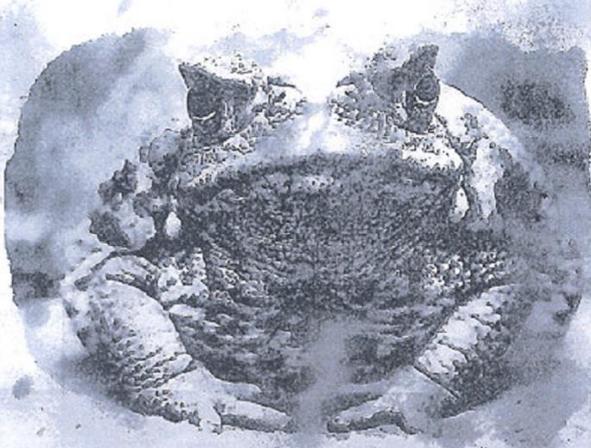


Ⓐnimals



by

Rory Te'Figo.

Animals

by Rory Te'Tigo

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Contents

[Copyright](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Chapter 1 Dream of the cow](#)

[Chapter 2 Vic's University horror](#)

[Chapter 3 Carl D. Bloeman's attitude towards his son](#)

[Chapter 4 Susan Karlson's joy about her work](#)

[Chapter 5 Mr. X The deathbed contemplation of a German rocketeer](#)

[Chapter 6 Martin Urban's my way is the right way in to the future](#)

[Chapter 7 Vincent's death bed talk to Vic](#)

[Chapter 8 Mr. Y's ideas about his work](#)

[Chapter 9 Dirk van der Park a Dutch resistance fighter](#)

[Chapter 10 > more than a cow in the Super Farm](#)

[Chapter 11 Letter by the author to the reader](#)

[Chapter 12 Vic discovers > and decides to hide her](#)

[Chapter 13 Operation Crossbow and Operation Hydra](#)

[Chapter 14 How Vic is found out](#)

[Chapter 15 The consequence of compassion](#)

[Chapter 16 The first day of freedom](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Animals Fact & Fiction](#)

[Animals Timeline](#)

[Characters](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

[Family Tree Jacobovic / Bloeman](#)

[Locations](#)

[Summary](#)

[Times of Mr. X. & Y.](#)

Chapter 1 Dream of the cow

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Slowly the morning mist was clearing.

The tops of the dark pine trees emerged from cotton fluff low clouds.

Dawn.

The herd started to stir.

They needed to get down to the stream at the bottom of the woodland clearing soon. There were calves and suckling cows amongst them and they needed to drink.

Three days ago the herd had been attacked by a wolf pack and whilst the strong bull and the determined cows had managed to fend the wolves off, the bull was injured in the melee. So even their strongest was weak and needed water. They were hiding in a thicket of young fir trees that they knew very well. It was part of the vast range of hilly woodland that had been their territory for a very long time. Stands of broadleaf and pine trees mixed with woodland meadows. Streams with good watering pools ran through it and there was plenty of tree cover mixed with many grassy clearings. It was early spring and the meadows were in bloom. The birds were preparing for their breeding season and it was the morning chorus that told them that it would soon be light enough to leave the cover and quench their thirst. The post- glacial world was good to them. And whilst predators existed the aurochs the wild cattle that all cows descended from were strong and knew their surroundings well enough not to be led into an ambush. They stood close to 6ft. tall at the shoulder. This time of year their dark brown coat started to lose its long winter hair and in patches the summer fur shone like polished bronze. Their formidable curved Horns and the combined strength of the herd usually kept danger at bay.

Their understanding of the world around them was such that they knew where to go when the winter easterlies froze the ground rock hard, or which thickets gave shelter when a winter south-westerly burdened their territory with deep snow. They knew their surroundings well enough to know where it was easiest to comfortably lie in the flower-sprinkled grass of a clearing big enough to see and enjoy distant views, whilst they chewed the cud of a mornings mouthful of grass, leaves and tree bark roughage. They knew the watering holes and they knew where

to dig into the bank of a stream to find the rare salts and minerals that they needed for their health.

The post-glacial world was one of long warm summers, glorious springs lush autumns and sharp cold winters. A world in which the plants and animals had found a new balance towards each other.

Less than one thousand years ago the glaciers, the perma-frost and the arctic conditions had dominated the landscape. But now most of the land was covered by sub-tropical woodland. It had taken only a relatively short time to change what one might have wanted to call "tundra", a frost-bound landscape dominated by grasses and a few hardy dwarf trees to develop into a much warmer habitat with a large variety of mixed broadleaf and coniferous trees and all manner of shrubs and plants. Thus an environment that was only suitable for cold-adapted plants and animals was now home to a much larger number of species. It had turned into the post-glacial sub-tropical forest a mixture of dense woodland and forest clearings sometimes called a temperate jungle.

These post-glacial forests and scrublands were populated by plants and animals that were very adaptable and were able to utilise these relatively recent woodlands and their great opportunities for life. All life is inter-dependent and inter-supporting and therefore the progress of plants and animals into the former tundra was quite swift.

Seeds of oak were scattered by jays and other birds whilst squirrels did not only bury hazelnuts and other tree shrub seeds for winter storage but also conveniently forgot the location of some of their stored winter food so that some seeds could germinate and grow into hazel bushes and trees, that over time other squirrels would feed on, and in turn forget the location of some of their stored winter food. And other fruits were attractive to eat to different animals. And whilst their seeds passed through the animals unaffected they were eventually deposited on the ground together with a handy batch of fertiliser. Thus the whole eco-system played its part in the conquest of the fertile plains left behind by the retreating glaciers.

The aurochs cattle had contributed to the speed of this migration by carrying bacteria, insects and seeds in their gut and their fur, as part of this whole expanding eco-system. All cattle to this day have three stomachs. One stomach for grass. One for leaves. And one for the cud the tough plant matter that they regularly bring up to chew again and again to aid its digestion. Even though cattle are today mostly fed on grass their original food contained a lot of leaves, tree bark and small

branches. If this is added to the diet of modern cows they stop suffering from permanent diarrhoea and instead of producing gooey cow pats their products are firmer and look more like that of deer and other woodland herbivores. After all that is what cattle really are.

025Z6/76193> stirred again. She opened her eyes. Her bull calf Bov nestled against her. Tenderly she woke him up with a gentle lick behind his ear. He responded with a slight groan opening his large soft eyes.

The feeding machine clanked into action.

The batch of cows 025Z6/76193> belonged to began to wake up.

Their time to feed.

The dream memory of the aurochs herd in the cover near the stream, the dream memory of her bull calf Bov, started to fade.

The heifer 025Z6/76193> walked over to her feeding station. She put her head down into the stainless steel trough.

The computer released a precisely measured amount of food pellets from the dispenser.

Reader! Please look up Shona Cattle. /. U.K. /. wikipedia.

Chapter 2 Vic's University horror

Last night I woke up in a sweat. I had dreamt it was my first day at University again. A terrible day that I would really rather like to forget. Ever since my grandfather died I had no one to fight my corner. My father was just too determined to see me study Chemistry. It did not matter to him what I wanted. It did not even matter to him that my chemistry grades in High School were the only grades that were not straight A's. I sometimes have the feeling that what I want just does not quite register with Dad. Granddad was totally different in this respect. Granddad always listened to me. He always gave me the feeling that my word counted. He treated me as an adult and an equal even though I was only fifteen when he died.

With my father Carl it was always a different matter. I sometimes thought that with Da I was never any older than four or five. A toddler that had to be tightly reigned in lest he fall. Or should that read: tightly reigned in lest he fall?

It took quite a lot of therapy until I was able to look at myself and enjoy my little Freudian slips and realise what I was really thinking about. So what I most possibly really wanted to say was that due to being held on such a close lead all I could do to defend myself against my father was to find way after way to fail.

The first day at University should have been exciting and fun. Instead it was difficult and a day of humiliation I would rather want to forget.

I never was the best looking guy and I think that being so unhappy about where I was and what I was about to study did not help.

I saw myself as just another young man with a pronounced Jewish face full of acne. Lack of self-confidence oozed out of me like an unpleasant odour.

I never was a sportsman and I had gone through college putting my nose into my books rather than my body onto the football pitch.

That way I got straight A's for all my chosen subjects. Chemistry being the one exception.

The only other exception was Art.

Here I gained an A with distinction.

It had been my wish to study stage set design. Every moment that was not spent studying I spent reading up on my interest. Dad did not

approve but my greatest joy in college was helping to design and build the sets for the theatre group.

The possibility to create a scenery.

A vista with a narrative.

Translating a location that was described by a playwright into reality fascinated me.

The use of perspective and discreet optical illusion.

Manipulating a stage with its small and finite space.

Building a piece of countryside stretching all the way to the horizon within these limits.

Equipping a room with objects that were in keeping with the period the writer described.

That was what I wanted to do more than anything else. That was what I saw as my artistic calling.

Dad thought art and the applied arts were a pursuit without substance. Something for middle-aged ladies that had to fill their time whilst their husbands were busy earning big bucks in the city.

Something akin to flower-arranging.

Or.

Knitting blankets in aid of the local stray-dogs home.

So when I realised that in the hall of residence I was to share a room with the former football ace from my High School I felt the unease of foreboding.

And rightly so.

When I prepared myself to go to bed in the evening of this first day I found a toad under my sheets. And a large group of fellow freshman students outside the door that was flung open by my room-sharer so that all could take part in the fun of my humiliation.

This was the first of an unending string of degradation and bullying and of course I never got rid of the nickname toad.

Thus started an ordeal that was only equalled by my loathing for chemistry.

My fellow students made it their mission to ensure that my time at university was as unpleasant as possible. I tried to compensate by studying hard. I buried myself in my books. But getting good results did not endear me to my tormentors. It appeared to me as if there was a competition amongst the other students. A competition about who can find the cruellest practical joke or prank to be played on Victor Bloeman. Many of the pranks included toads. Toads to be found in my wardrobe. Toads to be wrapped in my towel. Toads in my car and toads hopping

out from under my bed. I was very unpopular amongst my fellow students. In hind sight I would say though that I was really very popular as the target of pranks and bullying.

I compensated by studying and found that whilst chemistry left me cold and uninterested bio-chemistry was a different matter.

I quite enjoyed studying that little gap from where simple chemical processes turned into biological processes that influenced and shaped life.

In my third year at university I was quite amazed when I met a female student that appeared to be interested in meeting me. Leila Borokowsky was quite a good looking brunette and for all I knew she had just started her freshman year. We first met in the library at the photocopier. From then on we appeared to be meeting all over campus. From the mess-hall to the hallways that led to the classrooms. Wherever I went I appeared to be meeting Leila.

I could not believe it when she appeared to show an interest in me that was not just academic. I just could not help myself but fall in love with her.

At first I was very suspicious that all this was just another foul joke. I expected toads to spill out of Leila's satchel at any time. But that never happened. She gave me the impression that she was really interested in me.

Me, the joke of the University.

Leila lived in a little rented room just off campus. There we studied together. At first I was not too enthusiastic about it but Leila also introduced me to smoking dope. And yes, you guessed it before long we were not only studying bio-chemistry but enjoyed the chemistry of our biology.

This went on for a couple of months and I was only too aware of my emotions.

I was happy.

Happy for the first time since my beloved grandfather died.

So happy that I did not think anything of it when Leila started to talk to me about the possibility of using bio-chemistry to make chemical compounds that led to mind-altering states.

Legal highs.

Drugs that were so new on the scene that they were not yet outlawed.

I thought nothing of it but Leila appeared to be very fascinated by this.

I even thought nothing of it when Leila asked me to draw up a list of apparatuses and procedures that would be needed to create such drugs.

We actually joked about this non-existent laboratory and how it could continue producing ever new bio-chemical compounds that were too new to be banned and that had effects from, mind altering, to addicting, to turning those that took them into zombies that wanted nothing more than the next fix.

The joke stopped being so funny when all of the sudden several things happened.

First I could not find Leila anywhere. There was no answer when I knocked at the door of her room. She did not answer when I tried to reach her on her cell-phone. No one even appeared to know whom I was talking about when I tried to ask around after her.

And then there was this real tragedy. Some students from a high school up-state jumped out of a window and another student was found dead in the room they had jumped from.

And then the police knocked on my door and arrested me.

It turned out that Leila was not even called Leila. She was not a student at the University at all. She had used a stolen student card to gain access to the campus. She really was a high school dropout with a record for drugs and prostitution. She had been sent to our university by her South American pimp to find a bio-chemistry student.

Sleep with him, me.

Get the knowledge of how to make designer drugs from her target and start making them.

The whole plot fell apart when those high school boys had died.

I was devastated.

So much for having found a woman that loved me.

She could just as well have had toads jumping out of her handbag.

I am usually quite relaxed as far as foreigners go. As the grandson of a Dutch Jew I believe that everyone that makes it to the US of A should have a chance to make it in America. But my attitude to people from South America and Guatemala in particular changed after this.

The police tried to pin the death of three teenagers on me.

It looked really bad.

Not to mention how I felt about what I had thought was a woman that loved me.

And then my father sent the cavalry in the shape of our family lawyer.

Due to the deaths, there was no way that my relationship with that woman could be swept under the carpet.

That I had taken drugs with her could not be kept from the university.

After a week the police was able to arrest Leila and her Guatemalan pimp just before they were able to slip across the border into Mexico.

Leila came clean and told them about the true extent of my involvement or rather the lack thereof.

Father's lawyer was able to pull some strings and so what came out of the whole mess was that I ended up being thrown out of University, and cautioned for my drug use as long as I agreed to go into therapy.

To begin with therapy meant to be assessed in a mental hospital.

I had the feeling that Da thought that that would help me assess the severity of the mess I had allowed myself to be involved in.

It turned out that the doctors in this hospital were quite against drugs and their policy was to keep anyone that had been involved with drugs and the law inside as long as possible.

But eventually I began to be visited by Chas Freedeman a psychologist.

It turned out that Da had arranged a placement for me with Mr.

Freedeman's therapy group.

This was group therapy and a course of analytical private sessions with Mr. Freedeman.

Therapy that I did not only need to get over the trauma of having been in a mental hospital for over three months but also because I could not get over being used and abused by the woman that I thought loved me.

It took me quite a while to get my life back together but with Chas Freedeman's help I got the mess I was in into perspective.

And then one day Da came by and visited me in the downtown flat where I had been living for the last couple of months and told me that he had arranged a job for me as a sub-manager in a super-farm in the Mid-West.

Chapter 3 Carl D. Bloeman's attitude towards his son

Ever since my son Victor was born I had the wish that one day he should study Chemistry and take over the family business. My father Vincent had started an independent drugstore when he arrived in New York after the Second World War. He had been in a slave labour camp in Germany and when he eventually returned to his home town in Holland he learned that all our relatives had died in Auschwitz. So after a couple of years in Israel he came to New York and opened his drugstore.

I never had a really good relationship with my father Vincent. I put it down to the fact that he had been in a camp. I found him to be remote. Sometimes he also was overprotective and then at other times I had the feeling that he just did not connect with me at all. I presume it did not help that my mother Rachael died in a hit and run car crash when I was only five years old. I sometimes cannot even remember my mother's face but I think that my father must have loved her. He definitely missed her and I think that losing her must have contributed to the fact that he was not able to connect with me very well. But then nor could I. Most of the time, we were just two people, living on two different planets. And most of the time, that was just all right by me. Around the time my father died I had had quite an argument with him about the right choice of education for my son Victor. Dad was convinced that Victor should have his own say and follow his fancy and study stage set design. I found that idea absurd and silly.

Stage set design is not a profession for a young man!

It is much too unreliable as a source of income!

Victor must be able to support his future wife and children!

And he should earn enough so that he can not only support himself and his family but also enough to have a standing in the community that is fit for a son of mine!

So I decided that Victor should study chemistry!

My son had a good head for facts and figures, and he understood the complex relationships between the properties of chemicals. And understanding the opportunities that arise from the combination of different chemical elements came quite naturally to him.

Besides as I now own 25 drugstores I sometime wish I had studied chemistry. Instead I had to work in our drugstore that my father Vince

had started right after he came to New York. And then a bit later when I was still working in this drugstore I attended evening classes in business studies and economy.

