, and Jillian Heine follow me!” The other soldier yelled at the crowd. Gradually four children all around the age of fifteen moved their way to the soldiers. “Jillian Heine! Come to the front now!” the big voice bellowed again. Jillian realized that was her. She was Jillian Heine, but she wasn’t an orphan.

*He can't be dead! I just saw him yesterday! It's not true! They must have the wrong girl!* she thought to herself. As afraid as she was of these horrible men she stayed put, refusing to say she was an orphan because to her it wasn't true. Unfortunately, they not only knew the orphan's names, they knew what orphan went with each name. The taller one of the two soldiers, the one with the thick mustache, came up so close to Jillian she could feel his warm breath on the tip of her cold nose.

"Jillian Heine?" The soldier asked in a tone that changed the question into a command. She moved her head slightly just enough for the soldier to take it as a nod. "You're father Isaac Heine is dead. You must come with me," he demanded again. Without a response from Jillian he grabbed her by her wrist, nearly crushing the bone, and swung her off her feet dragging her to the rest of the children. Her wrist ached and was bruised from the Nazi's tight constraint on her arm. Not letting go of Jillian, he led the children to a wash house and told them to clean up.

"Two minutes. That's it!" he barked into the room. Jillian scurried out as quickly as possible not wanting to get the soldier angry with her again. She had learned her lesson. Unfortunately, not everyone was so fast, Ben Abrams was still washing up. Jillian watched as the soldier entered the house. The noises were traumatizing, she could hear the shrill shrieks of the boy and the sound of a bullet ripping through soft tender skin. If he came back out he would barely be able to move, if he was still alive. Nearly five minutes later the soldier came out with the young man nowhere in sight. Jillian could barely breathe. Ben Abrams, a boy with short auburn hair, a soft face, and beautiful green eyes was dead. Suddenly, Jillian lost all the courage she had just moments ago. She felt like curling up in her father's arms and letting the world disappear for awhile, maybe even forever. Before she could think one more thought she was startled by a threatening, but familiar voice telling her to keep moving. The voice came from the soldier she was now, sadly, well acquainted with. She shuffled her feet along the ground that was so dry months of rain couldn't make a crop grow on it. Dead leaves crumbled and cracked under her callused feet. There was no time for grabbing shoes when the uniformed men destroyed her house and forced her out. She now regretted not taking the extra ten seconds to grab a pair of sandals, but she was thankful for grabbing her beloved Star of David pin her deceased mother had given her.

She fumbled around in her coat pocket for the pin.

*Oh no! I must have left my pin in my old clothes! What happened to it?!?* Jillian worried as she held back tears. Whenever she was sad, or missed her mother she would be comforted by the beautiful pin that never left her side. Longing for her pin and her mother she marched forward fighting a hopeless battle against her emotions. Every so often a tear would trickle down onto her long scratchy coat.

After two miles she and her fellow orphans reached a field wider than the Nile. At one end nearly fifty bags of sand in stacks taller than her waited patiently to be moved. “Your job is to move all of these bags to the other end of this field! We will work until the job is done. If you want to go to bed tonight I suggest you don’t stop! Now get to work, and don’t make me say it again!” the Nazi bellowed. Without hesitation all four of the children swiftly walked to the bags. Jillian was the last to grab a bag. She bent down and hoisted the bag onto her bony shoulder. Before she could take a step it slipped off. She tried again, but the weight of the thirty pound bag on her shoulder was unbearable. It was impossible to even move one bag let alone fifteen. The other three orphans clearly much stronger than Jillian were already moving their second bag. Jillian didn’t even care. Her heart cried for her father. She couldn’t stop thinking about living without him. Reality hit her. She would forever be alone without her father, and mother, and even her Star of David. She collapsed to the hard ground. She was dehydrated, tired, and depressed. She couldn’t even think about the sand bag, let alone carry it. All she could think about was staying alive. Not dying, living even though it meant having no one to comfort her.

The soldier just now noticing that Jillian wasn’t moving hurried over to where she lay. “Get up! There is no reason for you to be lying down!” He shouted as he whipped her stiff back. Jillian wanted to get up more than anything. She wanted to get up and hit this man with all the power she had. She wanted to whip him and give him commands, but she couldn’t. At least not before he hit her again. After the second crack of the whip, with no response from Jillian the soldier grabbed her long fragile leg and picked her up with ease. He hauled her all two miles back to the main camp. Once there he threw her onto the floor and went to talk to other soldiers about the situation. Luckily for Jillian she had been thrown right by a wash house.

She half walked half dragged her self inside, and hurried over to the sink. Her dry knees scraped against the cold rough cement. The smells coming from the dank, windowless room overwhelmed Jillian's nose, for her face was mere inches from the floor. The hungry roaches crawled on her raw knee searching for food. Disgusted, Jillian pulled herself up to the sink. She scooped the water up to her mouth and swallowed the bitter liquid without complaint. After hydrating herself she proceeded to wash her face. Feeling cleansed and rejuvenated Jillian walked out of the house with much more energy and waited for the soldier to return.

Soon, accompanied by three other soldiers the Nazi came back. "I am ready to work again. I feel--" Jillian started to speak.

"No need for that. You won't be working here anymore," a soldier cut in.

*Yes! Jillian celebrated in her mind. I don't have to work anymore! I wonder what I'll do now. Hopefully they will let me sleep for a while.*

"Grab her!" A man Jillian didn't recognize yelled at the other soldiers. "We are going to take you to a shower now," the man said turning to face Jillian.

Jillian was about to have another celebration, but then she remembered, the men talking about showers like they were hell, and her father walking away from her never to return. She finally put it all together. Her father was killed. He had taken a shower, that killed him. She was about to take a shower. She was about to die!

The four men closed in around her groping for her thrashing limbs. She used all the energy left in her small weak body. She hit whatever came in contact with her, and didn't even try to fight the river of tears, but she was no match for the strong men. Within seconds they had her in a tight grasp, and even though she tried there was no escaping their restraints. She wouldn't, just wouldn't, let these cruel men get their way at least not without a battle. After a short, but strenuous walk Jillian was brought to the shower house where nearly two hundred people stood oblivious to what was awaiting them. Jillian much slower and with less power continued to fight the massive Nazis. The line slowly inched its way forward, with people voluntarily entering the death chamber. When Jillian got to the entrance she had one last burst of energy where for a moment she escaped the hold of the soldiers. She started to exit the chamber when her moment of freedom was cut short by the sharp pain of her dishwater blonde hair being yanked

from her scalp. Without a chance to react Jillian was thrown into the chamber next to a girl no older than five and a man the age of her father. She was crammed up against them as the heavy metal doors slammed onto her nose. The air soon became foggy, and Jillian was gasping for air. Tears fell into her open mouth, and the taste of salt filled her throat. She cradled the young girl she just met, and held her close as she watched the last people she would ever see get smothered in fog.