



“If the Supreme Court says that you have the right to consensual sex within your home, then you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery, you have the right to anything.” And “Whether its polygamy, whether its adultery, whether its sodomy, all of those things, are antithetical to a healthy, stable, traditional family.”

Former U.S. Senator and Presidential candidate 2016

“I would like to develop a couple of ideas for you on the question of homosexuality. There are those homosexuals who take the view: what I do is my business, a purely private matter. However, all things which take place in the sexual sphere are not the private affair of the individual but signify the life and death of the nation.”

Heinrich Himmler, SS Nazi Chief and architect of the holocaust.

### Chapter 1: Early Years

Sitting here in my plush little chair,

In neatly polished glass, a reflection of my cold blank stare,

Like that leaf I spy falling from the Sycamore tree.

Is that you that I see? It matters not who it may be.

Nothing matters now that you have been taken from me.

So, I may not be Robert Frost, but this little poem means a great deal to me. It is difficult to put heartbreak into words, like trying to describe the kind of thick darkness of a room that has no hint of light. We know there is a way to describe such things, but the mind refuses us the kind of relief that will surely come from such an understanding of the abstract. No, I guess I am bound to the cold hard facts of my mundane story. Yes, that is right, I call my story mundane, irrelevant, and common because there is one thing we can all be sure of in this life, we all lose the one we love the most. The only difference is the backdrop of the story, but the result is the same. We live, we suffer, we love, we lose, and we die. This is the great shared commonality of us all, and a lesson we rarely see until the very end, when the horrible deeds are done, and there is nothing left but so many ashes of regret. But I am obviously becoming a bit morbid in my old age. I mean, it is the year nineteen-eighty-five, and I am sitting in my comfy little room at the Sunnyvale Pennsylvania Retirement Community. Don't misread me here, I am not being sarcastic. This is a very good place. I have my own little brown carpeted room, with a very nice twin adjustable bed. The staff were nice enough to bring me some very fine bedding and pillows, since I do not have any relatives to rely upon. Let's just say, that after my arrest in Germany in 1935, the cat was out of the bag. Oh no, did I just use that cliché. Well I guess that overused saying was no different than the one I am about to use, "out of the closet." Yes, that sounds much more modern. I love these American phrases, such as, "out of the closet," "gag me with a spoon," and, "that's so bad," which I discovered means something is good. My point is this, I was not one of those brave enough to proudly proclaim my sexuality during the heyday of 1920's Germany. Oh yes, you youngsters of today believe that you are the pioneers of gay and lesbian

rights, but you are sadly mistaken, but don't worry, I won't talk too loudly over your boasting of originality. Old renegades like me must fade away to make room for the young and high spirited.

All I ask is that you remember us from the past. That you place us in the small italicized footnote at the bottom of your righteous page. Recessions, war, poverty, and the incessant political street fighting violence, has a way of forcing people to prioritize their battles. Gay rights were not high on the list of people's priorities, and neither was the rights of Jews such a concern.

Trying to remember my early years is like looking through a kaleidoscope with my greasy thumbprint on the lens. But that is sometimes with history. The imagination distorts images based on whatever fancy or feeling strikes the observer now. At times, the image is clear, but the narrative is embellished. Other times, the image and narrative are correct, but the underlying emotion is wrong. Then again, how can we ever tell which part of the story is real or imagined. So, I will spare the reader of my simple tale with too many observations of my youth. I know that I was born on a sunny day filled with marshmallow clouds partly obscuring the beginning of a gloriously colored rainbow. No, that's not right. It was a cloudy grey kind of day with torrential downpours so thick, one can not even see a few feet in front of the naked eye. You see, I have no idea what kind of day it was. I know, according to my birth certificate, that I was born on June seventh, nineteen-hundred and four in a hospital in Frankfurt, Germany. The weather of that particularly painful day is unknown because my father and mother, Karl and Anna Werner respectively, never talked much about the weather. My father, a clerk at Gunther's Trading Company, talked little of mundane things such as the weather. My mother, Anna

Werner, a very progressive woman of the times, ran her own seamstress business from our modest flat in the Bockenheim district. I cannot say that my childhood is very remarkable. I was happy, like most innocent boys and girls of that time. I remember playing tag with my older brother Hans on hazy afternoons when the tutor failed to show for our daily lessons. In hindsight, I suspect that mother and father had a hard time paying for science, math, and piano lessons as the great war came to the forefront of thought. So, the first ten years of life are really a blur of normal boyhood shenanigans of throwing rocks at old Mrs. Konigs salty old German Shepherd and seeing who could piss the farthest off our flats front porch overlooking Wilhelm Avenue. The milkman, Mr. Kline, never failed to look up when passing by our pissing perch.