I have to thank my father for the fact that he handed his drugstore over to me after I had finished my evening classes. He had realised that in order for the business to survive and stay independent it needed to be run by someone that understood how a business needs to be run to survive. Out of compassion he quite often advised people to take the cheapest remedy for their ailments rather than the potion that was more lucrative for the business. That his doctor advised him that he had a weak heart also played a role in his early retirement. Under my leadership I was able to expand the business to a chain of 25 drugstores and to have a chemist as the next chairman of the board would be ideal for the company that I had created.

My son Victor appeared to be doing very well in school. When Victor was eleven, my wife left us for a younger man. Victor's answer to the loss of family life was to bury himself in his books.

So he excelled in school getting very good grades.

I was very happy and proud of my son when he got a place at a good university where he studied chemistry.

I was aware of the fact that Victor was not getting on with his fellow students. Somehow I did not react to the fact that they had given him the nickname Toad. That he studied chemistry and continued to get good grades was all that mattered to me.

I had heard that Victor had found himself a girlfriend. I was all in favour of that. The sooner he started to realise that he had to take some responsibilities in life the better. I thought that a girlfriend or even wife might just be what Victor needed to focus him on being a chemist and a board member of the family business. That his girlfriend was not Jewish did not matter to me. After all as far as I knew our family had been trying to be secular for a long time. My only worry was that his studies might suffer from being distracted.

Then out of the blue I got a phone call. Victor was in police custody. He had been arrested for organising an illegal drugs laboratory.

I was totally devastated.

I sent our company lawyer to sort out the mess.

I heard on the news that some school kids had died up-state from some legal high drugs and I started to get really worried.

Our lawyer called and said that things did not look too bright and I started to panic.

Victor's defence was that he had been duped by his "girlfriend" into drawing up the plans for an illegal laboratory believing it to be a joke. But with three kids dead no one saw the funny side.

Then after a short week the woman and her pimp were arrested.

Thankfully she corroborated Victor's story. He had been hoodwinked. She told the police that she had been taking drugs on and off since she was in the last year in high-school. She had wanted to study chemistry herself but was thrown out of Uni during her first term because of her drug-taking. From there on she had been in a downward spiral, taking drugs and eventually working as a prostitute to pay for them. Her Guatemalan pimp had had the idea to expand his drugs interests into producing legal highs, synthetic drugs so new on the scene that the law had no time to make them illegal. As her knowledge of chemistry was too rudimentary to cook up these designer drugs he had instructed her to find a vulnerable male student that she could lure into a relationship and extract the knowhow from him.

That she claimed that Victor was the nicest guy she ever met was something I managed to keep secret from my son.

She claimed that she felt ever so guilty and sorry to have deceived Victor and that the deaths up-state were due to a mistake she had made when cooking up the first recipe she had duped my son to provide.

It was not easy but with the occasional brotherly handshake and a lot of persuasion our family lawyer was able to keep Victor out of the main court case that resulted from this mess. But of course it was impossible for him to continue his studies at university.

He was also ordered by the judge to go into rehab.

This involved being hospitalised in a city clinic for an assessment. I could have organised a better hospital but I thought at the time that it might be character building if Victor was given the chance to repent and be treated amongst people that he really should not have gotten involved with in the first place. I had thought that this assessment would only last a few days or maybe a few weeks at the most. So I got worried when Victor was still being assessed after two months. I visited him and could find nothing wrong with him. When I asked Victor's doctor I was told that one never knew with drugs cases and it was better to be safe than sorry.

I got the feeling that the doctor was pursuing his own agenda and made inquiries how I could get my son out of there.

That's how I got to know Doctor Chas Freedeman. We appeared to be getting on quite well which is not usual for me when talking to coloured people.

Dr Freedeman told me that the clinic Victor was in was known for their "none release" policy towards drugs cases that had also involved the courts.

In the end it took three months before Victor was released from hospital and only then under the condition that he attended group therapy sessions with Dr Freedeman.

It turned out that the whole experience was so bad for Victor that he also had to attend some psychoanalysis sessions with Dr Freedeman. So I organised a down town flat for Victor and was very worried about his future.

But I also worried about my hope to have Victor become a chemist and chairman of the board, running the company I had created.

All I had worked for, all I had hoped for appeared to have turned into sand running through my fingers.

I presume I really was very angry with Victor. I had worked so hard all my life to create a business I could hand over to him in the future and all my ever so intelligent but stupid son had done was turn it into the smoke he blew out of his hashish pipe.

I knew I was right in being angry.

I just knew that chemistry was the right profession for Victor and my business.

And I knew that studying chemistry was the only thing Victor should be doing.

How dare he destroy his destiny!

How could it be that my son could be so stupid!

So I silently raged within myself.

A couple of months later I attended a conference for chemists, bio-chemists, and veterinary biologists in Aspen, Colorado. I got to know a very likable chap called Martin Urban. We appeared to get along very well. So I told him that my son just had left Uni without getting into details. But I also told him that I had had great plans for my son to one day take over my company and chair the board. As we were getting along so well Martin made a suggestion. He needed a sub-manager in the business he ran for a large national food producing company. If Victor should be interested he could get this job. And if he was able to hold it down for a while he could use the experience he had gained to apply for a more senior job with Martin's bosses whilst at the same time

studying chemistry in some evening classes. This should eventually lead to Victor having a degree in chemistry and some valuable experience as a manager.

I found this idea just brilliant. It appeared to be just perfect as it opened a possibility for Victor to leave the unpleasant past behind and gain work experience whilst pursuing the goal of studying chemistry. I thought this was the way out of this mess. And I was sure that Victor being the good boy he really was would be able to follow it through and be an excellent sub- manager, manager and eventually manager of the family business once I handed it over to him.

All of a sudden there appeared to be hope. I was really very grateful to Martin Urban for his suggestion and help.

This was the last chance that I myself had hoped for but had not been able to see.

So once I was back in New York I visited Victor in his downtown flat and told him the good news.

Chapter 4 Susan Karlson's joy about her work

She really loved her work. She enjoyed all aspects of it. And even though she had this very Scandinavian sounding name of Susan Karlson she was a proper female redneck. Her forefathers had come from Sweden but that was six generations ago and they had helped to win the West. But they had never been cattle ranchers, saloon owners, or gun slingers. Instead they had been ordinary people who won the West by hard work and their ability to buckle down and suffer. So whilst Susan Karlson's family tree had no Davy Crockett or Doc Holiday hidden amongst its branches it was made of hard working, church-going poor and respectable people.

So Susan was raised to work and she worked hard and loved what she was doing.

Most of the time her work involved looking after the 1000 cattle in Shed 19 of "The Farm".

"The Farm" had twenty-six of these sheds. It nevertheless did not employ many local people. Most of its workforce came from South America. Colombia, Mexico. Guatemala, you name it. Anywhere where a poor agrarian people wanted to better themselves by coming to the USA, work hard and give themselves and their children the prospect of a decent life.

Susan was one of a few American citizens employed by "The Farm". It had been company policy right from the start to employ illegal migrants from the south.

They worked hard and as they had no legal status they were absolutely no trouble at all.

The arrangement with the local Sheriff's Department was that once a month the Sheriff's men arrested five or six illegals for deportation. These workers were immediately replaced by others from the illegal immigrant community. These Campesinos thought that they had struck gold as they now had a steady job. But of course this only lasted a while. Within a year or so all the illegal workers on "The Farm" had been deported and replaced by other illegal immigrants who in turn thought that at last they had struck gold as they now had found a steady job. This practice ensured that the majority of the workforce did not dare to

have union representation or any other undesirable affiliations. It also gave the majority of the workforce the illusion of hope and therefore kept up the morale of people who in reality had entered into a contract that only had one possible outcome.

Their deportation as illegal immigrants.

But these Central American Campesinos needed the hope that they had found a good steady job that paved the way into a life as an American Citizen even more than they needed the money they earned. Hope is a medicine that enables people to endure. And whilst the life of the Campesinos working for "The Farm" was much more decent than the life they had left behind in the south of the continent, it was a life that was only made bearable by hope.

Part of Susan's job was to act as a liaison between the sub-manager in charge of "Shed 19" and the Latino workforce. She was also doing the slightly more skilled jobs.

Replacing the odd rubber hose on the 80 cow capacity revolving milking parlour.

Treating sick cows with antibiotics.

Keeping their milk with its traces of antibiotics out of the main milk tank or in the main milk tank if the traces of antibiotics in the main milk tank were below a limit that was supposed to be legally safe.

One of the jobs that Susan had not been too fond of to begin with was giving the hormonal treatment that brought the heifers into season and then later the artificial insemination. Somehow she could not help but think that somehow she was actually having sex with these cows.

To begin with she was so bothered by this idea that she even contemplated talking to the pastor of her church about it but than being the redneck she was she could not quite bring herself to do it.

Instead she started to appreciate her husband more and started a family. "The Farm" was quite in favour of that, as a woman with such responsibilities was easier to handle.

So Susan slowly saw sense and started to enjoy being the creator of generations of cows.

First she had to lead a whole sub-section of the cows in "Shed 19" through the restraining gates, where she gave them a hormone injection so that it would be certain that the cows would be in heat three days later. Then when these days had passed and the cows were receptive and fertile the job of playing god and being the creator began. Once again the cows were funnelled into a restraining cage, only this one was

screened so that the cows waiting their turn could not see what was going on.

Susan and her two best Campesinos took it in turns to take the semen straws out of the liquid nitrogen container, and put it on a rack to let it thaw out. Whilst the bull semen slowly became liquid again Susan who had put on a plastic glove that reached all the way up into her armpit took a straw of semen that already had thawed, and stepped into the insemination booth. Sheathing the straw that she by now had attached to a syringe in her hand she pushed her hand pointy fingers first into the vagina of the restrained cow. Working her way all the way up to the uterus. This was why the plastic gloves she was wearing were greased with Vaseline and reached all the way up to her armpits. Pushing the tip of the straw into the uterus Susan compressed the syringe squirting the bull semen home. The whole process only took a second or two.

It had to be over before the cow realised that she in fact had just been sexually violated.

Susan went back into the preparation booth to discard the used straw, take a frozen straw out of the liquid nitrogen to be thawed out, collect a thawed straw from the thawing rack and was ready to inseminate the next cow. The Campesinos in charge of the restraining cage released the inseminated cow. By the time Susan was ready to inseminate her next cow each of her two helpers had inseminated a cow of their own.

The whole operation went like clockwork, like a well-rehearsed insemination dance.

But then there were hundreds of cows to be inseminated within the time of their enforced fertile period.

A third of the 1000 cows of "Shed 19" at a time.

Insemination days were long and hard work.

The aim was an average of inseminating one cow per minute. But even though the booth was shielded from view to the other cows some cows were just difficult by nature and others were clever enough to understand that something strange was going on and therefore were not easy to handle. Susan put it down to the fact that the cows were in heat. In a natural environment that was not under the total control of humans these cows would be baying and try to find a strong bull to father their calves. So it was to be expected that they were reacting more to their natural instincts and were not as docile as usual. So insemination days were long and hard work with a ten hour shift at least.

Not that Susan minded. She was on an overtime agreement.

Unlike the Campesinos.

They just had to do the work as ordered. Or their name would be on next month's deportation list.

As I mentioned before inseminating cows was a part of her work that Susan Karlson did not immediately find enjoyable. But it grew on her. She started to jokingly talk about the cows as her girls. She decided that there was no reason why she should not like insemination days as much as any other aspect of her work.

After all, being in absolute control of living beings that had no choice but to obey her every wish was what deep down she really enjoyed most.

Chapter 5 Mr. X The deathbed contemplation of a German rocketeer

I am lying in my hospital bed. My wife and children have just left. They are visiting me twice every day now. My cancer is terminal and the doctors say that I have not got much time left. So I lie in my bed contemplating my life. I have contemplated my childhood and my time in school and university only this morning. Now it is time to think about my time as an engineer in Germany and America.

My task was gigantic. So gigantic that it appeared to be nearly impossible. But then I became an engineer at a time when no task appeared to be impossible for the "Deutsche Herren Rasse".

I was born into a family of noble background. Therefore the idea that I was able to do things that had never been done before and that my role in life was to make technical miracles happen came naturally to me. As naturally as the idea that all my work was contributing to the power and glory of my nation.

I would never admit to it in public but the notion of the pure race and the need to keep the sanctity of my racial blood pure resonated well with me. After all I married my cousin.

So my task ahead was difficult and no one had done what I set out to do but than it was my destiny and the destiny of my race to make the impossible possible. After all: Germans were "The Master Race!"

Right from the start I had realised that what I was trying to build could become a weapon of great destructive power. A weapon that could not be intercepted and that would strike fear into the very bones of the enemies of Germany. I had also seen the potential of my creation to be used for the glory of Germany in a totally different way. A way that only I and a few of my colleges and subordinates could understand. The absolutely new form of propulsion I was working on was, whilst difficult to control, not only able to carry a bomb into the towns and defences of the enemy but could also be used to propel an object, maybe even a human, a true super human, a German, into the vastness that lay beyond Earth's atmosphere.

It was this dream that I later stated I tried to realise. Not only for Germany and the Führer, but for the benefit and furtherance of all mankind. But for the time being I was busy. Very busy. As the thesis of my doctorate was all about rocketry, I knew about the work of others in

my chosen field of expertise. And as the Reich was intrigued by the promised potential of my "Aggregat" series of rockets, I had the means and the ability to ignore patents and copyrights. If I found that others had contributed to the theory of rocketry I used their ideas without second thought. Before the outbreak of the war I even contacted the American physicist Goddard and asked his advice about aspects of rocket design. So it was not surprising when parts of an "Aggregat 4" that had veered off-course landing in Sweden had found their way to the enemies were recognised by Goddard as being part of one of his inventions. But what was a little bit of intellectual theft in comparison with my "Great Aim". My all surpassing dream of a "Greater Germany". The dream that "The Master Race", at last took its God-given leading role on earth and amongst the stars.

My task was gigantic. So colossal and at the same time so rewarding that absolutely nothing was permitted to stand in its way. I had no doubts that this was Germany's destiny and that I was the man whose abilities and divine role in the greater scheme of things was to deliver the greatness my nation deserved. At least that was what I believed in the beginning. That was why I had joined the NSDAP as early as December 1932. And once the Nazis had come to power in 1933 I attended a SS horseback riding school. At the end of the war I had gained the rank of Sturmbannführer. But as it was convenient the Americans believed what I wanted them to believe. That I had to join the Nazi Party in 1937 or stop work on my rocketeers dream of humans reaching space. I claimed that in order to be able to work on my dream I had to make a pact with the devil. As I was careful not to be seen too often in the concentration camp factory that produced my "Aggregat" rocket it was easy for the Americans to believe me and ignore that I actually knew what was going on, and the Americans were the ones who were willing to dance with me in order to get a sound footing in the new technologies that eventually would help them win the Cold War.

I admit that I actually had no stomach for pushing the hoist button on the great portal crane in the tunnels of Mittelbau Dora when the obligatory 10 inmates were hanged from it every morning to make sure that the remaining slave labourers did not even think of sabotage. By the time the production of the "Aggregat 4" had moved in to the Kohenstein tunnel system near Nordhausen I and my staff knew that the war was lost. I decided that it would be helpful for a possible future after the war if I and some of my friends could be arrested by the GeStaPo for defeatist talk. This happened after a Party that we had

carefully pre-planned for this purpose. We knew that the risk was small. After all the Führer desperately wanted my rocket renaming it the "Vergeltungs Waffe 2 (V2)". I later used this arrest as proof that I had never been a Nazi in the first place. Thankfully after the war there was no one that could or wanted to give evidence if I ever had pushed the hoist button of that great portal crane in the tunnels in the morning. The "Aggregat 4" was never the less my child, my construction and I was not surprised to learn about a statistics that had been compiled after the war that stated that there had been more people killed in testing, constructing and assembling my "Aggregat 4" than in its use as a weapon of terror against the people of London or Antwerp. But that was of no importance to me.

So I made plans for the end of the "Thousand Year Reich".

