

The Forbidden Friendship

By

Michaela Nannen



About the Author

My name is Michaela Nannen. I live with my family in Pekin Illinois and I love shoes-especially high heels to dress up in—and I love baby animals. My favorite food is shrimp. Especially do I love them with cocktail sauce. This is my first real attempt at the Young Authors contest. I do hope to be an author some day.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to my Grandmother, who encouraged me to write as if I was a friend to one of my very favorite authors, Simone Arnold Liebster. I would also like to dedicate this work to Simone. If she had not written her memoirs, I may never have had the chance to “meet” a young girl who showed the kind of loyalty I hope to imitate as I myself mature. What a wonderful example they both have set for anyone who wishes to follow their conscience and not just go along with the crowd.

Chapter 1

Early Childhood Together

My friend, Simone, was the closest kind of friend that a person can have. She was nice. Our parents liked each other too. Since almost nobody in Germany had money, our families often had dinner together and listened to the radio or played games or just sat around and visited with each other.

Simone played the piano and I liked to sing. Some people say that I sounded like an angel when I sang. When Simone played the songs on the piano I sounded so much better!

We both loved our dogs; in fact, our dogs had really cute, fluffy puppies together! Simone's dog was named Zita and my dog was named Sheila.

Simone and I liked to play together, jump rope, and skip almost every day. In fact, once when we played a little too rough, my dress got torn on a big rock and Simone actually sewed it up on her mother's machine so that I wouldn't get punished when I went home. What a wonderful friend. It seemed our life was perfect and nothing would ever change that. Little did I know that it would change so drastically and never be the same.

Chapter 2

Obstacles we started to face

After a man named Adolph Hitler came into power, things started changing. People couldn't say "Good Morning" to anyone anymore, but everybody was required to raise their arm out stiff and say "Heil Hitler". They had to say that over and over again or they could be arrested and sent away! At school, in the morning when the teacher would enter the classroom, all the children had to stand up and raise their arms and say "Heil Hitler", I was petrified not to follow the direction of the principal and other authorities.

Simone and her family, for some reason, would not say "Heil Hitler". People would avoid them when they walked down the street, like they had some sort of contagious disease. One day as I looked out the window

toward the Arnold family's house, the Gestapo was there! Oh no!! The two tall men with mustaches and big boots started pounding on the door! I watched for a while but I was petrified when I saw them dragging Simone's father out of the house. They threw him into the back of a black car and sped away!! I couldn't take it anymore and begged my Mum to try to do something. She said I should mind my own business because otherwise we could get arrested too. If people spoke up and said anything bad about Hitler or the Nazis they could be sent away. Why wouldn't her father just pretend to go along and do stuff that everybody else did?? I didn't understand and thought they should just pretend even if they didn't like the Nazis.

Chapter 3

Pressure at School

Simone was so smart that she was put in a school for children with her exceptional talent in scholastics. After her parents were discovered to be so stubborn and refusing to raise their arms and say "Heil Hitler" or support the Nazi things, Simone was put in a regular school again. For her it was kind of like going to a school for dummies. I watched her face a lot and I could tell that she wasn't happy. Most teachers were very mean to her. She told me about a paper she had to carry to every classroom in the school. It had to be read by each teacher out loud, in front of Simone. It told everyone how Simone refused to "Heil Hitler". I would never have been able to stand in front of all those students and teachers and be humiliated like that. At our school, the principal made sure she was always left out, pushed aside. How horrible! She wasn't allowed to have her own books, participate in class discussions or even read our books. Some days Simone was put in the center of a big circle of students. I was one those kids and didn't want to make fun of her but I didn't want to be different from everybody else. I don't want to laugh at her; I don't want to hurt her. But I don't want to be different from everybody else! Why cant people just leave her alone? Why can't she just be normal? I'd never tell her parents if she saluted the Nazi flag or said "Heil Hitler"! There were a few of us who didn't join in the ridicule but none of us defended Simone either. When I think back to that scary time-I am embarrassed that I wasn't more courageous like my dear friend, Simone. If she's just give in, then everything would be alright again.