All playful innocence dissipated like a fog meeting the rising sun, in the year nineteen-hundred and fourteen. Since politics, not the favorite subject of conversation, in the Werner household, I had to learn of the war from our tutor, Mr. Aron Dolmer. I will never forget the man, always smelling of garlic, with his short hunchbacked stature and horn rimmed spectacles, that always slid to the tip of his nose. He would nervously catch his glasses just before falling into his thick salt and pepper bushy mustache. He had a kind face. A fatherly face. The kind of face that revealed a soul pure, kind, and gentle. Completely different than the hard-lined unsmiling face of my father. My father's face depicts the granite chiseled form of the strong Germanic male. But I loved them both, as if each complimented the other, providing me with a balance I still feel blessed to have had in my early years. My mother, the face of an angel. Unblemished like the face of a fine porcelain doll.

“Little Karl,” she would say, with the soft voice of a feather gliding in the soft breeze of our cozy flat. Oh, that’s me by the way. Named after my Father Karl.

“Karl sweetie,” help mommy set the table.

“Karl my dear,” come see the beautiful flowers I picked in the forest this morning.

As you can tell, I was her favorite. My brother Hans loved her too, but he is certainly more independent than me. I wanted to be her baby and stay that way if I could. The horrors of the world can halt at the heavy wooden door of our home, and I can stay in her warm embrace until the end of time itself. She died of cancer when I was just ten years old, one week before I learned of the coming storm of World War One and two weeks to the day I watched the German hero’s marching off to the conquest of Belgium and France.

I will jump ahead presently to where this story begins, but I believe in precision, and story precision involves the dull details of childhood. Very few characteristics of my childhood stand out. The death of my mother, a pin that still pricks carelessly across the surface of my heart, and the parade of warriors marching smilingly into the arms of death.

It must have been getting late, because I remember looking toward the great gardens across the street, mesmerized by the pink tint of the towering pine and oak trees as the sun began its final dissent. From down Wilhelm Avenue I could hear a freight train roaring down the lane, kicking dust into the air like a swarm of millions of angry bees. As the sound approached, I could see the blue, red, and bright green uniforms of the young German soldiers. I use this term

loosely, “German” soldiers, because Germany was not a Nation in the normal sense of the word. Since old mustached and bravado, Wilhelm, came to power, he worked furiously to unite the many independent provinces into one so-called Reich. Not surprisingly, I witnessed the many different brilliantly colored uniforms of individuals, faces glowed with their romanticized perception of war. Even my neighbor Mr. Vogel, waved jubilantly at the passing soldiers, horses, and cannon. Would he be waving if a fortune teller could explain his fate in 1942. You see, he was a homosexual and would die in Mauthausen concentration camp. I know, because I brought his body to the crematorium.

## Chapter II Love at First Sight

Four years of watching as a steady stream of broken bodies and faceless men trickled through my city. We called them the faceless men because they are the ones with missing jaw bones, chins, and sometimes everything but a mouth and a gaping hole where the nose used to be. I worked several hours each day after the trading company in the makeshift hospital, once the city library. I guess it didn't matter much. I mean who wants to read when life as you know it is coming to an end. The warning signs of defeat flashed steadily in every home, every tavern, and every school since nineteen seventeen. The trenches on both fronts devoured men with impunity, without bias as too age. Boys as young as sixteen and as old as fifty filled the library. Where the works of Aristotle Cicero, and Shakespeare once stood, now boys and men lay bleeding and dying for a war they never agreed to fight. But fight they did for our old Emperor, and for this they paid the ultimate price. I can't say that I would have been any different. Watching these

ghosts in nineteen fourteen passing me by in the opposite direction, one couldn't help but feel a surge of Nationalistic pride, even if we were not really a Nation. They left in the multicolored uniform representing their respective province and returned in a standard field grey uniform of the Kaisers Reich. A Reich quickly solidified through war, and soon to pay reparations to the victors.