I saved our technical documents against the order to destroy them and managed to have myself and my staff taken prisoner by the Americans at the end of the war.

I found it easy to change my allegiances from the Super Germans to the Super Americans. As long as I could serve and thereby be part of a "Herren Rasse" I was in my comfort zone.

The doctors have increased my daily amount of morphine. Therefore I find it difficult at times to concentrate on my reminiscences.

I have been working hard all my life being busy realising "The Greater Goal". Therefore I never understood that there is no such thing as a "Herren Rasse". At least not a "Herren Rasse" as the Nazis envisaged it. Any truly superior human being would not have to prove his superiority by trying to exterminate other humans that he saw as inferior.

A true "Super Human" would have the empathy to feel the deep needs of its fellow beings and try to assist them in their lives quest.

The "Herren Rasse" idea in contrast is nothing but an admission of weakness. A failing of the understanding that all life is sacred. And that the greatest gift of humanity is its ability to love one another and help all life on its path to fulfil its great potential.

I think this idea must have come out of the morphine.

So my enormous task of creating a super weapon for us Nazis led to the enormous task of winning the space race in a bid to win the cold war. As long as I was in charge and as long as I was given a nearly impossible

task by my masters, I was all right. It became a different matter once my task had been achieved. I had a real problem when my masters did not share my dreams. I simply lost part of my brilliance when I had the feeling that I was tilting against the windmills of a mind that was not able to comprehend my visions. Once I arrived in America it took time and the advances of the Bolsheviks in space for the American taxpayer to even remember that I was theirs. The feeling that I was side-lined never went down well with me. So I thanked my fate that I was once again the right man at the right time and in the right place when America wanted to go to the moon. Inwardly my faith in the divine guidance that I had as a German was never broken. So I gave my best for this. But then the best is what a "Herren Mensch" always gives to his masters. Once I had made America reach the moon, I was extremely frustrated that my follow-on dreams were rejected and I once again was side lined by my masters.

My dream of achieving greatness in the service of a great cause had come true.

The fact that my success was tarnished by my willingness to be cruel and ruthless in the pursuit of my aim never bothered me.

My success was what counted.

You cannot make an omelette without breaking eggs.

So I lie in my hospital bed thinking of my great successes in life.

I am still frustrated by Hitler losing the war for our "Great Nation"!

I look up at the ceiling. The morphine makes me see pretty patterns on it.

All of a sudden there is this bright light.

Bright and hot like white hot iron.

Heat.

All overpowering presence of white hot light.

Arggh!!!!

Chapter 6 Martin Urban's my way is the right way in to the future

I Martin Urban have now been general manager of this Farm for many years. Very early on when I was still a young man in the late seventies and early eighties I was aware that the whole area of food production was heading into a crisis. A crisis that needed a radical change of attitude. A re-think that I was able to undertake. Even then it was clear to me that humanity had an ever growing demand for food. After all there were 5 billion people on earth then and the population was constantly growing. Conventional agriculture was simply too archaic to provide food for an ever growing number of humans. What agriculture needed was a completely different approach.

And I had the feeling that I might be able to help by studying agriculture and veterinary medicine.

The idea was not necessarily all mine. There were other people working on the problem too. People that were in a better positions than me.

People that had more experience and that had the ear of other people.

People with power and money. My idea had proven its worth ever since the beginning of the industrial revolution. Agriculture used to be dominated by small farmers who had a couple of dozen cows some pigs and a couple of hens. They used their few acres of land to produce food for themselves and their animals. A system that had not changed in hundreds if not thousands of years. So I had decided that what was needed was the industrialisation of farming.

The division of labour in farming. Farmers had to stop being all-rounders. Amateurs with doubtful experience that were trying their hand in all aspects of farming. Instead they should become experts specialising in just one aspect of farming.

Having farms that were totally dedicated to one thing.

One crop.

Thereby the farmer could become a specialist in his own field of expertise.

A crop grower or an animal grower.

A specialised food manufacturer.

And like in the industrial revolution a great increase of productivity would be the result of this agricultural revolution.

Even in the late seventies and early eighties when I started out in life and was at university I saw this development was unavoidable. So once I had got my university degree I was very happy when I found a job with one of the four big food production companies in this my beloved country of America. Industry had made America the most powerful nation on earth and industrialisation of farming was the logical next step that would make America even more powerful. Industrialisation of farming would enable America and the great company I worked for to feed the world and its ever growing number of people.

As my degrees are in veterinary medicine and agriculture my job was to look into ways of re-organising the productivity of animal farming. Others had done great work towards increasing the productivity of farming hogs and chicken.

I was to look into the industrialisation of farming cattle.

Due to my degree in agriculture I knew that cattle were indeed the perfect animal couch potato.

If one provided cattle with food water and shelter they would be perfectly happy. They would just crash out and have no desire to do anything else but chew their cud whilst growing fat or producing milk.

I also found out that feeding them on corn instead of grass or even on corn mixed with animal matter like slaughter waste did work very well. Corn was cheaper to produce and had more calories than grass. By feeding cattle cheaper food that had more calories it was possible to cut the cost of production. By adding the right amount of vitamins and minerals to suit either milking cows or beef steers the idea that mass production equals less cost and improves financial gain proved itself. By adding slaughter waste the animal feed contained even more calories and made the cattle mature even faster.

So I helped to design a totally new form of cattle management and beef production.

A confined animal feeding operation.

I admit that there turned out to be a problem with feeding offal to cows. It was not that their versatile stomachs could not cope with it.

Admittedly the three stomachs of a cow had not even evolved so that the animal could feed on grass alone but one of these stomachs was meant to digest leaves. But having three stomachs was an advantage that helped in feeding meat to plant eating animals. The problem lay somewhere else. Thankfully it showed itself mainly abroad. Part of the offal that was feed to the cows in my experiment was cows brains. There

was no other market for this lump of fat. Only a small amount of cows brain could be added to a hamburger before the hamburger started to taste bad. So feeding brain back to cows appeared to be the ideal solution.

The common practice I helped to devise was to free all remaining flesh like the brain and other tissue from the bones in a high pressure high temperature steam boiling process.

This appeared to be working well until someone abroad decided that this could be done under less pressure and at a much lower temperature.

This saved costs.

The problem it caused though was that some were along the now partially closed food chain a cow had developed an infection with some deadly prions. Biologically active chemicals so primitive that they did not even reach up to the status of a virus.

I was forced to write a memo to my bosses that unexpectedly feeding cows corn and animal fat led to the rise of an unexpected illness.

BSE.

Or mad cow disease to give it its popular name. My bosses came back to me wanting to know the risks of spreading this prion infection amongst whole herds. And was there a possibility of the infection spreading to humans.

At the time there was little mentioning in the literature of prions causing any effect on cattle let alone any effects on humans. So first advice was to ignore the problem but I soon had to change that. It turned out that prions did infect the whole herd and that the illness they caused also spread to humans.

This was bad news indeed.

And it was very bad for business.

The press went viral over food that killed.

In 1985 I had to advise my bosses that at least abroad the age of cattle should be limited to three or four years. Thereby the deadly prions did not have enough time to accumulate. The cows looked healthy. And people were exposed to a much lower dose of prions. It took much longer to reach high enough levels to make them ill. This enabled my company to reject any claim that it was our meat that killed.

And of course the temperature that was used to boil the slaughter waste of the carcasses had to be increased again.

I had to admit that it was me who had let this jinni out of the bottle. My company wanted to sack me but then decided that it was more in its

interest to keep me on its books. This way I was still bound to the confidentiality clauses I had to sign when I had joined the company. Not that the board of directors ever needed to have worried themselves over this. I am a company man with heart and soul. And I do believe that our way is the future. Indeed I do believe it is the only way into the future. No other way will be able to feed the ever growing number of people on earth. But for now the application of the methods of the industrial revolution to farming creating a farming revolution is able to lower prices per carcass and thereby make my company more competitive. This makes more money for our shareholders.

So I was taken out of research and instead was made manager of this "Super Farm" or "Confined Animal Feeding Operation" as we prefer to call it.

I have been working for my company now for 24 years. And for the last 10 years I have been in charge of this part of the future.

A Super Farm.

I am proud of being part of this enterprise. Our system of having 1000 cattle in a nearly completely mechanised shed is part of this agricultural revolution. We are at the forefront of a future that will feed more and more billions of people. Once our system of farming has been adopted world-wide there will be no end to the positive change it will bring and even more importantly our food will be the best and at the same time the cheapest that was ever available!

I said that we have 1000 cattle in a nearly completely mechanised shed. Cows are living things and as such they are not completely predictable. So we still need workers. People on the ground to deal with unforeseen circumstances and some of the simpler manual tasks that would be just too expensive to convert to a fully merchandised operation. In this area of work in our farm we found another way of optimising cost. Instead of having union organised American workers do these menial jobs we decided to employ Latinos. And to ensure that these bods on the ground did not pose any trouble I was very adamant not to ask for national insurance numbers, work permits or documents of nationality etc. I found that this ensured that we recruited a workforce that was less prone to asking the wrong questions and wave the union card in my face every time I had to let go of someone.

In the summer of 2008 I attended a conference for chemists, bio-chemists, and veterinary biologists in Aspen, Colorado.

One evening, in the bar of our hotel, just before dinner, I met Carl Bloeman, a chemist, and owner of a chain of drugstores, in New York. We both felt a bit lost as the theme of the conference appeared to be just outside of the particular field of expertise and interest for both of us. So we hit it off immediately. And after spending some time over the week Carl told me that his son had just dropped out of university. He did not mention why. But as Carl appeared to be such a good honest straight kind of a guy I offered Carl a job for his son with my company. The job of a sub-manager at my farm had just become available and I thought that the son of such a good and friendly man even though he did not finish Uni with a degree might just be the right sort of person that could fill the position.

Chapter 7 Vincent's death bed talk to Vic

I am lying in my hospital bed. The nurse has just left after making me more comfortable. Letting my mind wander over the events of the last few weeks I am not surprised that I at last was diagnosed with a severe heart problem. The Doctors want to operate but they are not quite sure if I am strong enough for that.

I have had a bad relationship with my son Carl for quite some time now. But in the last month or so it all came to a head when we not only disagreed as usual about how to run the business that I had handed over to Carl some time ago, but we also were so very much at loggerheads over the education of Carl's son Victor. I always saw Vic as a very talented and artistic young man and tried to support his wish to study stage-set design. But Carl was very set in his plan for his son. So we had very hard months of argument and counter-argument. I had the feeling that maybe at last Carl was starting to understand that his wish that Victor should study Chemistry was wrong. Vic did not have enough interest in it. He was so much more fascinated by the possibility of using art in order to create a vista, an exciting outlook on an imaginary place that was used to tell a story. i.e. stage-set-design. These arguments with Carl went on and on. He was so sure that chemistry was the only thing that was right for his son and that stage set design was a profession for weirdos and that he would definitely not permit his son to be a weirdo.

I at last thought that I was maybe able to make Carl see sense, and that he understood that being artistic and interested in design had nothing to do with being weird.

Then Carl in his usual way got back to his original idea about the matter and all my hard work of persuasion appeared to be in vain once more.

And then my heart gave out.

Or nearly.

So I am now in hospital awaiting the result of the doctor's assessment of my chances of surviving open-heart surgery.

I am looking forward to my grandson Vic's visit in a short hour.

So I let my mind wander over my life.

My son Carl and I were not getting along very well for quite a while. I presume this was inevitable. After I had found out that my family and my beloved fiancée Leah had not survived the war but had perished in the Nazi-death-camps I managed to emigrate from Holland to Israel and then on to America making a new life for myself in New York. Eventually I found a new love in my dear wife Rachael. We were very happy when eventually Carl was born. He was only 5 when Rachael was killed in a chance car accident caused by a drunken driver who fled the scene.

Once again I lost the person I loved and was left with my young son. In hindsight this may have made me over cautious in his upbringing. If I had lost Carl as well I am not too sure what I might have done to myself.

So once again I was the lone survivor of my family, but this time I had Carl to bring up. I presume I was too protective towards Carl. Whilst I struggled to bring him up all on my own.

As a result Carl and I still have problems with one another.

I was never able to talk to Carl about my experiences during the war as an inmate in the concentration camps that built the V2 Rockets. Maybe the pain was too great, too fresh when Carl was still a young man. Maybe the pain of losing Carl's mother also played a part in all I did. Or maybe I simply was afraid that I would lose Carl too. Whatever the reason, I was most possibly too protective for Carl when he was a boy and a young man and we simply came into a situation where we did not get along any more.

It was very painful for me.

I lost Carl in this way even though he was still alive by losing his love and respect. At the time it appeared that I lost him as I had lost all others that I had ever loved.

The feeling of being a cursed survivor only got better when Carl's son Victor was born.

Victor and I appeared to be good friends right from the start. By that time I reluctantly had handed over the independent drug-store that was

my business to Carl because I started to have heart problems. He went on to make a good success of the business expanding it into a 25 shop chain of drugstores.

Therefore I was able to spend a lot of time with Vic. Time that Carl did not have as he was busy expanding the business.

But there appeared to be an even deeper bond between my grandson Vic and me. I thought of it as wacky but for some reason he reminded me of my friend Dirk van der Park. He had the same quiet smile that Dirk had shown even in the most desperate times in Mittelbau-Dora, in the Kohenstein Tunnel System, near Nordhausen, in Germany. The Concentration Camp where we were forced to build the Aggregate 4 Rocket also known as the V2. And like Dirk, Victor used this smile where others might have uttered a quiet or even not so quiet curse.

I never talked to Carl about my time in Germany. He knew that I had survived the camps but that was all I ever told him. Like many other survivors I could only build a new life for myself by not talking about what I had gone through and the cruelty and casual lethal violence I had seen and had been subjected to on a daily basis.

I kept all this inside trying even not to think of it. And for decades I succeeded in it.

But where I went at night in my sleep was a different matter.

One of the stumbling blocks between Carl and me was that I thought that he was too strict with Vic, but then maybe that was a result of the way I had brought him up.

So as you can imagine, the basis of my good relationship with Vic was that I could hardly ever say no to him.

So very much like I could hardly ever say no to Dirk van der Park.

Out of necessity Dirk had developed a way of dealing with people that made him immediately likeable to all around him but inconspicuous to the Nazi guards. It partially had to do with posture and as it is called today body language or "non-verbal communication". All in all it was just a way of making everyone around him immediately feel at ease and happy to be around him. When I asked him once about it he said that he could only use this talent when he genuinely believed in what he was doing. So Dirk was a very wonderful person to be close to. It is possible that I might not make it beyond this month. So I think that it is important to talk about the forced labour camp at Peenemuende and

Mittelbau-Dora and what I saw and had to go through in Germany. Carl is not the right person to talk to but my grandson Vic may just be someone that I may be able to confide in.

It's the summer holiday. So Vic is able to visit me in Hospital this Thursday morning. We had really meant to go to the Guggenheim Modern Art Museum together. But then after a row with Carl about Vic's wish to become a stage set designer I had a funny turn and ended up in hospital.

Ah! Here is Vic.

We greet each other in our usual warm manner. Vic is a bit awkward in these strange surroundings and being fifteen does not help. But after a while he settles down and I start telling him about our family and what happened during the war.

So I cast my mind's eye back to the past.

And begin to tell Vic about the darkest time in my life.

My family was of Jewish descent but we had made great strides in assimilating ourselves into Dutch society. My parents were more secular in their beliefs than many other Jews. This was because our great grandfather had left Russia just in time before one of the quite common pogroms.

Jews were commonly subjected to these outbreaks of violence whenever it suited the Russian Czar or any of its regional administrators.

Whenever something went wrong. Whenever a scapegoat was needed. Or just whenever it was convenient without any reason at all there was a Pogrom. A confiscation of Jewish property. The killing of some Jewish community leaders or any other Jew the authorities thought was getting above his station. Or any Jew that happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Some regional Russian Administrators saw Pogroms as a very handy way to increase their income.

So our great grandfather Moshe Jacobovic decided that he had enough. He decided to leave with his young wife.

