

Mattie sat in the commandant's office the third day of his arrest and repeated, "I stole the valuables for myself. I am not working with anyone."

Once again, the commandant sighed and leaned back in his chair and motioned for the guard to take Mattie away. If Mattie thought he got away without being tortured that day, he was wrong. Instead of taking Mattie to his cell in Block 11, the guard dragged Mattie to the courtyard between Blocks 10 and 11. Mattie knew this was where guards shot prisoners caught committing crimes. Many days he averted his eyes as he walked past the wall where the SS strung up Jews by their necks, slowly tightening the noose to make them suffer.

He struggled but was quickly subdued when two other guards came to assist. One tied Mattie's hands behind his back and the other guard lifted him to the gallows, but instead of hanging him by the neck, he suspended him by his tied hands.

The pain was excruciating, but Mattie refused to let the guards see him writhe in pain. "I'll be back in an hour. Perhaps you will want to speak then," the guard told Mattie as he joined the other guards at the back of the courtyard.

Mattie tried to remain still, as any movement caused him to swing and he could feel his joints tear from their sockets. Pain shot upwards through his body and breathing was becoming difficult, but he remained silent. His thoughts flashed back to his kind, soft-spoken mother who died when he was only fourteen years old. He thought about his older sister Irena, who gave up everything to become a mother to him and Samuel. He smiled, remembering playing ball with Kacper and stealing apples off his neighbor's tree. His final thought before he lost consciousness was of his beautiful wife Perl and how happy they were before the Nazis arrived.

Mattie regained consciousness when a guard lifted him down and poured a bucket of water over his head. He laid on the hard ground, grunting in pain. His shoulders burned like they were on fire and his body was drenched in a cold sweat. Ten minutes later the commandant arrived, and Mattie clenched his teeth when the guard hauled to his feet.

"Show respect to the commandant and look at him!" The guard hit Mattie in the head when he refused to look at or answer the commandant when he asked him who he was working with.

Mattie felt his eye swelling from the hard blow as pain exploded like dynamite in his head and he finally looked up, "I stole the valuables for myself, sir."

The commandant walked away and once again the guard threw Mattie into his cell. He tried moving his shoulders, but the pain was so consuming he could hardly breathe. Finally, the pain subsided, and he curled himself into a ball in the corner of the cell and fell into a restless sleep; nightmares about what the next day would bring, invading his mind.