Each day I would care for these men with the same tenderness offered by the female nursing staff. I was just a boy, so there was not a stigma attached to my tender care of the pitiful wounded entering the front doors in droves toward the end of the war. For three years I helped wash the blood-soaked bandages recently taken from the dead to be used again on the dying. As time passed, I graduated to more intricate duties like dressing wounds already black with infection and smelling like rotting cheese. Most would have to go under the knife for amputation. It is true that after caring for so many wounded, and seeing someone alive and talking one minute, but gone to oblivion the next, you become hardened inside. A numbness creeps into your soul like an alien invader and mimicking who you once were. I looked the same, acted the same, and even felt the same, but something goes missing. You just can't cry anymore regardless of what you see. Horror does not hold the same definition anymore. This impersonality gives rise to a disturbing nondiscrimination. You stop asking for someone's name. That is until one day you see that one person who hand delivers you your lost humanity. I was just fourteen at the time, but I was about to have my first hard crush.

His name was Corporal Roland Aust.



“Karl, I need you to clean these bandages and go around and wrap as many wounds as you can see that needs immediate attention,” stated nurse Berlow. She was my favorite out of all the other nurses. She was smart, pretty, and sassy. She reminded me of my mother. The face of an angel with the devil’s wit lurking just below the surface.

“You got it Kitty,” I replied. That was her nickname. I don’t know how she got it, but a cat reference certainly seemed to fit her disposition.

“Oh, and Karl,” she whispered. I followed her eyes as she looked to bed number fifteen, hastily placed somewhere around where the fiction section used to be. When I looked back, she was smiling with a very motherly smile, with maybe just a hint of something I would never see in my Mothers expression, something erotic. She again whispered, “they moved the Corporal to bunk fifteen. Go and make sure he has clean bandages.” She quickly turned away as if knowing I was about to blush, sparing me any more needless embarrassment.

I thought to myself, she knows. She knows my thoughts. She can see my dreams. She must have watched last night as I told Roland how I felt. That I wanted to kiss his soft lips and run my finger gently across the scar on his face and tell him that it will all be Ok. But she couldn’t know such things. I decided that this was all just a part of my imagination.

I was only fourteen, and still very confused about such things as sex. I watched friends exchanging notes and glances with the girls from the neighborhood. I rounded the corner of Berlin Street one afternoon to see my best friend at the time, Hermann Gunther pressed tightly

under an apartment stairwell kissing Gertrude Muller. I believe I saw his hand on her ass, but maybe I was wrong. For me, I always just believed that I was a late bloomer. Maybe asexual, or just plain strange. That is until I watched the stretcher bearers carry in Corporal Roland Aust, the hero of the Western front. At least that's how I imagined him. Math is not my strong point, but it doesn't take a genius to count the number of years that separated us. He was just sixteen, four years ago, as I watched him march off to face the horrors of the Western front. Each night I close my eyes, scanning the eager faces of the young and old marching soldiers, hoping to catch a glimpse of Roland in that sea of multi colored uniforms and shining bayonets. But would I recognize him? The faces of the young boys marching off to war on that crisp autumn day on Wilhelm Avenue. Faces of boys still caught between the states of carefree fanciful pubescence and the unimaginative world of manhood. But this was not the face I was looking at now. His face, like so many others, has aged far beyond the years. These are the eyes of shattered innocence. Eyes that gazed into the stone face of death and lived to tell the tale, even if their story is cut short by the trauma of a broken body, a shattered innocence, and a pulverized soul.

I can see that my own stage of development is not nearly as advanced as my Roland. Despite only six years difference in our age, we may as well have been twenty years apart. As my time involved boyhood pranks and the confusion of a budding realization of my homosexuality, Roland's was one of heroically facing death. At least that is my fantasy. The truth, as I now know, is that everyone who sits at the table of war and willingly, or unwillingly, tastes its tempting fruit, experiences horror, fear, and sorrow. I see the shadow of horror still

imbedded on his beautiful stubbled chin. I see the deep lines of fear forever carved into the prominent structure of his elevated cheeks. I see the sorrow in his piercing blueish green eyes. The kind of sorrow that seeps into a person's soul and forever becomes a part of their fabric. This is the truth of war written on the faces and the soul of every person brave enough to sit at its table.

Well that is enough sentimentality for one day. I know I can never utter these words to the man lying before me. But if I can't, touch his lips as my lover, I will gently dress his wounds and kiss them tenderly in my mind.