The accounts of how precisely he did this vary but we presumed that he had had contact with a Turkish trader who smuggled him out of Russia. What is known is that he somehow managed to get to Istanbul and from

there via North Africa and Spain to Holland. With every step on his journey he tried to leave more and more of his Jewish identity behind. By the time he and his wife Judith arrived in Leiden they had been baptised and their name had changed from Moshe and Judith Jakobovic to Carl and Sophia Bloeman. In a very secretive way they still kept some contacts with the Leiden Jewish community but that was all done behind closed doors and in a way that made no one suspect that Herr Bloeman was a Jew himself.

By the time I was born the contacts with the Jewish community were so loose that I was not even circumcised.

Nevertheless I knew that we were original Jewish. I do not know if this was what drew me to the most wonderful woman I ever met. To this day I cannot describe the depth and beauty of my feelings for her. But the moment I saw Leah Rosenkraut I knew that she was the woman I loved and wanted to spend my life with. And Leah loved me too. We had a very strong bond with one another. Very often we knew exactly what we wanted to say even before it was said and the world appeared to be a nicer place just because we were together.

We met in the spring of 1940.

I had just started studying Chemistry at Leiden University. And even though war had been declared between Germany, France and England, it was a time when every Dutch citizen hoped it would be a war that would not involve Holland. So we were happy together enjoying each other's company and making plans about the wonderful future we would have together.

I had talked to Leah's father and once he learned about my family's history he had agreed to our marriage. And then, the week before we were going to announce our betrothal the Germans started the war in earnest and circumvent the French Maginot Line by marching west through Holland.

I was called up to be a soldier but by the time I had reached my barracks and was supposed to be sent out to fight Holland had capitulated.

So I was sent home and whilst I hoped to be able to continue my studies the more immediate concern was to find a hiding place for Leah and her family.

It was well known what had happened in Germany in the "Reichs Christall Nacht" the widespread destruction of Jewish property and the burning of Synagogues and the beginning of what we now know as the

“Die Endloesung”, the killing of Jews and other undesirables, on an industrial scale. Even before the German offensive had conquered France, Holland and Belgium we made plans how to protect Leah and her Jewish family. We decided to use the connections of the Bloeman’s to get a new set of papers and passports for the Rosenkraut family that was free of all links to the Leiden Jewry. This involved the Rosenkrauts moving to a village close to my parents’ home just outside Leiden. We hoped that now both our families were safe from whatever the future might hold. Leah and I continued to see one another but we had agreed that it might be better to wait with the announcement of our betrothal and our marriage until the war was over.

Leiden University was closed by the Nazis so for the next couple of years I found a little job working as an assistant in a chemist’s shop. I liked working behind the counter dispensing all manner of remedies to the people of Leiden. Not that there were many medicines available but the chemist and I tried to help our customers as well as possible.

During this time many Dutch people allowed themselves to be infected by the Greater Germany ideas of the Nazis. The German approach to Holland was that it really was a part of Germany that just by chance of history had failed to become part of the Reich. As a result the Dutch people were treated quite well as long as they were pro-German. Any anti-Jewish sentiment was very much encouraged by the Germans. We had a neighbour who lived at the end of our street that had joined the Dutch Nazi Party and had taken it upon himself to sniff out Jews and other Dutch citizens who were opposed to the German occupation of Holland. We tried to avoid him as much as possible and to this day I do not know why and how he presumed that the Bloeman and the now renamed van der Reik family of my darling Leah had anything to do with Jews. Maybe he had not had any idea at all. Maybe he had received a tip-off.

So one day he came into the chemist’s shop and confronted me. He told me that there was a way that I could help my family and the family of the van der Reiks. I was supposed to volunteer for a job in Germany. This would stop him investigating the backgrounds of both the Bloeman and the van der Reik's.

I had heard of these jobs in Germany and I was not very keen to go. If nothing else it would mean that I would take the job of someone who would then be able to fight in the German army and it also would mean that I would have to leave Leah. So I had avoided recruitment to Germany. But this time the neighbour was quite adamant and he turned

quite menacing. I had no choice. It was either work in Germany and our families would be safe or else. So after discussing it with both families and with a feeling of foreboding I registered as a foreign worker in Germany and was told to be in Rotterdam one Monday morning in the summer of 1943.

I said goodbye to my darling Leah and our families hoping to see them again once my term as a foreign worker in Germany was over.

In Rotterdam I was assessed and given a number and then I was marched with over one hundred other Dutchman to the train station where we were loaded into a cattle wagon that left for Germany in the afternoon of the same day. We had protested about this unsuitable mode of transport but were told that due to the war effort there was no other transport available. The wagon was locked from the outside. Its small window was covered with barbed wire. We were too many for the size of the wagon. We had not enough air or water. We were on the move for two days before our transport reached a train station in Northern Germany. Here we were unloaded and were assigned to other cattle wagons according to the numbers we had been given. By that time I had realised that what had been called Foreign Guest Work was not quite what I had thought and that my chances of survival were not good. After another four days of travel this wagon arrived in a train station near a village called Trassenheide by the Baltic Sea.

We were walked from the Station to a facility called Penemuende-Trassenheide a barbed wired compound that had been hit by heavy Allied bombing only a few days before. So my first job was to help with the clearing of rubble and the burying of bodies in mass graves of the former inmates/workers of this camp. By this time the number I had been given had been tattooed to my left forearm and after delousing I had had my head shaved and been issued with a blue and white striped uniform. I understood that I was not a guest-worker but a prisoner.

The barbed wire compound that I had to help clear had housed the slave labourers of a Nazi research establishment. It appeared that the German Military was experimenting with some sort of rocket at this facility.

Whilst clearing the partially burnt out huts our work team came across a man who had been trapped by some debris and whilst he was badly burned and injured he was still alive. He gave us his name and managed to tell us about the attack by allied bombers. We could not quite believe him but he told us that he was a member of "Armia Krajowa" the Polish Resistance. He and a comrade had smuggled out a report about the research the Germans had been conducting at Penemuende and they

had asked for an air strike on the facilities. Their request was granted and they even had known when this strike was supposed to happen but had not been able to leave the hut they were in because by chance the Germans were extra vigilant on that day. We tried to patch him up and managed to give him some water to drink but our Nazi Guard soon saw our commotion and just stepped up to the injured Pole and shot him dead.

We had to just turn away without protest or we would have been killed next.

I always thought that this Polish Freedom Fighter was the most courageous man I ever met. In a place where most people were busy with just trying to survive he still had the guts and tenacity to continue his fight and send and receive messages of great importance to the war effort. And when the attack that he had requested came he kept schtum and was willing to die.

It was during that clear-up work that I first met Dirk van der Park. Dirk had worked as a jeweller in Antwerp before the war. He had been arrested under the allegation that he was a Communist. So he had been conscripted into this job in Germany. Alternatively Dirk had been given the choice to be shot as an anti-Nazi resistance collaborator. He had arrived at Penemuende just a day before me but had already worked out how to keep a low profile and survive. During the clear-up work it became apparent to us workers that the bombing attack on the installations had only been a partial success. While the encampment for the slave labour force had nearly been wiped out, the huts where the German engineers had worked were nearly undamaged and the houses where the engineers lived had only a couple of windows blown out. So the testing of the new wonder weapon continued within the month of the attack on the 18th of August 1943.

We slave labourers were moved to a different factory the Mittelbau-Dora once we had dismantled the damaged rocket factory in Peenemuende.

To begin with we had to extend the tunnel system of Mittelbau-Dora. There the conditions for the slave labour force were bad. There were no protective work clothes. As a result work related injuries were common. Eventually we started to build the A 4 rocket. The Nazis decided that some of the failings of their apparatus could not have been failures of their design but must be due to sabotage by us slave workers. So the guards started to make an example of some of us. They randomly killed some of us during roll-call early in the morning before the start of work.

First they killed just one or two each morning. Short iron bars to smash the back of the skull was their preferred killing tool to begin with. One of the guards walked through our rows and killed whoever took his fancy with a blow to the head from behind. They soon realised that whilst we were very afraid of it the killer was often splattered by the blood of his victim. So instead they randomly select five of us and hung them by the neck from some scaffolding.

I remember a day when one of us got the sleeve of his striped jacket caught in a milling machine. The arm was ripped off and he died within minutes. The guards were so angry over this that they clubbed nearly all the machine operating slaves to death in that whole section of the factory.

Another time someone lost a finger in a metal press. Instead of having him sent to a nurse or doctor or even having his hand bandaged by one of us a guard just killed him by throwing him to the ground and kicking his head with his jackboot until he was dead. Death was all around us and the randomness and unpredictability of it was part of the system of terror that kept us working in these most inhumane of conditions.

Looking at Vic I can tell that my story upsets him. I wish I could make this easier for him but I can't think of a way how to talk about the daily presence of death that we had to endure as slave labourers in the tunnels of Mittelbau-Dora without upsetting him and myself. These tunnels were our home; our work place and the place where so many of us died. A section of the tunnels was cordoned off with a wire fence from the floor to the roof. Here we lived right next to a whole underground factory where we build the Aggregate 4 better known as the V-2 rocket. Work conditions were bad. Accidents happened every day. And the engineers were very paranoid. They claimed their failings on sabotage. So there was a continual regime of terror towards us. In the end every morning before work they selected 5 of us to be strung up from one of the big portal-cranes that spanned the whole width of the main factory tunnel. They preferred to hang their victims in full view of all of us so that we had to watch our fellow slaves pleading for their lives and their deaths. The fact that this could happen to all of us at any time was clearly what the SS guards enjoyed.

Never the less Dirk van der Park had developed a method that kept him and me out of the attention of the guards that worked the daily roll-call and the portal-crane. We stood not too proud, not too straight, but also not too slouched or in a way that made us look too weak to work. It is difficult to explain our body posture after all this years but the fact that

we managed to survive the roll-call hangings without having been picked proves that we got our posture just right. But it was not only that we managed to avert the attention of our oppressors. We shared a wooden bunk in our cramped living quarters. Whispering we managed to talk about what we wanted to do after all this was over. By focusing on other things than the possibility of instant death we were able to keep our spirits up and stay alive. It helped us to survive the poor food the bad working conditions and the fact that the guards killed anyone at any time just for their own amusement. Over time we formed a small group of friends amongst us slave workers that tried to look out for one another. This was difficult and dangerous but it helped in our struggle to stay alive.

Sometimes there were high ranking visitors to the tunnels. Engineers or Nazi administrators. They wanted to see what fine Rockets we were producing for the "Glory of the Reich" and the war effort whilst we were starving and dying by the hundreds. Some Nazis came and visited just to watch what fine machinery could be produced by us "Untermenschen" when under the instruction and jackboot of the "Herren-Rasse".

Slowly the constant hunger, the constant threat of accidents and the constant threat of random death was wearing us down. We were close to losing all hope that we could ever survive our ordeal.

Dirk van der Park had been assigned to the section of the underground factory that made the gyroscopes. Part of the flight control and automatic piloting device of the A4 Rockets. These were an assembly of flywheels and gears made from steel and brass to very precise tolerances about the size of a shoebox. So his previous experience as a jeweller came in quite handy. The "Steuerungs und Ziel-Fuehrungs Werkstadt" was housed in a side tunnel that I usually had no reason to visit. But one day I was ordered by an engineer to deliver a box of valves from the fuel tank assembly shop where I worked to this auto pilot workshop.

As I was wearing the common blue and white striped pyjamas of the slave labourers Dirk was not very vigilant towards me. So I could see him put a battered tin can onto the lower gearbox of one of the milling machines only to return to his own assembly table and continue with his work. If I had by now not have known Dirk so well I would have missed his quick side glances in search of guards or the foreman. But as I knew him I understood that the placing of the tin can had a secret meaning. Later that evening when we were back in our living quarters I asked him what that can had all been about. Dirk was shocked that I had observed

him. He said that even by seeing what he had done I had endangered him. He clearly did not want to talk about it but eventually he told me that the lower gearbox of that milling machine had a slight fault and as a result it regularly became very hot. The tin can contained urine that he had boiled down to an oily consistency. As a former chemist's assistant I knew that such an oil was very rich in phosphorus and other corrosive chemicals. Dirk had added this oily paste to the oil that was supposed to lubricate the gyro mechanisms that he assembled. These mechanisms appeared to be working perfectly when they passed quality control but the time it took the V-2's to travel from the underground factory where we built them to their launch site was enough to corrode the bearings of the gyros. Dirk also told me that he was very careful to use his paste only occasionally. He understood that a successful campaign of sabotage was one that could be sustained for some time. The knowledge of what Dirk was doing was one of the things that helped me to keep my spirits up in these dark and dank tunnels.

I started to talk to Vic in the early afternoon. It is now nearly nine o'clock at night. I can see that Vic is upset but I could not find any other more gentle way of telling him about these terrible times I had to live through. Vic has to leave now as the night nurses are going to come on shift soon. So we say our goodbyes and Vic promises to come back tomorrow.

Once Vic is gone I cast my mind's eye back to a part of the story that I left out.

It happened about three weeks after I had arrived at Penemuende. We were just about to finish clearance work of the damage done by the air raid on the facility. All of a sudden I had to think of my darling Leah. It almost felt as if she was standing right in front of me. And then I felt a tremendous physical pain. It was as if my insides were being torn out of me. I nearly fell down with the intensity of it. I was totally winded and it took me some time to recover. Dirk van der Park was standing between me and the SS guard. He shielded me with his body from the guards. Otherwise I could have been beaten or worse. After some time I recovered but I felt weak for days after that.

Once the war was over I returned to Leiden.
I searched for Leah and my family.
I was not able to find them.

Eventually the Red Cross displaced persons agency came up with some information.

Apparently our families were betrayed by the same neighbour that had advised me to volunteer for the "Arbeits Einsatz" in Germany within a week of my departure. My loved ones were deported to Neuengamme Konzentrations Lager, a Concentration Camp, near Hamburg. From here they were all transferred to Auschwitz except for Leah. She was transferred to a small Sub-Camp in Braunschweig to the south of Hamburg. There her death was registered three days after her arrival.

The names of my relatives were not on the small list of survivors from the Camp at Auschwitz/Birkenau.

I don't know how I will tell Vic this part of my story.

I will have to decide that tomorrow.

Whilst I am lying in my bed looking at the reflections of the lights of the city that never sleeps on the wall of my hospital room I all of a sudden again have this very strong feeling of Leah's presence.

It is as if she is standing in the corner of the room.

She appears to be surrounded by a wonderful shimmering white light.

Her face looks ever so peaceful. She stretches out her hand towards me.

With a smile I take it into mine.

We embrace and kiss.

All is well now.

We are back together.

Nothing will ever be able to come between us again.

We are both so happy.

It appears as if our love is radiating out of every pore of our bodies whilst we are bathed in this beautiful white light.

Hand in hand together we walk towards this wonderful soothing bright light that appears to be right in front of us.

The last thing I hear is the continuous beep of the heart-monitoring machine in the hospital room that we leave behind us.

Chapter 8 Mr. Y's ideas about his work

Being in charge of the inmates of Mittelbau-Dora was not without its benefits, one of them being that he was entitled to a requisitioned house in the small local town of Nordhausen. But he had decided not to use this entitlement. Instead he took a room in the old army barracks that had served as a starting point for the whole Dora complex. This kept him closer to his job and he was eager to fulfil his duty for Reich and Fuehrer. It was what he loved best and it was what he was good at. He had access to all the work camps in the Nazi Germany K.-L.

(Konzentrations-Lager) System, so he was able to commandeer a constant supply of slave labour for his camp. And to him Mittelbau-Dora was very much his camp. The work his slaves had to do had been classed as "Kriegs Endscheidend" ("War Decisive") and so he was able to get all the best, the fittest and the most trained slaves for his very own contribution to the inevitable "End-Sieg", the unavoidable final victory of Greater Germany over its enemies.

