

My Purpose
Scarlett Linke (2022)

I adjusted the chair to correct its height. For years, it had served me well, but my back aches too often now to continue to justify keeping such a thing. I ought to buy a new one sometime soon, I had just kept putting it off. A notebook and a single black pen rested on the table, staring at me from below. And in this moment, I felt that this was somewhat of a final occasion. I held the pen in my hand, and with it such power. I could fight dragons, rescue princesses, sprout wings, and fly to mars. I could live with any name, lead any life. Hell, I could even conquer the world. But those stories were never to be told by me. No. This ink, this paper. It has a purpose. This story. It means everything.

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As the car approached the camp, the gates towered above me. Rusted on the entrance, the words *Arbeit macht frei*.

Work sets you free.

‘What utter bullshit,’ I muttered under my breath. In hindsight that probably wasn’t my greatest moment, but with fear comes stupidity, and I was scared. I feared what would become of me, what would become of my country, and of my sweet girl. I wished so much that I didn’t have to leave her, but I wanted only good to come for her. And I knew that I would bring nothing but sorrow.

I was marched out of the car to join the others. The new population, just from today. The environment, unfamiliar and unforgiving brought nothing but dust. The uniformed men towered over me. Me and the hundreds like me. Like a sack of potatoes—the nutrition I would never receive, therefore, an irrelevant metaphor—I dropped to the ground. I missed so dearly the warm embrace of my babies. I could still feel their hands, cold in mine. These men, they had taken all that meant anything to me in this world. They had taken me from my babies.

Tears streaked my cheeks, as I wiped them with my dirty hands. Abuse is all that came from my outburst. The uniformed men, fraught with rage, with hate at the very core of their hearts. I demanded them, begged them, even pleaded for them to stop, but they didn’t. They ordered me up and punched me back down again, sure to spit on the inferior communist, whipping any delusion of superiority from my mind. And when my dignity was all but lost, they surrendered to my demands. And it was silent. They took me away to be

processed, shave my head of its hair, and be assigned a number in place of the name that they too had taken from me.

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Dinner time, and I sat in the hall, staring at the bowl of grey water. They called it soup. It was all we had to keep us from starving. Truth be told, starving was what they hoped we did. We all would die in the end. Even Hitler. But the mechanics of that world were clear. We would eat when we were told to eat. We would do what we were told to do. We would say what we were told to say. And we would do it all when we were told.

And that is why I ended up there, in Auschwitz. I never was some Hitler enthusiast, although I believe that was obvious. I was never a radical either. I have always had my own opinions, and that is why I was sentenced to die.

After dinner, we were taken to bed. It was freezing that night. I remember it vividly, as night fell, the frost grew on the thin layer of fabric that covered me and my many equals, apparently it was a blanket. The frost could even be seen in the air that night, and with each breath came the fear that it may be my last. It wasn't. But for many others, they never saw the light of day again. I wasn't afraid to die because, for me, I knew that I would have people to greet me on the other side, much couldn't be said for the others. They were scared.

'Guten Abend, gute nacht.'

Werner. My baby boy.

How I longed so much for one more kiss. One more touch. One more look. I needed my children back. Oh, how much I hated the Fuhrer! All I could do was to pray night and day for the freedom of my daughter. For my baby's life. I knew that I was well gone by then, and so was her papa. But the Fuhrer, now in his grave—Thank the Lord—must rest every night knowing that he could never have her: my Liesel. She was never his to have. But somehow, I was. I was stripped of my freedom, my religion, my culture, and my wealth. I was made from all, to be nothing. My husband. He was murdered in cold blood, just to further Hitler's cause. Every free-thinking human was to be lost to the war. And to him, we weren't even human.

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The sound of the sirens woke me from the trance that I had long grown comfortable in. I can feel it coming on. Any second now. Sooner or later, I will leave you. But do not be offended, it is not a personal matter, merely a matter of time. Time of which you have a lot, and time of which I have very little. I will leave everything that I have grown to love behind, not just you. But I am not afraid, my purpose is all but over now, and Hitler. Well, I believe you know all that happened to Hitler.

My darling reader, I will now burden you with one truth. The story will never be completed. My story will remain unfinished forever. Simple ink from a simple, single black pen, drying on the pages is all that I will ever know this to be. But I know the ending. For you, you must fill in the gaps yourself. And you don't even know about Liesel yet. But rest assured, youthful reader, all will be well in the end.