

Under The Poplar Trees excerpt

JOSEF

Now, Meyer, if we're going to be friends...

YOUNG MEYER

Who said we're going to be friends?

JOSEF

Well, naturally, I assumed... isn't it good to make a friend? After all, that's how we will win.

YOUNG MEYER

Win? In this place? Truly, you are mad.

JOSEF

Friendship's the one thing they can't take away from us, right?

YOUNG MEYER

You haven't been here long enough.

JOSEF

What? Different rules?

YOUNG MEYER

Of course, different rules. And the smart ones say, whatever you do, don't make a friend.

JOSEF

But why---

YOUNG MEYER

Think about it.

JOSEF

I am. But I don't understand---

YOUNG MEYER

Because it'll be that much worse. Don't you see?

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JOSEF

You mean...

YOUNG MEYER

When they're gone. This is the other side of hell. Do you understand that much?

JOSEF

Maybe.

YOUNG MEYER

Why "maybe"?

JOSEF

It's only hell if you think it's hell.

YOUNG MEYER

Oh, that's very smart. So where do you think we are?

JOSEF

It's a place. Just a place.

YOUNG MEYER

There's only one name for a place where they make you stand at attention for five hours. That's what happens here.

JOSEF

Still, I can't help thinking that the bonds of companionship could lighten one's burdens. I mean, faced with brutality, one can---

YOUNG MEYER

Oh, will you shut up? You're here ten minutes and already I can't stand you! Are you completely blind? Do you know what this is? Do you know what could happen to us?

JOSEF

(beaming)

Thank you. From the bottom of my heart. Thank you.

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YOUNG MEYER

For what, you imbecile?

JOSEF

You just said—

YOUNG MEYER

What? What did I say?

JOSEF

You said “us.” And thus, the door opens.

JOSEF mimes opening a door. He gives
YOUNG MEYER a hearty handshake
which is accepted reluctantly.

We’ve made contact. We are together. Already---are you aware---already there is the thread.

YOUNG MEYER

What thread?

JOSEF

The thread between us. Do you see it?

YOUNG MEYER

I see nothing. Nothing. Let me sleep.

JOSEF

But you can feel it. It’s there. The miracle.

YOUNG MEYER

Miracle?

JOSEF

Between two people. A connection.

Lights down on the barracks.