As he had a near inexhaustible supply of slave labour at his command he was able to use abuse and commandeer his labour force as he pleased and he liked to rule this force at his disposal with an iron grip of fear. As an SS-Gruppen-Fuehrer he had decided that terror was good for the "Arbeits-Moral" (work ethics) of his inmates. He very much saw them as his very own, private property. To him terror was good for the productivity of his slaves. Slaves that had to be constantly reminded of their inferiority and the superiority of himself and the German Master Race. Therefore at the beginning of every shift he had 5 inmates executed as part of the roll call. There were two 12 hour shifts per day and he had decided that 10 dead inmates every day was a good baseline that made it possible to keep the production of V weapons running smoothly and his demand for more slave workers from other camps reasonable. After all due to accidents, living conditions and "Sonder Behandlungen" (special treatments) he had to find replacements for about 200 inmates every day. Therefore 5 slaves hanged at the start of every shift to keep the rest in an obedient and fearful mood was about right as he saw it.

He often selected these 5 slaves himself. It was a job he really liked. To begin with he had been walking slowly through the rows of slaves with

a short iron bar in his hand that he used to kill by smashing the back of the head of any slave he fancied. But that turned out to be not as effective as using the portal crane as a gallows. Besides every so often he got splattered with blood when he used the iron bar cosh and he was sick and tired of having to find a slave to clean his uniform. It was also so much more effective to have his victims face the crowd of slaves before they had the noose put round their necks. Hoisting them up slowly made the spectacle of their jittery dance on the hangman's rope much more effective as a deterrent. And if he so desired he could still use the cosh anytime. There was a whole set of minor punishments as well, ranging from the confiscation of shoes to solitary confinement in pits that were so low that the inmates could not stand upright in them. But the portal crane was the method of dispatching slaves that he really liked. It created the right sort of obedience, fear, and eagerness to work that he needed to make sure that there was no sabotage and the all in all output of V weapons that his slaves produced in the underground tunnels of his Mittelbau-Dora was as high as possible. Sometimes the engineers that had designed the V weapons, the V1 flying bomb, the V2 rocket, the Volksjaeger (Peoples Fighter Plane) and the "Komet" also known as the "Kraftei" (Power Egg) a Rocket powered fighter plane, came to check on the production rates. This happened quite often when one of these "Vergeltungs Waffen (Vengeance or V Weapons) had failed and sabotage was suspected. For the engineers it always had to be sabotage. That there could have been a fault in their calculations or their understanding of the machines that they had designed for the glory of "Reich und Fuehrer" (Empire and Leader) was incomprehensible for them. The Germanic Master Race did not make mistakes like that. He had always felt sure that Germany's 3rd Reich would be victorious in its fight for outright world domination. It was Germany's inherent destiny to rule the world. He had some relatives in East-Prussia and therefore had knowledge of the advances of the Russians in the east and the advance of the allied forces in the West was also something he eventually could no longer ignore.

But he had an unshakable belief in the wisdom of Adolf Hitler. He was totally sure that if nothing else the V weapons he and his slaves built would eventually turn the tide of war and Greater Germany would be victorious. If not immediately the Germanic spirit would rise up in the shape of the "Wehr- Wolf", the Nazi German resistance movement that was to continue the fight once regular German army units were unable to fight on. So quietly he made preparations for the unthinkable.

The defeat of Greater Germany.

Being the good organiser he was he put some civilian clothes away and he had decided that his adjutant was a man he could trust to organise the German resistance together with him.

So eventually when it became clear that the American forces were only 24 hours away he gave orders for his detachment of SS guards to disband and wait in hiding until their services were once again needed in the ranks of the "Wehr-Wolf".

On the day of disbandment he and his adjutant slipped away into the woodlands towards the west of Camp Dora.

By chance they found a forest worker's trailer by the edge of a clearing that sloped down to a stream.

They forced the lock off the trailer's door and hunkered down for the night.

The first light of dawn had begun to filter through the cracks in the thin walls of their hideout when he heard a soft noise on the steps leading up to the door of the trailer.

His Luger pistol was in his hand just before the door was quietly opened. . . .

Chapter 9 Dirk van der Park a Dutch resistance fighter

The very first memory in my life is of Uncle Eduard lifting me high up into the air and laughing at me.

And I laugh back.

And he lifts me even higher into the air.

And we laugh together.

And I am happy.

I must have been about 4 years old. It is summer. We are having a picnic and my mother is laying out the food on a table cloth.

There was not much cause for laughter or happiness that year.

My father had died of pneumonia and kidney failure that winter and understandably my mother was very sad and depressed.

So my father's older brother Uncle Eduard who had no family of his own took it upon himself to look after mother and me and trying to cheer us up he had suggested this picnic in the Frankendael public park in our home town of Amsterdam.

So for once that year I was very happy.

I felt safe even though Uncle Eduard threw me high up in the air. The world was whole again and even thinking about this picnic lets me feel a bit of the happiness I felt on that day. And even later in my life on very dark days I tried to go back to this happiness as a refuge.

Uncle Eduard took his new responsibility very seriously and he started to spend more and more time with mother and me.

He had a little shop where he worked as a jeweller and watch maker.

Before he started to look after us most of his spare time was spent on his hobby as a stage magician. As his day job demanded both concentration and a very steady hand he was able to devise and perform magical tricks that held his occasional audiences in awe.

And of course he practised his stage tricks on me.

I was fascinated by this gentle giant of a man that had brought love and laughter back into our lives.

Whilst I was never aware of any physical evidence of it I think that my mother and Uncle Eduard had fallen in love. It was the kind of love that is not always expressed in a physical way.

So Uncle Eduard became the father figure in my life. Unlike a real father he was detached enough to enable me to grow into my own life without the problems I saw other boys having with their fathers.

Even as a boy I found it easy to understand people and their emotions and motivations.

But eventually I realised that understanding people was not enough. From then on I tried to comprehend people and their emotions and motivations.

As one might expect I, Dirk Van der Park eventually became apprenticed as a jeweller and watchmaker.

Uncle Eduard's little shop was too small to support him and an apprentice. So my apprenticeship was with another larger workshop. I liked the craft and found that the small detailed work and the precision required came easily to me.

There was another apprentice in this company that was a couple of years older. He was nearly ready to take his exams and become a journeyman clockmaker.

I looked up to him and we became friends. Like some young Dutchmen in those days he was very interested in the ideas of Hitler and the German Nazi party. The Nazis claimed that Holland was really a part of "Greater Germany" that just by happenstance of history was not part of the "Reich". Therefore the Dutch were from the same Germanic Aryan stock etc. etc. etc.

My fellow apprentice had fallen for these ideas and had become a member of the NSB, the "Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland".

Together we attended some political rallies of this Dutch Nazi Party. On one occasion an old lady standing on the sidewalk whilst we were marching past shouted:

"You idiots!" at us.

My friend broke rank and hit her in the face giving her a bloody nose, shouting:

"Jew, Jew, There you are, that's what you deserve you bloody Jew!"

I was very upset and tried to avoid him from then on.

After that I became interested in attending a youth group in our local church.

But I soon realised that I had difficulties believing in god and his divine plan.

Then I attended some meetings of the Dutch Communist Party. I liked their ideas of communal support and ownership of the means of production etc. but after a Comrade from Soviet Russia gave a talk I realised that communism and fascism were just the two sides of the same coin.

I understood that whilst religion is opium for the masses ideology is just an opium substitute.

Uncle Eduard silently watched me during these days when I tried to find my political feet.

He did not intervene.

He had a well-stocked bookshelf in the flat above his shop where he lived. He had even some rarer titles like Peter Kropotkin's: "Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution." And Proudhon's: "The Philosophy of Misery". He also had books like John Stewart Mill: "On Liberty"; Sigmund Freud: "Civilization and its Discontent"; "The Communist Manifesto" by Marx and Engels; and "Ethics" by Spinoza and several books by Mahatma Gandhi. So as you can see Uncle Eduard was a free spirit with a longing to understand the human condition and the belief that if no longer pestered by other people's preconceived religions and ideologies humankind would be just fine.

So without imposing these ideas on me he started to offer me the occasional book to read and I not only began to understand him better but I also began to see the state of humanity in a more comprehending and compassionate way.

But I still found the ways of the world to be wrong and frustrating. So eventually Uncle Eduard gave me just this one piece of advice: "Become the change you wish to see in the world!"

I also started to be very interested in Uncle Eduard's other great interest.

Stage Magic.

Uncle Eduard taught me all he knew.

I began to understand how a crowd can be enchanted by a magus performing his tricks. How his sleight of hand or double-bottomed box created a reality that only existed in the magician's intent and in the mind of the audience. It was only a small step for me to compare this with the deception and the whipping up of emotions I saw the Nazis

and the Communists conjure up in their rallies. From then onwards I watched the weekly cinema newsreels with a new and sharpened eye.

I realised all politicians from the far right to the centre and the far left were all just magicians out to deceive and abuse their audiences for their own charades.

But the Nazis in particular were out to hoodwink the masses.

They tried to take away people's humanity and change them into mindless robots capable of the most heartless crimes.

They justified this in the name of a political philosophy that knew no compassion and saw brutality as a virtue.

Observing all this I could not help but worry about the future.

I had started to go to the cinema a lot.

One reason was that I felt very attracted to a young usherette that also sold cigarettes and ice cream during the intervals.

By this time I was about 20 and I had worked as a journeyman clockmaker and jeweller for two years.

So I thought now or never and asked her out.

To my amazement Sweantje said yes and within the month we were a couple and within the year we were engaged to be married. I now got into the cinema for free watching all the latest films.

But I was most interested in the weekly Pathe' newsreels.

I watched the storm clouds of war slowly rising above Europe for a second time in a quarter of a century and I got very worried.

Sweantje and I decided that the best thing would be to save as much money as possible and emigrate.

We thought that it would be best to be as far away as possible from any future conflict.

We set our heart on a new life in South America.

In the autumn of 1938 we got married.

I had never thought that I could be so happy.

Being together with Swantje taught me another very important lesson.

How easy it is to be kind to everyone. If there was any single word that could characterise Swantje kindness would be it.

And I learned from her that kindness breeds kindness.

And having a kind attitude to life in all its forms leads to a wonderful experience all round.

So we were very happy and our happiness appeared to be contagious. Mother moved in with us in Uncle Eduard's flat. Officially this was because it would save money as she was no longer able to work as a nurse but as I always saw it, also because they were in love and had been at least ever since my father had died.

At that time we all hoped that another devastating war in Europe could be averted.

But then in 1939 we understood that this was not to be and during summer and autumn of that year we realised that we had waited too long and missed our chance of a new life abroad.

The Great War was bringing forth its child and all our lives were caught up in it.

When war was declared and Hitler and his maddened crowd started their offensive in the west in 1940 it took only five days until Holland was taken.

A couple of weeks later the British had to evacuate what was left of their army from the beaches of Dunkirk.

Shortly after that France was forced to sign its note of surrender in the same railway carriage that had seen the German surrender after the Great War only 22 years before.

Life under German occupation did not appear too bad to begin with.

Of course there were changes.

Dutch pride was badly hurt. And together with this the whole outlook on life in our beloved home country changed.

Dutch society became polarised.

Some people had fallen to the German propaganda.

Most wanted our Queen Wilhelmina back with us in Holland.

Others hoped that there was the possibility to create a Dutch Soviet Republic once the Germans had left.

The majority of people just tried to keep their head down and get on with their lives as well as possible.

But the Nazis had put an end to "as well as possible".

One change was that the books that had been on Uncle Eduard's bookshelf were moved into one of his double bottomed stage magician boxes.

There are always clocks to mend and jewellery to be repaired. But during those times a small shop could not support the owner and his family.

Not whilst Holland was occupied by the Germans.

But whilst the front door of the shop was closed its back door was always open. There was a constant stream of people that came to sell or exchange their jewellery so that they could hide their assets from the Nazis.

And Uncle Eduard's double bottomed-boxes were very useful for this grey trade. Whilst his official safe was usually nearly empty.

Eventually in 1941/42 Uncle Eduard was very unhappy when an increasing number of Jewish customers came to his back door.

They wanted their jewellery melted down to more compact little ingots that they could sew into their clothes.

They had been told that they were to be repatriated to a new Jewish homeland in the east that the Nazis were creating for them.

Whilst he was willing to help he did not believe in the "kind offer" that the Nazis appeared to have made to our fellow Dutchmen of Jewish decent.

I helped Uncle Eduard in this grey trade because the workshop in which I had made my apprenticeship had also closed.

It nevertheless looked that even though Holland was occupied our family might come through this terrible war.

And then in the beginning of August 1943 life as we had known it, with its compassion,

its love,

and the safety of our family,

came to its end.

The door to Uncle Eduard's shop was broken down at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Dutch Police and members of the Dutch Nazi Party the NSB stormed up the stairs.

They smashed up the shop.

Uncle Eduard's double bottomed boxes were no safe hiding place when faced with iron bars and pickaxes.

They had not even come because of the grey trade.

They had come because my former fellow apprentice who had been a member of the NSB had denounced me to the Nazis as a Communist.

I was held pinned against a wall whilst they searched the flat smashing everything in their way.

Once they found the books they broke all the boxes hoping to find more.

What they found was some jewellery and a few gold ingots.

They forced Uncle Eduard to open the safe.

There was nothing in it.

In frustration they just shot him in the back of his head.

Swantje tried to intervene but was badly injured by being rifle butted in the face.

I was knocked unconscious.

I woke up in a Gestapo cell.

After four days without food I was interviewed by a Gestapo Officer with mild manners and the voice of a slithering snake.

He took some notes.

Then he gave me an option.

He would either take me out into yard and shoot me, or I could sign up for an "Arbeitseinsatz" in Germany.

I had seen Swantje being hurt with a rifle butt and hoped that she might have been taken care of by my mother who after all was a nurse and that she would be all right.

Otherwise I might have chosen to be shot.

I signed on a dotted line and life as I had known it ended.

After a couple of days in the cell, this time with water, a foul smelling thin soup, and a small piece of bread once a day, I was taken to a train station in shackles.

I joined a group of other Dutchmen waiting in a barbed wire compound. I was assessed for my abilities and given a number on a piece of cardboard.

Some hours later we were loaded into cattle waggons and our journey to hell began.

The small window of the cattle waggon had barbed wire over it. We were about eighty people in a space that could not have taken fifty. So it was standing room only. There was a bucket of water and another bucket to be used as a toilet.

The water bucket lasted us for half a day's slow journey.

The train stopped in the vicinity of a station.

It stood there for hours.

Whilst moving the opened but barbed wired window had provided some fresh air.

Stationary the air in our waggon became un-breathable.

The first people began to faint.

We had to try to lay them down without standing on them.

The train moved on.

Stopped.

Moved on again.

This went on for two days.

Some of those that had fainted died.

The train stopped.

The doors that had been locked from the outside opened.

"Tote!"

An armed train guard shouted at us.

First we did not understand but then we lifted three dead out of the waggon.

We were glad of the fresh air from the open door.

The door was shut again.

After another day on the sidings the door was opened again.

"Tote!"

Shouted the guard.

This time the stifling air, the lack of space, the heat of the sun, and the lack of water had killed five.

We were permitted to empty the toilet bucket and got a single bucket of water in return.

The train started to continue its journey.

The train moving, stopping, the guards shouting for us to take our dead and the latrine bucket out and us receiving a little water and an occasional small amount of food went on for what appeared to be weeks.

At one time the train had stopped in a large shunting yard overnight when the nearby town was attacked by Allied bombers.

The journey ended and we were herded into what turned out to be a transit camp.

Here my head was shaved.

My clothes were taken away for delousing and replaced with blue and white striped work clothes. The number I had been given on a piece of cardboard was tattooed into my left forearm.

I realised that this was not a year or two of work in Nazi Germany but that I had been sucked into a system of forced labour and that I would need all my wits about me to survive and hopefully return to Swantje and a life of our own choosing.

As I had assumed from watching the Pathe' newsreels the aim of the system I had fallen victim of was to take my humanity away and change me into an automaton.

A piece of machinery that would be forced to work and eventually be disposed of once it could no longer fulfil the purpose the Nazis would force it to serve.

I decided that I would be human.

That I would survive.

And that I would do whatever I could to retain my identity.

This resolve was soon tested when the journey to the place of my slave labour continued.

As before, we were herded into cattle waggons.

We had a bucket of water and a bucket to use as a toilet.

