

The Lines on My Face

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Looking in the mirror, I couldn't help but notice the lines on my face. For me, each one of them told a story. Laughter lines and frown lines, all telling the tale of my long life. I have lived many years and seen many things, true terror and true beauty. I have seen the wonders of mankind and man's true horrors. I look away from the mirror and down at my arm. The black ink stares back at me, little numbers marking a specific time in my life that I have pushed away. Today, however, I can feel time catching up with me. I have run from it for years and now it has caught me. Memories I have hidden in the darkest corners of my mind rush to me.

Images of my mother are the first thoughts that come to mind. I can remember her beautiful face in those days before we were taken away. Her long brown hair was always styled in loose curls and her blue eyes always revealed the way she was feeling. She would always attempt to wear the latest styles. I can remember her embrace and the feeling of safety that it created. Under all these beautiful images of my mother are the memories of her in her last few days. Her long hair that had been always been styled was gone. Of the small amount remaining very little, if any of it, contained the same warm brown I had come to know. The color was dulled and had no shine. Her usual sense of grace and elegance was gone. All that was left was a skinny, frail body. A remnant of her former self. Very rarely did I get to see her during my time at the camp, yet the last time I saw her is as clear as day in my mind. Her skinny body had scared me. I was young at the time and not sure how to react to the ghost of my mother in front of me. The first thing she did was grab me and pull me into a hug. Her warm greeting melted away any fear I had, just like it did before we had been placed in the camp. I looked into her eyes and saw the same blue reflecting her emotions. Looking back now, I realize that she knew this was the last time that she would get to see me. She was aware of just how

long she had left. She said she loved me and kissed me on the forehead then left to return to where ever she had snuck away from.

The news of her death reached me by way of the campers around me. A man had approached me one morning to give me the news. He knew a woman that had seen me with my mother. She was the one that told him to let me know. I was eating when he came over. The man approached me and sat with me. He had his meal with him. I cried when he told me she was gone. It was the first time in months I had cried. He embraced me while I wept then offered me his food. Every day from then on we sat together and ate. I never knew the man's name and even have a hard time remembering his appearance now. All I can remember are his gray eyes that stared at me with compassion as I cried.

My days working at the camp passed by in a gray haze. I did my work and that was all. I watched friends come and go. I watched people live and die. The man who comforted me when my mother died disappeared one day and to this day I do not know what happened to him. Eventually we were liberated from the camp. I never saw my father or sister again. My brother, who I found later, told me they had passed on while at the camps. My life continued once I was gone from the camp. I slowly adjusted to normal life.

As my memories slowly fade away, I wipe tears from my eyes. My life has never been anything special, but everyone around me calls me an inspiration. I did nothing special in my mind. I did not sneak away to show my love to a family member as my mother had, nor did I comfort a child who desperately needed a friend, as the man had. I was too weak to help carry others out when my camp was liberated. I just had luck on my side, keeping me alive. When I look at the lines on my forehead where my mother kissed me, a thought crosses my mind. Maybe I do have something special. My mother's total love for me and the man's willingness to help me have lit a flame in me.

They taught me the way to live my life, to give selflessly to others and to love unconditionally. I know that I have followed their inspirations throughout my life and hopefully, I have inspired others. Most people look at the Holocaust and see the terror that occurred there. They only see human kind's dark side, yet, to me, the Holocaust shows a different nature of mankind. It was a time where people were tested and many chose to go above and beyond protecting themselves. They risked their lives to love and help others and as a survivor I choose to portray that portion of my story. I choose to tell the story of the good the Holocaust brought out in people. I believe they would have wanted that goodness to be passed on. Just like the lines on my face that I carry with me every day, I will carry my story and the stories of the people no longer here until the day when I can see them again.