**The Final Goodbye – Harriet Lee**

FADE IN

EXT./FOREST (WINTER)/DAY

CAPTION (FADE IN)

Winter, 1943

We can hear Nazi forces shouting incomprehensible threats in the distance with barking DOGS – they are searching combing the SNOW covered floor.

CAPTION (FADE IN)

30km North of Dresden, Germany

However, RUDI, a man in his mid-twenties dressed in a German foot-soldier’s uniform and a thin RED SCARF wrapped around his neck, is not with the rest of the soldiers. He is walking with a purpose through the snow drifts and between PINE trees down into the valley, glancing over his shoulder every so often, as though he were afraid of being followed by his brothers-in-arms, who are still hidden by the foliage.

Soon, Rudi comes to a wooden BRIDGE over a wide river, surrounded by pine trees and an outcropping of rock further along the bank, where JOSEF, a man of a similar age as Rudi, though slightly less robust and dressed in filthy clothes with a yellow STAR OF DAVID sewn over his breast, is leaning against the rotting railing, staring down at a CREASED PHOTO in his hands showing two couples and six children; two boys and four girls – the boys have their arms around each other.

Rudi

(sighing)

It had to be you, didn’t it.

Josef

It would seem so.

The pair stand in silence while they watch snowflakes fall.

FLASHBACK

EXT./FOREST (WINTER)/DAY

A snowflake lands on small, mitten covered hands. A YOUNG RUDI watches in fascination as it melts in front of his eyes, while YOUNG JOSEF rolls a SNOWBALL. He then throws it at Y. Rudi and the two get into a snow fight, Y. Rudi jumping off the outcrop next to the frozen river to follow his friend.

Josef (VO)

Do you remember the first winter we spent here?

The two boys are rolling around on the hill now, making snow angels and laughing at each other.

Rudi (VO)

You have other things to worry about.

Y. Josef takes Y. Rudi’s hat from his head and runs up the hill with it, Y. Rudi following closely behind, their boot covered feet sinking almost knee deep in the snow.

Y. Rudi

Oi! Give that back!

Y. Josef

You’ll have to catch me first!

We can hear Josef laughing quietly OS as he remembers.

FLASH – SCENE CHANGE

EXT./FOREST (SPRING)/DAY

We look into the sun and then back at the surroundings, which is now green GRASS and yellow CHAMOMILLE FLOWERS by the river. TEENAGED RUDI and TEENAGED JOSEF, both wearing short trousers and shirts with rolled up sleeves, are sitting on the outcrop, fishing with home-made rods when ANNA, a young woman with a pony tail, comes up behind them.

Josef (VO)

What about that time you tried to kiss my sister?

T. Rudi turns around and tries to pull Anna in for a kiss, but she pushes him away, making him lose his balance and he falls into a shallow part of the river.

Rudi (VO)

Yes, but… Josef…

T. Josef points and laughs at his friend as Anna runs up the hill.

Anna

Mama! Rudi tried to kiss me!

T. Josef

(laughing)

You’re gunna get it now!

T. Rudi

Shut up and help me!

T. Josef helps pull T. Rudi out of the river before he shakes his arms with a quick flick, water going everywhere.

Josef (VO)

You looked like a wet cat!

Rudi (VO)

Now is not the time to…

T. Josef tries to help wring the water out of T. Rudi’s clothes, both laughing when there is a sudden GUN SHOT OS, and they turn to see where it’s come from. We follow their gaze and we return to the present.

END FLASHBACK

The shouts and dogs barks are still some distance away, but they are getting closer now, and the soldiers are getting jumpy – another GUN SHOT is fired.

Josef smirks to himself at what we can assume is some kind of private joke before looking back down at his hands and the photo again.

Josef

(sighing)

It started that year, didn’t it; the laws and the degradation?

Rudi becomes agitated and keeps looking back and forth between where he’d come from and Josef.

Rudi

They’re getting closer. You need to go.

Josef continues to stare at the photo for a few moments before turning towards Rudi.

Josef

I got married. Did you know that?

Rudi

What?

Josef

Maria, her name was. She was head strong. You would have liked her.

Rudi looks over his shoulder again.

Rudi

If you leave now, you can…

Josef

We had a daughter. Anna, after her aunt.

Tears start to come to Josef’s eyes as they become lost in memory.

Josef

She was only two when she… When she…

Rudi

Josef, please. You can hide in the cabin. They won’t find you there.

Rudi puts a hand on Josef’s arm, but he pulls away, turning to face the soldier.

Josef

They’re all gone now. Everyone. I lost them all.

(cries softly)

Is this goodbye really all I have left?

Rudi

(shaking his head)

No. Think about what you’re saying!

Josef holds the photo out towards Rudi, his hand shaking as tears run down his cheeks.

Josef

Take it.

Rudi

Josef…

Josef

You have to take it. Take it and burn it. That way they’ll never know.

Rudi

Stop…

Josef shoves the photo into Rudi’s chest, holding his hand over it, looking into his friend’s eyes.

Josef

It’s the only thing left that will connect us. You know what they do to sympathisers.

Rudi puts his hand over Josef’s, holding the look as Josef backs away, leaving the photo in Rudi’s hand.

The dogs are louder now, and the men’s shouts are increasingly menacing, though still indecipherable; they must have found Rudi’s footprints.

Josef

You have to kill me, Rudi.

Rudi

What?

Josef

Shoot me. Drown me. I don’t care. Just kill me.

Rudi

(shaking his head)

I can’t. I won’t.

Josef

You have to. It’s you or them.

Rudi looks towards where the noise is coming from nervously.

Rudi

There has to be another way. You could run, find a way to Switzerland…

Josef

Why? My reasons for living are gone. My wife and daughter are dead. Mama, Pa, Anna, Rosa, Alice… All their families, taken.

Rudi

Please, Josef. Don’t make me do this.

Josef

If you don’t, do you know what they’ll do to me? Those soldiers you call brothers? They’ll put me on one of those trains, or in front of a firing squad. Or better yet, they’ll let their dogs tear me apart to save bullets.

Rudi

You’re more a brother than those men will ever be.

Josef

(smiling wryly)

Don’t let them catch you saying that. They might think you cared about me or something.

Returning the smile, Rudi looks down to his side and pulls his WALTHER P38 from the LEATHER HOLSTER on his hip, contemplating it for a moment as he weighs it in his hand.

Rudi

You know, it’s not too late. You can still run.

Josef

We both know how this ends, Rudi. It’s too late for me.

Rudi

But it doesn’t have to be!

Josef

What else is there for me to live for?

Rudi stares at Josef for a few moments before sighing, nodding and pulling Josef into a last embrace, squeezing him tight, as though he would be able to absorb him into his body as he scrunches the photo in his hand.

Rudi

I’m going to miss you, brother.

Josef

I know.

Retreating from Josef for the last time, Rudi wipes his eyes and sniffs before pulling back the hammer.

Rudi

Until we meet again.

Josef smiles at him and nods.

The gun fires and Josef staggers back, hands flying to his chest in shock, a red stain steadily growing in the dark fabric. The corner of his mouth rises slightly as he collapses to his knees.

Josef

I’m coming home, Maria.

He falls face first onto the bridge, his blood pooling below him, slipping through the cracks in the wood and flowing into the river as he breathes his last breath.

Rudi stares at the body of his friend, hand holding his gun hanging limp at his side as he glances at the photo, looking at the two boys they had once been smiling out at him. He listens to the shouts and the dogs as they continue to come ever closer.

CUT TO

Josef’s blood flows down the river, staining the once bright, clean paradise.