### Chapter III Discovery

"Hey Karl, want to take a piss off your balcony?"

Jurgen Schneider is one of my few friends. I don't know why he is my friend. We have so little in common. I like the beauty of nature and art. He likes to kill baby bunnies and wouldn't know a Picasso from his asshole. But nonetheless, he is my friend.

"Not today Jurgen, I just want to sit here awhile," I replied. I really didn't want to just sit here, but I really didn't have an urge to piss off my balcony, or torture Mrs. Koning's German Shepherd. Three years of working in the, makeshift library turned hospital, on Gunther Street, changed me inside. Endless days of changing bandages stained crimson and brown with blood, sweat, and floating particles of dirt. Endless nights of listening to the screams of those refusing to die and the low guttural moans of those accepting their fate, changes a young man. I am just

seventeen, but I have smelled the sickeningly sweet odor of death more times than I can count. I can still smell death sitting here in the fresh breeze of Frankfurt gardens with my only friend, Jurgen Schneider.

“What happened to you Karl? You are no fun anymore,” asked Jurgen, looking at me with an expression mixed with wonder and resentment. I felt rage swelling within me like a balloon stretching under the growing pressure. I understand his wonderment of my transformation. I understand his unspoken fear of a potential ending of our friendship. But this did not cause my anger to subside.

I blurted out harshly, “maybe I am just tired of these stupid childish games.” I stood up and came within inches of Jurgen’s shocked expression. By now the rage was unstoppable. As if watching an actor play his part on an elaborate set, I was no longer in control. I am a mere spectator now. I continued with my tirade. “Maybe Jurgen, I find it hard to play pranks as I watch men without limbs, without faces, without lives stumble along the street aimlessly trapped in the horror of the past. Maybe I am seventeen and feel guilty that I am not among the dead, diseased, and broken. Maybe, just maybe, you should grow the fuck up also.”

I would like to lie and say that I felt regret at having said these words to my best friend. But I do not regret my outburst. In fact, looking at his childish dumfounded expression, gives me the urge to pounce on his face. To just let go of years of pent up sorrow...of pent up sexual aggression. I am not a learned man, but I know my feelings and where they originate. Like any person who has lived for any length of time in their own head, I am truly empathetic to my own

sorrow. I missed my crush Roland. I missed caring for his battered body. I missed the feel of running a warm sponge across the hard ripples of his bare stomach. I wanted to die from my loneliness.

“Fine Karl. I don’t want to hang out with a fag anyway. Oh yes, we all know your queer, and your world is coming to an end. You and all your freak fag buddies.”

As I watched Jurgen walk away toward Gunther Street, kicking at the long blades of dew-covered grass along his way, I felt numb. I felt confused. I felt scared. How can he possibly know what I have been feeling inside all these years? How can he know my deepest secret fantasies swirling above my bed like torturing demons? I began to ask myself questions that I never considered before. Am I a freak? Is my love for another man wrong, immoral, punishable by hell fire, as preached in every church in Germany and, as I imagine, throughout the world? Are my days numbered? I felt a chill pass through my body with this last question. Although there are no signs that homosexuals are to be officially punished, the possibility of such action is not so far fetched in my mind. People are angry since our defeat in war, and when people are angry, they need someone to blame. Will it be those deemed amoral? Will it be Jews?

I sat there under the shade of a large elm with my head resting against its rotted bark. My eyes closed, reliving the past few moments of our falling out, I could feel the back of my head settling gently into a large groove of the bark. I imagined my entire body slowly absorbed into the tree until nothing of my existence is left. My stomach feels heavy like a lead weight resting on my bladder. If Jurgen knows about me, then everyone must. I am afraid to open my eyes. I can

feel the stares of the passerby's piercing my mind with their looks of condemnation. Images of hell fire grow steadily out of the blackness in front of my eyes.

"Karl is that you?" came a familiar voice from above. I dared not answer. Is this it? Is this my final judgement? Has Jurgen come back to put me out of misery? The hell fire recedes now and is replaced by an image of Jurgen standing above me with a thick log, ready to bring down on my head scattering bits of bone and bloody meat amongst the dew-covered grass.

The voice repeats its question, "Karl is that you?" Cautiously I open my eyes ready to face the final blow that will send me to the fiery depths of hell. Because isn't that what we have been taught is the destination of those who don't fit in.

