I remember when I was fifteen years old going to a public school for the first time. I was nervous because I only knew one person and that was Lindsay Moore. I remember searching through the sea of kids trying to find her, and when I did I remember being incredibly relieved. There three guys standing with her one was Joey Pappas, Ayden Bracken, and Mac Labelle. I wish I would have known how the second one would change how I saw people.

I remember later that September going out with the guy who would become my first relationship. His name was Mac Labelle I remember him going through bouts of sadness that you just couldn’t help him get out of. I remember we dated for six months, but most of the time was spent arguing, comforting his deep sadness about life, and the last two months were spent with him constantly tearing me down. I remember the moment I realized that the jokes weren’t really jokes but teardowns.

When I was dating Mac for most of the relationship I wasn’t happy, and to this day I don’t know why I stayed so long. Fear maybe. During our relationship I became good friends with Ayden, and I remember him being a sweet, romantic, emotionally deep, and affectionate. He was everything that I wanted to have in a boyfriend.

“What do you mean by that father,” asked Ivan.

“I mean that not all men can maintain their integrity and morals under conditions in which survival is the only goal. For example, there was a man by the name of Dmitri Chekhov who would always steal anything he could get his hands on from his fellow prisoners. He could often be seen begging off of some poor fellow who dared to lit a cigarette in his presence. Then there was his brother Andrei Chekhov who was known for his tattle taling about any violation by his fellow prisoners which meant spending days in the cells depending on what it was, but the cells for most meant certain death,” stated Boris.

“What exactly were the rules, “ questioned Ivan.

“Well Ivan you couldn’t have tobacco or anything of the sort on your person. It was also against the rules to take any scrap of metal from the machine works site because it could be turned into a knife. There was tons more, but pardon my old age has left blanks in my memory,” stated Boris.

“What were the cells you told me about,” questioned Ivan.

“In modern terms it would basically be equivalent to solitary confinement, but much worse. They would only give you bread for five days, and occasionally give you some very watery soup. That was if you were lucky to get bread or soup at all,” stated Boris.

Ivan leans back in his chair wondering to himself how could a country do such horrible atrocities to its own people. Boris recognized the look and said

“Ivan my dear son does humanity still shock you. All you have to do is look into the past and see persecution and genocide is nothing new. Look at Turkey and the Armenian genocide, at Germany and the Holocaust. It is nothing new it's horrific acts will always shock humanity, but to me I understand that humanity is capable of beautiful acts and of horrific ones. Keep in mind the bad does not outweigh the good. Look at Mother Teresa and all the people she has helped, and Albert Einstein and his theory of relativity and many more. The world Ivan as you may know isn’t always pretty, but it is the place with which we live, and when it is our time to leave we need to be able to look back and see how we made the world a better place for others. “

“There have never been truer words spoken.” stated Ivan.

“I don’t think I have mentioned to you our squad leader have I? He was a large almost bear looking man with a blonde hair and mustache, but if you looked closely you could see that his hair was beginning to gray. His name was Andrei Tyurin, and he had been in the camps for almost twenty years, but if you knew him you would know why he had survived. He knew how to grease the palms of the men around him, and could get what he wanted out of the most hardened senior guards of the camp. A good squad leader makes all the difference between life and death. If you were apart of his squad he treated you like a brother, and always had a encouraging word to say to someone,” stated Boris.

“What happened to him,” questioned Ivan.

“It may seem like a paradox, but that was the saddest part about living that hell was that you never got to know what happened to the friends you made along the way, and unlike out in society it's not about whether they are now married and living on the West coast it's about whether they are alive or dead,” stated Boris.

“You mentioned that Andrei was your squad leader, but you never mentioned how you had meet,” stated Ivan.

“I first meet Andrei Tyurin in Ust Izhma the camp was a special camp for political dissidents, it wasn’t a special camp unlike some of the later ones I was in. Andrei chose me to be apart of his squad when we left Ust Izhma. I knew why he had chosen me it was because I was a hard worker, and knew how to stay out of trouble.”