As before, we were too many people for the limited space in the cattle waggon.

We were treated like animals.

The Nazis were behaving like animals.

The “Super Race” that Adolf Hitler had claimed the Germans to be was not super at all.

The Germans were nothing but a herd of mindless morons.

Having their heart replaced by the politics of evil.

Combating this evil for now meant surviving the train journey.

As expected the water ran out long before we had reached our destination.

There was only one solution.

As my father had died of kidney failure I knew that human urine still contained a lot of water that a human body can utilise.

This could stop us from dying of thirst.

So we used the empty water bucket to recycle our urine.

When faced with death even vile means that help you to survive become acceptable.

Once again though, some of us fainted because there was not enough space and enough air.

And once again some of them died.

I had expected this.

There was nothing I could do.

I became angry with myself over my helplessness and I vowed there and then to myself that I would survive and save as many of my fellow slaves as I could.

The train journey lasted another ten days.

Occasionally when we stopped the doors of the cattle waggons were opened and we were ordered to carry our dead out.

Occasionally we were given water or some nearly inedible food in return.

Once, our train was attacked by a low flying aircraft.

Thankfully the pilot tried to concentrate his fire on the train’s engine and not the cattle waggons that he mostly missed.

The train limped into some sidings where it stood for two days before a replacement engine arrived. We heard the cries of the injured from the cattle waggons near the front of the train that had been hit.

The train guards did not even bother to open the sliding doors of those waggons.

By the second day the desperate cries for help had stopped.

The ordeal of our train journey came to its end in the small village of Trassenheide.

We left the cattle waggons behind and were marched to a barbed wire compound nestled amongst sand dunes and pine trees.

The camp had been attacked by Allied bombers a day before our arrival. So our first job was to clear up the rubble that had been the wooden huts that the slave labourers were housed in.

It was during this work that I first met Vincent Bloeman.

Vincent and I found that we worked together well.

It was the beginning of a friendship which saved our lives as we looked out for each other.

On the second day of our work Vincent all of a sudden fell to his knees as if he had been struck by lightning.

I have seen this since.

I thought it could be connected to the time that one of our loved ones died.

I managed to shield Vincent from a guard when it happened to him. I had seen another man been killed by the same guard when he all of a sudden appeared to collapse.

Nearly all the slave workers that had been in these huts were killed by the bombs and the fire that ravaged these flimsy buildings after the air-raid.

Near the concrete footing of a small stove in the centre of one of the huts we nevertheless found a badly burnt Polish slave labourer who was still alive.

Vincent and I both tried to shield him from the guard who was supervising us.

In a low barely audible voice he told us that he had worked for the Polish Resistance Armia Krajowa and had called in the air-strike.

The Nazis were testing and building a rocket at this site and it was important to try to stop them.

Vincent and I were amazed. How incredible. A victim of Nazi oppression, a slave labourer to continue his opposition to this murderous regime and call in an air-strike even though he knew that he himself would most likely be killed in it. We tried to give him some water. But the guard saw what we were doing stepped up to us and shot the Pole. We escaped with a beating.

I vowed to myself that I would continue the fight that had cost this brave man his life.

In the weeks that followed Vincent and I got to know each other more closely.

It helped that we both came from the same area of Holland but we also recognised each other's will to survive whilst continuing the resistance the Pole had shown us.

It was during these first days of our slave labour that I started to have quick flashes of memories of Uncle Eduard lifting me high up into the air as a small child just before a dangerous situation.

It felt to me as if Uncle Eduard was looking out for me from wherever he was.

A strange feeling as neither Uncle Eduard nor I had believed in an afterlife.

Nevertheless these warning memories saved my life more than once.

I was carefully watching the SS Guards.

I analysed their movements, motivations and mannerisms.

I kept a low profile whilst observing the guards with a stage magician's eye for detail.

I was aware that I had to be very careful to hide my attitude.

I would be killed immediately had the guards suspected that I was determined to continue the fight of that brave Polish Resistance Fighter.

Vincent and I carefully gathered around us a small group of our fellow slave workers. Our objective was to survive. I thought I had better keep my determination to fight back to myself. This way I hoped to protect my friends should the guards ever find out about my plan. After we had finished the clear-up we were ordered to dismantle some machinery in a large hall that the Nazis had hoped to use for the production of their rocket.

This work was finished in the middle of October.

We then were marched back to the train station.

Once again we were loaded into cattle waggons.

We all knew how to survive the ordeal of transport by now.

Once the bucket of water was empty we used it to store our urine that we drank to avoid dying of thirst.

We carefully rotated to the small window that was covered by barbed wire so that no one suffocated.

Thankfully this time there were no deaths in our waggon.

We arrived at Nordhausen after a three day rail journey.

We were marched to a former German Army Barracks and from there to a hillside covered by pine trees.

Coming closer we could see that there was a camouflaged entrance to a tunnel.

We were marched straight into the underground hell of Mittelbau-Dora.

Our first job was to help building the tunnels and caverns that housed us and the factory and workshops.

It was hard and dangerous work.

Once the tunnel complex was fitted out with the machinery that we had dismantled in the bombed factory hall next to the test site by the Baltic Sea we started to build the Nazi rocket.

As I was a trained jeweller and watchmaker I was assigned a job in an area of the workshop that was making gyroscopes that were used to stabilise the rocket in its flight. They consisted of a flywheel in a double frame and some steel bearings. The whole mechanism had the size of a shoe box.

Its parts had to be machined to a very high degree of precision.

All in all it was a very delicate piece of machinery that took the skilled hands of a jeweller to make and assemble.

Any divergence from the very precise tolerances we were given for these parts resulted in a beating.

The aim of a good saboteur is to stay undetected whilst he carries out his attack.

So I carefully observed all that was going on around me, trying to find a way to sabotage the Nazi rocket.

Our lives were very hard.

We got very little food.

We lived in fear of a beating at any time and occasionally these beatings were so severe that the victim died.

We had no protective clothing, no gloves. Instead of work boots the lucky ones amongst us had to wear wooden clogs.

Others just had to wear any kind of shoes they had.

As we lived underground the siren that sounded at the beginning of the two twelve hour shifts was the only way to keep time.

Slowly these conditions were grinding us down.

We were constantly hungry and lived in constant fear.

Anyone of us could be killed the moment a guard wanted to kill him for whatever reason.

When a fellow slave worker who had operated a lathe next to me caught the sleeve of his blue striped uniform in the machinery and broke his arm he was shot by a guard before we could see to his injuries.

Ever so often one of the engineers came into the workshop screaming and shouting at us that we were lazy and sabotaging their work.

The guards then randomly started killing some of us.

I noticed that any failure of the rocket was never the fault of the Germans but always ours.

These “Herren Menschen” were unwilling to admit that they were fallible and were blaming others for their mistakes. These random killings happened quite often. I urgently tried to understand what made the guards single out a particular slave to be killed. So I learned not to stand out as being too tall, too weak, or too healthy. I learned to avoid anything that could attract a killer.

My knowledge of stage magic saved my life. Just like a magician needs to read and manipulate his audience I read the guards and used my body postures to stop them choosing me to be killed.

At night in the relative privacy of our sleeping quarters I showed Vincent Bloeman and our few trusted friends how to avoid the attention of the guards.

One night Vincent who shared the wooden bunk beds with me, quietly woke me up. He had heard a fellow slave from the other end of our sleeping quarters go into the latrine. The slave had not come back for a while now and Vincent said he had heard strange munching noises. When we investigated we found that he was actually munching on some bread.

We were all on near starvation rations.

How had that chap managed to get hold of some extra bread?

When we challenged him he was very evasive.

More so than one would expect if he had found a spare key to the kitchen larder.

We threatened him.

We did not want to be violent to a fellow inmate.

There was more than enough violence against us from the Nazis.

But a potential food source was too important.

Eventually he cracked.

It turned out that a guard had given him the bread in return for information.

Information about his fellow slaves.

Information about who of us was willing to sabotage the rocket.

Information that the guards used to single out individual slaves to be killed.

We were stunned.

The reason I had not been able to find any pattern in the killings became clearer. The Guards had singled out prisoners to be killed on information provided by this fellow slave. He had sold the lives of his comrades in return for some pieces of stale bread.

And as he did not know anything about any sabotage he had just provided the killers with fake information.

Thereby making the random killings even more random.

We were shocked beyond words.

I had told Vincent and the others of our small group of friends that we at no time should allow the Nazis to take our humanity our dignity and our compassion for one another away.

Here we were faced with a situation that threatened our lives.

We were in a situation that for reasons of sheer self-preservation could only be resolved by neglecting our own humanity and stooping as low as our captors.

We killed the informant in such a way that it looked like he had slipped and cracked open his head.

For many weeks this event really troubled me.

Was it worth surviving if in the process I became as bad and corrupted as the Nazis?

A killing is a killing.

There never should be a situation that can only be resolved by taking another human being's life.

All life is sacred.

Killing is always the least intelligent option.

No one should ever be denied the right and opportunity to live.

All that is born comes in to this world in a natural state of grace that no one has the right to take away or tarnish.

But when faced with the reality that we would be singled out by that informant to be killed the next day I had allowed my hand to be forced.

I had lost my humanity and killed out of self-protection and out of revenge.

I had become as bad as our tormentors.

The only thing that stopped me from using my knowledge of stage magic to commit suicide and get myself killed was the hope that I could find a way to sabotage the Nazi rocket and thereby save innocent lives.

The whole situation came down to the old false argument: "I had to take a life to save my own life and the life of others." It made me sick to think of it but what it really came down to was that I had allowed the system of murder to make me a murderer.

I had lost my humanity and become as bad as any of the guards. It was during this time when I troubled myself with the loss of my humanity that I found a way of sabotaging the Nazi rocket. The gyroscopes that I made on my milling machine were very important to the whole rocket as they kept it upright and pointing in the direction it was supposed to go. Sabotaging the gyroscopes would sabotage the rocket.

Therefore the quality control of my work was very rigorous.

The vulnerable parts of the gyroscopes were the axes and bearings that enabled them to gimbal and spin at high speed.

Due to the quality control sabotaging them appeared impossible.

One of the things that enabled the flywheel of the gyroscope to spin so fast was a thin layer of machine oil.

Whilst it was impossible to sabotage the gyro by messing with the measurements I might just get away with messing with this oil.

The simplest way would have been to put some sand into the oil but that would have been spotted immediately.

It was the death of my father so many years ago that showed me the way.

He had died from kidney failure.

When I talked to Vincent Bloeman about it he happened to mention that without functioning kidneys one of the chemical elements that poisoned the body is phosphorus.

And that it was possible to obtain this highly corrosive chemical from human urine.

All that was needed was to condense the urine by boiling.

Vincent knew this from his job as a dispensing chemist working in a pharmacy at home in Leiden.

So I decided that if I added condensed urine to the machine oil that was used to lubricate the flywheel of the gyroscope they would still pass the quality control but by the time the rocket was fully assembled and was ready to be fired the corrosive phosphorus would have stopped the gyros from working in their intended way.

So I got myself an old tin can and boiled some of my urine until it had the look and consistency of the machine oil.

Occasionally I added this concoction to the regular oil.
I could not do this to all the gyroscopes I was making as that would have exposed what I was doing to this German "Vengeance Weapon". I had to content myself with sabotaging these rockets occasionally over a longer time.
Not that I was able to say how long a time I would be able to disrupt the Nazi war machine.
Our rations were getting smaller and smaller.
The guards were getting more and more aggressive.
They killed some of us slaves every day.
That some of the engineers came down into our tunnels shouting at us when a Rocket had gone wrong might have given me a secret smile that I could never show but it spurred the guards on to more cruelty towards us.
We had no mirrors but just by looking at Vincent and some of the other slaves I saw that by now we all were on the brink of death.
Exhaustion, malnutrition, unavoidable little cuts from our work and bruises from the frequent beatings, it was all grinding us down.
Our lives were ebbing away.
The will to live.
The will to keep our humanity.
The will to sabotage the rocket.
It all slowly began to blur.
Still somehow we lived through this.
Our friendship and the sheer determination not to let the Nazi guards take away our right to be keep us alive.
Our birth right to be human.
Our humanity.
Somehow we continued to come through this horror.

One of the milling machines I used to make the giros had a slight flaw in its gearbox.
As a result the gearbox became very hot. I used this to boil down the urine that I added to the machine oil to sabotage the rockets.
I always looked around very carefully before I even touched the tin can that I used for this.
But one day Vincent who had to deliver some valves from the area of the underground workshop where he worked to another area saw me using the can.
I was lucky that it been him observing me and not one of the guards.

I nevertheless realised that I was getting so worn down that I needed to be doubly vigilant to survive.

Even though I still did not believe in a god or an afterlife, in our little group of eight friends we had started to occasionally and in secret recite some Jewish prayers.

I caught myself one day realising that I silently and without moving my lips had started to pray nearly continuously.

The guards had started a new regime.

On top of the random killings they now killed at least five of us right after the roll-call and before the beginning of every shift by putting a noose around their victims necks and hoisting them up with the great portal crane.

It was done in front of all the slaves of the shift to deter us from sabotage.

I had tried to think ahead.

The increasing killings and the nervousness of the guards together with some erratic behaviour of the engineers who had come down to the tunnels taking away drawings rather than bringing new ones had made me think that the war was not going well for the Nazis.

So what would happen if the Nazis should lose this hellhole of an underground factory to the Allies?

If the Nazis decided to kill us all before we were liberated there was little we could do but die.

But what if the guards just fled and left us to the Allies?

The rocket we had been building was a new weapon of war.

Wouldn't the Allies want to learn from us how to build it?

Would they not want to keep hold of us so that we could teach them how to build it?

All we wanted was to survive this hell and go home to find our families.

So I came up with the idea that if at all possible our little group of friends should try to make a run for it the moment the Germans were gone.

We quietly talked about this and all in our group agreed that that would be a good idea should we ever have that chance.

Whilst we quietly waited for this chance the conditions of our lives got worse and worse. One day just after the hanging and the start of our

shift Pavel Koslovsky, one of our friends who had been with us right from the time we cleared the bombed factory building by the Baltic Sea, just snapped.

I personally had had visions of Uncle Eduard lifting me up high up into the air as a child.

So I knew that I had to be careful as there could be trouble ahead.

Pavel snapped and started reciting a prayer with a loud falsetto voice that was broken by simply too much.

Too much violence.

Too much danger.

Too much fear.

Too much hard labour.

Too little food.

Too little anyone of us could do about the whole damn situation.

Pavel just started reciting a prayer with a loud broken falsetto voice walking towards the armed guard who only minutes before had overseen the daily hangings.

Pavel just walked towards the guard, his arms flailing, reciting in Yiddish the prayer:

“Israel your cities are like a woman in the pains of her labour”

He had become a “Muselman”.

The Germans were very afraid of Muselmans.

It had happened to others before.

These slaves were just so far gone and had suffered so much that nothing mattered to them anymore.

They simply broke.

They were beyond caring.

Beyond all fear.

Beyond hope that somehow they might survive against all odds.

Beyond the power the Nazis claimed to have over them.

Free to die.

Free to recite a banned Jewish prayer and walk straight into their tormentors.

In the hope that either they could kill them or be killed themselves.

The whole system was based on fear and violence.

Men that stood outside the reach of the fear and violence the Nazis imposed on us were feared by the SS Guards more than anything else.

Therefore Muselmans were killed immediately.

Pavel Koslovsky recited the prayer with the broken falsetto voice of a man already dead and with arms flailing walked towards the guard who minutes before had ordered and overseen the hanging from the portal crane of five of our fellow slave workers.

The guard with eyes wide with terror fumbled to get his gun out of its holster.

Backing away he shot Pavel.

Once.

Twice.

Only after the whole magazine of the Luger was emptied into Pavel did our beloved comrade stumble and fall.

During all this I had to hold on tight to Vincent who had stood next to me.

Both to stop him from rushing forward to help our friend as well as from stopping myself.

There was nothing we could do for Pavel. We would have only made ourselves the next victims.

Two days later I woke in the morning after a vivid dream of Uncle Eduard holding me in his arms telling me:

"It's not long now!"