"Roland, its you!" I exclaimed, but immediately regretting my response. This was nothing like my nightly fantasy of meeting him again. In that lucid dream state, I embrace him tenderly felling his hard muscles under the softness of my fingertips. So, I tried again.

"Corporal Aust, so good to see your not dead." I replied. This response was worse than the last, and I instantly regretted it.

My mind went to immediate ease as I observed a soft kind-hearted smile take shape from his rose-colored full lips. My heart leapt as I watched the tip of his tongue gently roll across his upper lip, as he sat down close enough to feel his warmth merge with mine.

“I heard what just happened with your friend,” he stated looking away so as not to cause any more undo embarrassment.

What a polite and considerate man I thought to myself. Does he not know that not only the immediate past was blurred by his arrival, but the entire past and infinite future is obliterated into nothingness with just his presence.

“Oh that,” I stated, trying to brush it off like I did not know what Jurgen was talking about when he called me a fag. “That was nothing. That was just Jurgen being his usual dumb self.”

We sat in silence for what seemed like an eternity but was only a matter of minutes. I was not taken off guard by the realization that with anyone else in the world, such a silence would be maddeningly unbearable, but with him, I could sit in silence forever.

“You know Karl, I was awake every time you visited me at the hospital.”

My heart continued its rapid thud beating a hole through my chest like a hammer. Could he possibly have heard me whisper how I loved him? Could he possibly know how my heart ached for him through long cold nights of confusion, passion, and rage?

Before I could speak, he continued, “Its not safe to talk here. Follow me.”

We did not walk too far, just to the other end of the park. Here next to a white porcelain bird bath is an old wooden park bench. Nothing in this park is very much cared for and the bench

reflects the changing priorities since the end of the war. Grass grows wildly where at one time was neatly trimmed to just the proper aesthetic height. Trees grow until limbs are brushing unnaturally against the disproportioned grass, where at one time, a gardener gave great care with his art of trimming and pruning. This bench, once painted a brilliantly bright red, now peeling paint like a leper peeling patches of skin from a diseased and frail body. None of that mattered. We were alone, in an isolated part of the garden, and my dream was about to come true.

“I heard you Karl. I heard you profess your love for me. I have a confession. I was of the mind to grab your throat and squeeze as tight as I could feeling the righteousness well up inside me, like a good German doing his duty.”

He paused, giving me enough time for the tears to well up behind my eyes. I am alone, I thought to myself. Is there no one else like me in this world?

He continued, “But then I felt your touch Karl. I felt your soft caring hands glide across my skin. No revulsion at my wounds came from those beautiful hands Karl. I realized that I was beginning to fall in love with you.”

He came closer to my lips with his. I could feel the warm moistness of his mouth touching mine before we even touched. He placed his hand on the back of my head and pulled my closer until our lips finally met. He held me there for a long time, as I drifted into a euphoria, I never thought existed in such a concrete world of hatred, war, and prejudice. I will never forget



that moment, as well as, the ending of that moment, because all things are impermanent.

Happiness as well as sadness have the seeds of destruction sown into their very fabric.

“Hey faggots!” came the voice of Jurgen Schneider from across the park.

“Yea, here we go. Gonna kill some fags today,” came another familiar voice. This was the voice of Peter Luther. He is about my age, seventeen, but built like a concrete house. His days, since I can remember, have consisted of lifting bales of hay from sun up to sun down. I am not even certain if Roland could take them.

“Run Karl,” stated Roland, as he gave me a light push off the tattered bench.

“I’m staying with you, I replied,” noticing the strain of concern in my voice. I was not concerned for my own safety. ALL I could think of was him.

He grabbed me by the shoulders and kissed me quickly on the lips and said, “I can take care of them. I will come for you later. Its not worth getting yourself hurt. Now go!”

I reluctantly began to run in the direction of the oncoming boys. I looked back as I was running and watched as Roland gave a right hook to Jurgen’s face. As if in slow motion, I could see a spray of blood with what looked like tiny white shards flying through the air, as Jurgen laid motionless on the grass. I ran some more still watching the fight and tripped, feeling my legs elevated off the ground. My head hit something hard and sharp sending stabbing pain into my vibrating skull. I picked myself up feeling dazed by the blow to my head. Warm sticky blood

## Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