Chapter 4

Things Start Changing

I wasn't allowed to play with Simone anymore. I really missed my friend. Almost two years go by and I rarely see Simone except at school. Anytime our school was visited by the city supervisor it was especially difficult. He apparently didn't want to have a difficult child in his school. So we would again make a show of saying the dreaded, "Heil Hitler", sometimes outside in the courtyard around the flagpole. Of course, Simone would not participate. I was always emotionally drained on those days. After one of those days, as I was walking home I saw the Police arrest Simone's mother. I could tell she was crying, I cried for her, too. She didn't go to school the next day at all. I am pretty sure it was right after that, her beloved dog, Zita was poisoned! After her dog died, it was as if Simone had given up. She knew she'd be taken away soon—she just seemed ready to get on with it. It seemed as if she welcomed the chance to prove herself as loyal as she thought her parents had been to stand up for their way of thinking.

Chapter 5

Time for Simone to Go

One day as I was watching out my window, I saw two women with their drab colored coats and tightly pulled back hair, come to take Simone away. Oh, how sad! I thought for sure I'd never see her again. Later I learned she'd been taken to a reform school for girls. Rumors abounded about the Arnold family, especially in a small village like ours. There, she was not allowed to even talk. She had to work all the time. My mother said the reform school was for girls that were bad. I know Simone was not. During the whole time Simone was gone, Germany and most of Europe was in the middle of a war that raged all around us. Sometimes Mum and Father wondered if it would reach our small village too. On the radio we heard about other army force from other countries who most people called the Allies. Mum and Father didn't believe in what Hitler had done to Germany either. Everyone was hoping the Allies would rescue all those poor people who had been sent to the concentration camps. If that happened, I knew I would get to see Simone again and we could be friends again.

Chapter 6

An Unexpected Change

By now, it's April 1945. During the long, cold winter, most of the people who have been taken away to the camps from our area have died. I always listened very carefully on the radio or when Father read the newspaper out loud for the name Arnold in the obituaries. I never heard any of their names but I couldn't be sure.

One day, I was looking out of our front window again and saw two figures walking slowly down our street. I looked intently. Could it be?? Oh, how wonderful—it is Simone and her mother. I ran out our front door and practically flew across the street. It had been two long years. I hugged Simone so tightly. When I looked up at her mum—she didn't look anything the same. Her face was terribly bruised—black, blue and yellowish green blotches. She also had deep cuts held together with little pink bandages. Oh how she must have been abused. I let Simone take her mother to their old home and ran home to tell my mum.

Later that afternoon mum and I went over with some food. We helped them put to right the rooms in their home. Dust was everywhere. Some windows were broken, too. They told me and mum about some of the things they had to endure. Simone told me about a five-year old girl she was supposed to be responsible for. That child was the type that belonged there. She would stand up in her bed and urinate on purpose so Simone would have to wash the girl's sheets in the middle of the night. I would never have survived. At least I finally knew why, though. Simone and her mum had refused to acknowledge Hitler as Savior. The word "Heil" actually meant holy...they believed if they said that phrase as praise to Hitler it would amount to disloyalty to their Christian way of life. That's kind of strange because my family was Christian too, but mum and father told me to just go along and pretend. The Arnolds wouldn't cave in at all. Now I know they weren't bad people doing something in secret—they were standing up for what they believed in.

Within two months, Simone's father came home too. He was a pitiful sight. He was extremely thin and breathless. He had been gone for four years. I bet he hardly recognized Simone. I know for a bit she was shocked to see him. I quickly made my exit that day so their family could get acquainted. I learned

he lost some of his hearing from the abuse he suffered at the hands of the SS officers. As his strength was recovered he told stories about how he survived. I listened with amazement when he spoke of the Nazi's as a "Lion". He faced that "lion" with strength and courage. So did Simone. Many years later, Simone decided to write about all of her experiences. I believed it would help her heal, so I encouraged her to write. She even used her own drawings to illustrate some things. She wrote ***Facing the Lion***. It is a memoir. I waited in line to speak to her again at a book signing event, eager to have her sign my copy. I was delighted that she remembered me right away. She is still a lovely person. I am so grateful that I didn't let this friendship stay forbidden.