Then, startled, I realised that it would have been time for our shift.

Nothing had happened.

No factory siren.

No shouts from the guards to get up and be counted in the roll-call.

I presumed that my dream had woken me up early.

Eventually others started to stir.

Muffled sounds of victims who waited for the roll-call and their time to be hung from the portal crane.

Slaves shuffling to the latrine.

Murmurs.

The rustling of thin blankets on wooden bunks without mattresses as our fellow inmates turned over trying to catch another moment of sleep. The absence of the noise of the generators and the ventilation.

I woke Vincent with whom I shared a bunk.
We listened out carefully.
Lay waiting.
Trying to comprehend what was going on.

Was this it?
Had the guards just left?

Eventually we silently got up and woke our friends.

As we had presumed we were now either to be killed or we might be free.

Carefully in the dark we moved towards the wire mesh door of our sleeping compound.
As the generators had stopped everything was in darkness. We could not see a thing. A guard should have stood on the other side of the gate. Now, nothing.
Our senses were acutely strung trying to feel danger.
I threw a canteen into the passage on the other side of the gate. It came to rest with loud rattling.

No reaction.

We shouted.

No reaction.

We fearfully waited a while longer.

Shouted again.

This was it.

There could be booby-traps.

SS may be lying in wait with a machinegun.

Or.

We could simply be free.

Using a spoon and the force of our sheer number we forced the wire mesh gate.

Carefully with our small group of friends close together the melee of slaves felt their way through the dark forward into the workshop area. We broke through another wire mesh gate into the tunnel that we presumed led to the outside.

Eventually squinting in the morning light we reached the mouth of the tunnel with its bombproof concrete overhang, its open blast doors and the machine gun position next to a guardhouse.

All doors were open.

No guards in sight.

No booby-traps as far as we could see.

We were stunned.

Free of our tormentors we felt like children abandoned by their evil parents.

We knew that there was another part of the slave labour camp in some huts outside the tunnel system. It housed the less skilled workers. There was a hospital, the kitchen and a crematorium.

The slaves from this area were just as disorientated as most of us slaves from the tunnel system.

Together our small group of friends had whispered and dreamed about what to do on this day.

So we were prepared.

We tried to raid the hospital for some medical supplies but found that there were none.

It was set up for killing slaves not for healing them.

We raided the kitchen.

There was little left to raid.

To our terror we saw that some slaves that had broken into the kitchen's pantry and gorged themselves on the meagre food were collapsing onto the floor in great pain.

First we thought that the food had been poisoned and we had come up against a booby-trap.

Then we realised these slaves were so starved that their body just could not take the food.

Their intestines had been weakened so much by malnutrition that they had burst.

We took some of the remaining food and left the outer camp through the unattended barbed wired open camp gate.

As in our dreams we headed into the woods to the west. After a couple of miles we took shelter in a little coppice of fir trees half way down a hillside that led to a stream.

Only once we were hidden in this cover did we relax and start carefully to nibble some of the food.

Revived by the absence of terror we realised that the rumble of war was still very close around us.

We agreed that it would be best to stay in hiding for the rest of the day.

Even though the danger to our lives was not yet over the absence of our tormentors let us sleep deeply.

On this first day of freedom I woke up just before dawn from a strangely comforting dream.

Uncle Eduard, Mother and Swantje had been standing in the meadow next to our hideout in the fire thicket.

They were looking at me lovingly.

Swantje's loving smile was what I remembered most from that dream.

The light was slowly growing from the east.

Dawn chorus.

Mist lingering.

Hanging in the black tops of fir trees.
Becoming more visible whilst melting away.
Our little group started to stir.
A quiet cough.

The canteens of water we had brought from the camp kitchen were empty by now.

We had been nibbling carefully at the stale bread.
Weakness caused by years of harsh slavery demanded more water.

During the night war's deep rumbling had slowly crept east and north.

Cautiously we drifted down through the cover and into the meadow.
Through the morning stillness of the woodland valley we could hear a stream trickling below us.

Tension.

There is a two wheeled lumberjack's caravan standing on a track running parallel to the stream.

Hiding in a dip in the grass we observed it for a while.
It appeared abandoned.

It might hold tools.
Clothes.
Provisions.

Whispering we agree.
We have to go down and take a look.
Stealthily I creep up the steps to the door.
The lock has already been forced.
Carefully I push the door open.
Out of the corner of my eyes I see Uncle Eduard, Mother and Swantje looking at me.

Chapter 10 > more than a cow in the Super Farm

The prairie was visible through the open sides of the shed.

So were other sheds.

Sometimes people and vehicles could also be seen.

The prairie alone was what fascinated >. It was common consensus amongst the 1000 cows inside the shed that nothing outside it was actually real. This did not stop > being fascinated by the prairie. At the age of three days 025Z6/762193> and the 999 other cows had been walked from the birthing pens in the shed their mothers lived in to their current shed, never to see their mothers again.

They would leave this shed only once.

To walk to the slaughterhouse shed.

As they had no other knowledge of the world, all they could see through the open sides of the shed did not exist.

So > knew that the prairie was just a figment of her mind.

Knew that there was nothing outside the shed.

Knew that all outside was just a dream.

It is easy to understand that as the only experience > had ever had of the "great outside" was when she was walked from her birth pen to the shed she now lived in, at the age of three days, that her memory of what had happened to her at that age was very vague.

That the current shed was the second shed > had experienced, and that there were other sheds on the grounds of the super farm was irrelevant to >'s dream of the prairie.

All > instinctively knew was that all life begins and therefore it had to have an end.

Thankfully > did not know about the other shed she would eventually walk towards.

The shed that was already waiting for her.

The shed that was her life's final destination.

The shed that she would only leave in bits and pieces, to feed humans and other animals.

Therefore > was still able to happily dream of the life that she was truly entitled to.

A life that was not controlled, by the human greed for profit.

In her dreams she had hope.

Hope that her dreams could maybe come true.
Hope that there really was such a thing as the prairie.
We humans know that hope is the one thing that enables all life to cope with the most extreme situations.

And that the absence of hope can kill.

So > dreamt.

The dream gave her hope.

And hope was what made her accept her life.

A life that according to the standards of the industry that controlled it was designed to cater for all her needs in a humane way whilst also insuring that the greatest possible financial return to that industry was guaranteed.

>'s ear tag did not only show her number, but also contained a micro-chip that communicated with the water and feeding troughs in her shed.

The central data processing unit of the super-farm calculated her daily weight gain and assessed all her nutritional needs by comparing computer predictions with the reading of the scales built into the floor in front of the feeding troughs. This way her health was optimised and the computer mixed her food with additives including antibiotics etc. that maximised her growth rate. Time spent growing up was hereby shortened. > would be sexually receptive sooner. And calve as soon as possible. Only giving birth to her own calf would make her udder produce the milk that was the sole purpose of her existence.

Except of course that final destination.

The slaughter house shed.

Another dream had come to > recently.

A dream of her being part of a small group of fellow cows.

A herd.

A herd of her ancestors.

A herd of Auerochs.

And that beside her, there was a little bull calf.

Her bull calf.

And there was the most astonishing thing in the world with this little herd.

A bull.

A bull to guard and protect all of them.

And in her dream the whole world felt just right.

All things around her were real.

Nothing had to be declared a figment of her imagination,
in order to make sense of an alien environment.

And > was experiencing a comfort and happiness an:

“Everything is just right” feeling.

That her everyday life and routine just could not provide.

Her daily life was so far removed from this dream.

There was such a gap between what happened in her life and what
should really be happening in her life that only a constant daydream
could fill it.

And of course the humans, who had created the environment of the
shed, saw this constant dreaming, this placid escape from an unbearable
reality, as proof that they were treating the cows just:

“A 1. OK”

That they could claim that cows were the ideal couch potato.

Being happy to stare dozily into space, chewing the cud, not showing
any signs of distress. Because they were dreaming all the time, to escape
the nightmare that their life’s reality forced them to live through.

This new archetypal dream was ever so fascinating.

> was enjoying the outdoors of a mixed leaf woodland that was
interspersed with grassy clearings. A life that was centred on the herd.

And the hierarchy that the presence of the bull gave a meaning to.

In this dream > was so happy, so sure of the joys of her life that was
centred on the herd, her calf and the bull.

A life that > was meant to live. A life that would have been hers but for
the greed of the humans that had bred > to be placid and docile.

The perfectly happy cow that was able to fulfil its life’s purpose in a
dream.

A dream of independence.

A dream of a life fulfilled.

A dream that gave > hope.

Hope that somehow this dream could become reality.

And the prairie.

And the woodland with its fresh water streams.

Its dark pine cover,

and with the other members of her herd and most importantly,
the bull, could become true.

> was dreaming.

Was looking out through the open sides of the shed that was all that
life’s reality provided.

> was dreaming.

And these dreams, gave > the hope, to live on.

Chapter 11 Letter by the author to the reader

Dear Reader,

You the reader of this story will by now have understood that this book is all about compassion or to be more precise the lack thereof.

I remember that when I worked in archaeology as a young man and I had to handle human remains, bones etc., I realised that a human being, is a human being, is a human being and that the respect and dignified treatment a human being deserves does not end with the death of an individual.

Now in my adulthood I understand that respect and therefore dignified treatment is not limited to humans but should be extended to all life.

From sentient mammal's right through to the smallest living organisms.

Let me make myself clear.

I am not a vegetarian or a Jain.

But looking at life as such I realise what a rare and valuable condition it is. So my slogan now is: "All life is alive, and therefore it deserves to be treated with the respect and the dignity that is its non-negotiable birth right!

Life is sacred!"

I also would like to say that I do not intend to belittle the tremendous suffering of the Holocaust victims by equating them with farm animals. Instead my intent is to highlight that a total lack of compassion for all life was happening then and is still happening here and now. And that we humans are causing tremendous suffering on a daily basis. To other humans and to our fellow sentient beings. It is time to become aware of what we are doing.

Maybe in a small way this novella can help all to understand this.

It is the unnegotiable birth-right of all living beings to lead a life that fulfils its needs. It is the unnegotiable birth-right of humans to lead a life that is free of dictatorial oppression, cruelty, fear and terror.

I would like to extend this right to all sentient living beings.

How we treat each other is closely related to how we treat all living beings. As I mention in Chapter 9 we should live the change we want to see. It is up to the individual humans to extend a loving hand to all life. We can create a better world one being at the time. Living a life of loving Acceptance of our responsibility will rebound. After all the love you give to life will come back to you threefold.

Rory Te' Tigo

St. Just, December 2016

Chapter 12 Vic discovers > and decides to hide her

Vic had worked in the Super Farm for four weeks. As sub-manager he was not only in charge of the IT side of running one of the sheds but he also had to occasionally “muck in” and get his hands dirty in “his shed”. On one of those occasions, he had just cleaned the far corner where the automatic system that took away the cow dung did not quite reach, when he looked up and straight into the eyes of cow number 025Z6/762193>.

Vic realised that he had previously avoided direct eye contact.

But this time he looked a cow into her eyes and the cow looked back.

And all of a sudden Vic felt weak in the knees. It was as if he had been hit over the head with something heavy. He stood steadying himself by holding on to the pitchfork. He had looked into the eyes of a cow and he felt as if he had looked into a calm whirlpool of emotions. He saw a willingness to endure and at the same time he had sensed the straightforward confident understanding that this life the life in the shed was not right. That this cow knew what it was born for. Mixed broadleaf and pine woodlands and their clearings. That whilst this cow could not know any other life it nevertheless instinctively knew that the life it was forced to lead was not the life it was meant to experience.

The cows had been artificially inseminated eight months before and were by now very heavily pregnant. They needed to give birth so that they started to lactate. And it was this milk that was the reason why they were kept in this shed.

For ever cheaper milk.

For ever greater profit.

For ever less respect for life.

For ever more ruthless abuse of life.

The cows in the shed were just numbers.

Numbers on a balance sheet.

Numbers that had to show ever more profit.

Ever more success in the march of progress.

That it was cows producing milk that was originally meant to feed their calves was of no concern. These calves would be taken away from their mothers on the third day of their lives. Not on the second day as this would hinder the calves’ development. And not on the fourth day of

their lives as by that time their mothers would have started to have too strong a bond to them and would bay in pain too much, calling for them, hoping to get their calves, their children, back.

But on the third day so that the benefit of the calves being with their mothers was in balance with the interests of the only thing that was important.

The balance sheet.

So Vic had looked into the eyes of cow number 02Z6/762193> and had seen the clearings in the woodland, the comfort of the herd, and the satisfaction that a life free of human interference could bring.

And Vic's knees had nearly buckled under him.

In an instant he had seen what this "last chance job" was really all about.

The total disrespect of the needs of a fellow being, in aid of more profit.

And whilst he was not directly aware of it Vic could not help that his subconscious, his inner incorruptible self, made the connection with

what he was doing in his shed in the Super Farm with what his grandfather had told him about his experience as a slave labourer in Mittelbau-Dora. Vic understood instinctively that the cows under his control and the calves that these cows were carrying and he himself were part of a system that had total disregard for life.

Disregard for the beauty of life.

Disregard for the fundamental dignity that all life and all living beings can rightfully call their own.

A fundamental dignity that is non-negotiable.

A dignity and respect that is lost first of all by those that try to take it away from other living beings.

The killer.

The oppressor.

The slave master,

is the first to lose his dignity, even before he tries to take dignity and respect away from other living beings.

All these thoughts became part of Vic's self-understanding much later.

That happened there in the shed when Vic looked into the eyes of 025Z6/762193> was much more direct.

And impossible to put into words, whilst it happened.

A surge of emotions.

A tidal wave of feelings.

The urge to do something that would help.

To assist.

To stop himself from being a perpetrator.

A corruptor of the beauty of life.

A henchman.

It was the number 025Z6/762193> together with the nearly perfectly formed half-moon of white fur on the forehead of 025Z6/762193> that enabled Vic to identify and single out 025Z6/762193> from the rest of the cows in his shed.

In hindsight Vic could not remember when, where and how he had decided to take a stance and do something about it. But during the next couple of days he occasionally thought of 025Z6/762193> and eventually a plan started to form in Vic's mind.

He could not release 025Z6/762193> onto the prairie.

There was no way that he could smuggle her out of the shed.

But maybe he thought, he could stop 025Z6/762193> being parted from her calf.

The movable contraption that was used to inseminate the cows was stored close to the area where Vic had done the mucking out. He realised that he could move this insemination unit forward by a couple of yards creating a space that could hide 025Z6/762193> and her calf once it was born. He could compensate for the loss of length of the shed by angling the insemination unit slightly creating a false perspective. And by carefully scratching something that was very similar to a Central American sign of bad luck into the dust on the unit he hoped to stop the foreign and illegal workers from getting too close to the gap he had created.

Then later whilst working on the IT side of managing "his shed" he tried and found a way to register a 1000th and 1 cow in the system.

The calf that 025Z6/762193> was going to give birth to.

Calving time was a fortnight of hard work and chaos. At times it felt as if Vic would be overwhelmed. He had never before had to do so much hard physical work in his life.

In hindsight when he thought of this time he realised that the only thing that kept him together was the secret joy of doing good to 025Z6/762193>. He knew from the records that he could look up from his IT station that occasionally a calf would die. So the calf of > was first registered as still-born. And then he gave it the fake identity of the 1001st cow that he had created earlier. He had installed a milking gate in front of the recess that he had created. Such a gate was usually used to register the identity of the cow from its electronic ear-tag so that the

computer could assess how much milk any particular cow was producing.

Vic used the tag he had assigned to >'s calf to bar the little bull calf > had given birth to from leaving the hide-out, whilst the milking gate opened for > to give her all the access to her calf that she wanted. This on first sight appeared to be cruel to >'s calf, but it was the only possible way. If the closed circuit TV cameras could catch a picture of the calf wandering amongst the cows Vic's plan would be finished. It was just after calving time that Vic decided to call 025Z6/762193> calf Bov. He took this name from the Latin "Bovinae, or Bos Taurus" the generic name for cattle. Vic found this name very befitting. Every so often Vic found the time to steal away close to the little den he had created and watch > and Bov.

The happiness of child- rearing.

The finding of feet.

The amazed eyes of the calf trying to make sense of its surroundings.

The only thing that was missing were playmates of Bov's age.

These few minutes every day gave Vic a tremendous feeling of success.

Of having kept his humanity whilst working in an inhumane system.

Of having done the right thing.

Chapter 13 Operation Crossbow and Operation Hydra

Until 1943 over 40% of intelligence information the Allies received about the activities of the Third Reich came from Polish sources. Throughout the Second World War intelligence reports in particular from operatives of the Polish underground army "Armia Krajowa" were invaluable to Britain and its Allies. That so little is known about the importance of the information that the brave soldiers of the Polish Resistance provided about the Nazi war machine, German war technology and the conditions in Poland and Germany, is partially due to the Cold War. But in part it may also be due to the problems Britain had with the death of the Polish Prime Minister in Exile, General Sikorski, on July 4th 1943. Some claim that he was already dead when his plane hit the water near Gibraltar, killed by British Intelligence at the behest of the new ally against Hitler, the Soviet Union, or by Soviet NKVD agents with the help of the British double agent Kim Philby, who was in charge of British Counter Espionage in the Iberian Peninsula at that time. Whatever.

The Polish effort in the war against fascism was vital and substantial. Of particular importance were the reports about the German program of rocket development.

Soldiers of the Armia Krajowa were able to collect parts of a German Aggregat 4 (V-2) rocket that had fallen into a swamp after a test flight. They managed to have the heavier parts analysed and drawings made. The lighter parts were flown back to Britain. A Dakota C-47 transport aircraft of No. 267 Squadron of the Royal Air Force flew in from Brindisi in Italy. It landed during the night of the 25th / 26th of July 1944 near a village in the vicinity of Jadowniki Mokre and collected the parts and the drawings of a V-2 Rocket that had been launched from a German rocket test site near Blizna/Poland. This rocket part recovery flight Codenamed Operation Most 3 (Operation Wildhorn 3 in British sources) together with the recovery of a second V-2 that accidentally had landed in Baeckebo/ Sweden on the 13th of June 1944 informed the Allies of the German progress in rocket development.

The development site was identified by the Armia Krajowa as Peenemuende a village on the Baltic island of Usedom.

Peenemuende housed the Nazi scientist who developed the rockets, the test stands launch sites, workshops, and a Concentration Camp that housed the slave labourers who built the rockets.

Knowledge of this site came to Britain via the Armia Krajowa the Polish Underground Army.

What made the intelligence about the Nazi rocket program at Peenemuende different from other intelligence gathered by the Armia Krajowa was that two Armia Krajowa operatives were actual inmates in the Peenemuende Concentration Camp/Slave Labour Camp. These operatives therefore were able to report straight from the centre of development. They decided that a strike by British bombers was needed to halt or at least disrupt Nazi rocket development. (Operation Hydra, later Operation Crossbow)

Their request was granted.

These two brave Poles were warned in advance of the date and time of the strike so that they might go to a place where they could find shelter during the raid. But unfortunately at the appointed time they were unable to leave their wooden hut.

By chance their escape route was blocked by some SS guards.

Imagine the horror of a Nazi concentration camp.

Survival was a constant battle that many inmates lost.

Therefore not only to survive but to continue to take an active role in the fight against fascism was a brave effort!

To maintain enough of one's integrity and intent to continue the struggle not just for one's own life but also to continue the fight against this deadly enemy by sending reports from a concentration camp to the Allies in London is astounding.

But on top of that to order an air strike. To know when it is going to happen and then to have to accept that one will die in this air strike is heroic.

Many people died during the Second World War.

Many people died during the Second World War fighting the evil of fascism.

Many people died during the Second World War fighting the evil of fascism and with their death saved the lives of many other people.

But these two operatives of the Armia Krajowa lost their lives whilst continuing their fight even though they were already concentration camp inmates. And they continued their fight to a point where they

knew that death was inevitable. And when they looked death in its ugly face they kept schtum about the air strike and died.

Dying is never a good thing.

At least not in a war.

Killing is always the least intelligent option.

But these two solders of the Armia Krajowa sacrificed their lives in a way that in my eyes made them heroes.

And Heroes well worth remembering at that.

So this book is dedicated to them and to all the other brother and sister beings who die never having been given the chance to live their lives to its full potential.

Lives that should have been full of joy.

Lives that instead turned out to be restricted and governed by an incomprehensible rule.

The rule that profit takes clear precedence over the potential for joy of an individual.

The rule that when money confronts life, money wins!

What was it Chief Seattle allegedly said?

“When you have killed the last buffalo you will find that you cannot eat the money you made when you sold its hide!”

Chapter 14 How Vic is found out

I always had my doubts about Victor Bloeman. It was not necessarily because he came from the Big Apple. I have met other people that came from New York via my gun club. And they were perfectly O.K. . But Victor Bloeman was a totally different case. He gave me the impression that he was a man with an underlying agenda that was not easy to understand. I cannot quite put my finger on it but right from the start I had the feeling that there was something about him that was not quite right. If nothing else one might call it female intuition. So I, Susan Karlson, observed him very carefully waiting to see what it was that made him different. And if it was something that might involve the smooth running of our shed in the super-farm. I had been working there right from the beginning when the system of sheds were built and stocked with cows. To me the great increase in productivity that came with this kept-animal-husbandry system was a marvel. And I was proud of being part of what so very clearly was a step into the right direction. A step into the future of animal husbandry. After all progress meant finding ways to increase productivity so that profits could be maximised. The forward march into the bright and profitable future of the American way of life.

Capitalism at its best.

One way to carefully check on Victor Bloeman was to check on the IT side of his work. This meant to cross reference the data from the shed Victor was in charge of with data that had been collected before Victor joined the company. And also to cross reference the current productivity level with the level of previous years. To begin with there was nothing different to be found. But first of all my suspicions had to be put to the side for a while whilst we were shepherding our cows through their maternity cycle. It is necessary for a cow to give birth to start it lactating. And the milk was what was wanted. It was the reason why the cows were kept in this shed. The birth of 1000 calves within a week is hard work. So all farmhands that were not required for other essential jobs had to step in and help and the usual deportation of illegals was stopped for this week.

Thankfully we were able to time most of the births with an injection so that they happened at a time of our choosing. All the births were

recorded on our computers. As soon as the calves could stand they got their electronic ear tags. These showed a barcode and their individual microchips could be read by the gates to the feeding machine. This did not only record the amount of fodder. The feeding area had electronic scales in its footplate so that the computer could automatically weigh the calf and thereby provide data about their development and growth. As I saw it the wonderful computer program we were using was a super mother that was giving our calves exactly what they needed. And that included growth hormones and some antibiotics so that they became super calves, sexually maturing earlier for the heifers and putting on more muscles and greater weight for the bull calves so that they could be sent to the slaughter house shed earlier.

To maximise our profits and the development of our calves the sexes were walked to different sheds at the age of three days, the bull calves to a fattening shed and the heifer calves to a maternity and milk cow shed. I think this whole system was pure genius. And whilst as a woman I also saw the constant cycle of maternity I preferred to think of this system as an efficient factory producing milk and burger beef at high profit and low cost for our shareholders. It is a system that aims to take away the financial and physical risk that a small scale farmer faces on a near daily basis. It replaced it with guaranteed profit and safety. And all this progress was possible due to the sensors and their integration in to a computer program that tracked each and every cow and its role in the greater good.

The profit created by the whole system.

Capitalism.

And capitalism at its best.

Efficient, profitable and competitive.

Successful in all of its aspects.

A marvel in its conception.

A great piece of agricultural engineering.

Once the calving time was over I started to monitor the data from the milking shed looking for irregularities that might come about because Victor Bloeman was not doing his job right.

I had been looking for trouble for close to three months until all of a sudden I found what I was looking for. It started by finding that the cows were producing more milk than expected. And this was not

happening once or twice. The cows were producing more milk on a regular basis. It was not a lot to begin with but milk production continued to rise until it stabilised at 6 percent above the expected level, an increase that was so large that it could not be ignored. But for the time being I decided not to mention it to anyone. I was quite intrigued how Victor had charmed the cows into producing more than expected. I tried to analyse the milk production of each cow individually and found that it was an increase by all the animals in the shed. Admittedly some cows produced more milk than others and milk production varied throughout the shed and over time but all in all it was an increase of 6 percent. And then I found out that one cow continually produced less milk. And this decrease in production appeared to become more and more over time. So I decided to investigate and take a look at this animal.

Cow number 025Z6/762193> was an ordinary Friesian cross breed like all the other cows in this shed. It had the usual ginormous udder that made it nearly impossible to walk comfortably. When I test milked it, it appeared to have no problem to produce milk and the milk was not contaminated with bacteria or other pathogens. The results the milking robot showed were a mystery. I decided to carefully monitor cow 025Z6/762193>. I checked on it at different times of the day and all of a sudden I noticed that this cow was not always in the monitored part of the shed where it should be.

But where was it?

I drove down from the office where I had made my computer checks on my little quad rover. I unlocked the door and carefully walked around in the perimeter of the shed checking on my hand-held locator for signs of cow 025Z6/762193>.

There was no response on my locator. In the far corner of the shed there was the usual area for muck cleaning equipment and the other paraphernalia for the running of the shed like the equipment that our vet used to check on individual cows, etc. etc. I nearly decided not to investigate this area. But cow number 025Z6/762193> was clearly somewhere, as it had appeared and disappeared and then appeared again. So I investigated this area.

To my amazement the equipment in the storage area had not been stored correctly. It should have been pushed all the way against the wall. It looked as if it had. The insemination unit was stored at a slight angle betraying the fact that it had not been run all the way back on its rollers. This equipment and the vet's cattle gate etc. created an area that

was not supposed to be there. An area that was skilfully designed to shield the locator of cow 025Z6/762193> and only admit it to this hideout. But to my great shock this area also contained a bull calf. I had found out in the computer records that the calf cow 025Z6/762193> had given birth to had been a stillbirth that had been recycled. But here it was. A calf being suckled by cow 025Z6/762193>.

Here was the mystery of Shed 19.

Victor Bloeman had built a hidden sanctuary where he had kept a calf that he must have intentionally and fraudulently taken off the computer record by listing it as a still birth. He had stolen from the company. He had taken a valuable calf and some of the milk that its mother had produced in the last three months. I had found out what I had assumed to be a hunch of female intuition was the realization that there was really something wrong with Victor Bloeman.

Why he had done such a totally stupid thing I could not understand.

That did not matter.

What did matter was that I had found him out.

I had his head on the block. Victor would lose his job and I would at last become the sub-manager in charge of Shed 19.

I took my phone out of my pocket and rang our super-farm head manager with a big smile on my face.

Chapter 15 The consequence of compassion

I remember getting the phone call from Susan Karlson just after my lunch break. At first I could not believe what I was told. How could such a quiet and accommodating chap like Victor Bloeman do such a silly thing? I went and took a look myself. There really was this shelter in the back of the shed and there really was a cow and a bull calf in it. And it all was set up in such a way that it was not easy to spot it. So it clearly was not an accident but it had been planned carefully. It was a determined attempt at sabotage. I had to give the order to march the cow and its calf to the slaughter shed. As they had been together for more than the usual three days anything else would be cruelty. The cow would pine for her calf violently and the calf would pine for its mother to such an extent that it would be uncontrollable.

I then went back to my office and called Victor Bloeman's father. I had given Victor his job as shed manager because of my spontaneous good relationship with Carl D. Bloeman, Victor's father. We had met at a fair for business people and there Carl had told me that he was looking for a job for his son who had just dropped out of university. So I rang Carl and told him what his son had done. Carl was devastated but had no choice but to accept that I had to sack Victor.

I later heard that Victor went straight back into the care of a Dr. Freedeman. Only then I also heard that Victor had been in Dr. Freedeman's care before and that he had dropped out of university because of some scandal involving drugs. Had I known that before I would not have offered Carl's son a job in the super farm. Knowing that Victor had in some way being involved with drugs explained this silly and childish act of sabotage.

Some days after I replaced Victor with Susan Karlson I got another call from her. She reported that some of the cows had stopped producing milk. But to make things worse these cows stopped other cows from gaining access to the carousel milking parlour. When Susan tried to stop this behaviour the cows became unexpectedly violent towards her and her staff.

We tried to remove the cows that behaved in this way only to find that their place was taken by other cows. Eventually there were 25 % of cows that had to be sent to slaughter. The milk production of the rest of the

cows in this shed had fallen by nearly half of what it had been. Contemplating the great financial loss to the company I had to send the rest of the cows to the slaughter shed as well. The only solace I could find in this was that Carl, D. Bloeman had been sent the bill for the financial damage his son had done and he had paid without causing any trouble.

So under instruction from the company's lawyers I added a further sum for the disruption of the super-farms otherwise smoothly running operations.

After all this trouble was dealt with Susan Karlson came back to me to point out that before she had found the hideout with the calf the cows in this shed had produced a steady 6 % more milk than the cows in all the other milking sheds. A big smile came over my face. Apparently Victor Bloeman in his madness had stumbled across a way to increase productivity that I would have never thought of.

Chapter 16 The first day of freedom

The mist started to clear.

The pine trees across the clearing became more defined.

Early morning.

The escapees nervously started to prepare themselves to leave the cover of small pine trees.

They had to get down to the stream at the bottom of the meadow.

After years of slave labour for the rocket program of the "Third Reich" even their strongest were weak. It had been Dirk van der Park who had had the foresight to suggest that it might be an advantage to flee the tunnels where they had worked, lived, and died, at the earliest possible time.

They had been aware of the increased nervousness of the guards. So they knew something was happening. Their great fear was that if the Kohenstein Compound of the Mittelbau-Dora, was under threat of capture by the Allies the guards might just turn on them and kill them all. As things were a randomly chosen five of their comrades were hung on the frame of the big factory sized overhead crane every morning as a deterrent against sabotage whilst they all had to watch. So the possibility of death was around them at all times.

When the time came the scared guards simply left their post or rather did not turn up to start their shift. This was the possibility that Dirk's plan had tried to prepare them for.

Most of the slave labourers were so exhausted that they just turned over in their wooden bunks pulling their flimsy blankets over their shoulders and enjoyed the chance of a rest.

Dirk had suggested to Vince and a couple of fellow inmates that should the opportunity arise they should try to flee the large bombproof tunnels that had been their prison, work place, and place of execution since the end of January.

Dirk was acutely aware that the rocket parts they were assembling and the whole A4 apparatus that they were forced to put together was a new type of weapon and that whoever eventually would conquer the Mittelbau-Dora complex would be interested to question the slave labourers as how to assemble the V2 and operate the machinery.

Whilst only too willing to support the enemies of their fascist tormentors their aim was to get home as soon as possible and find out what had happened to their loved ones.

Therefore once they had understood that there was no mass execution and that their guards had simply left, Dirk, Vince, and their small group of friends forced the wire mesh doors to their sleeping quarters and with great care and fear of booby-traps and possible SS Guards waiting in ambush to shoot anyone leaving the tunnels they made their escape. Plan was to find a hideout and evade all contact for a while and as soon as things calmed down to start off first as a group and then eventually in pairs to get home.

They had found this thicket of young pine trees. It was bordered by a woodland meadow that sloped down to a little stream.

Daylight was strong enough now to see. By the side of the stream they could now make out a small foresters trailer. They decided that it might give them the opportunity to find some supplies, maybe even civilian clothes or tools that they could use as weapons like an axe or a shovel.

They quietly moved down to the trailer.

Surrounding it they saw that the padlock on its door had been forced. Warily trying to be very quiet Dirk stepped up and opened the door. A shot rang out.

Dirk fell.

The former slave labourers rushed forward as one, clambering over him, overpowering two German Army deserters by force of numbers.

A second shot hit the roof of the trailer.

The Germans were beaten to death.

After the mêlée.

Exhausted, panting from the rush of adrenaline.

They found Dirk at the bottom of the three steps up to the trailer door.

He had received a through and through on the inside of his left upper thigh.

The bullet had ripped through the great leg artery.
He was still alive but whilst they tried to stop the flow of blood, Dirk's life literally ran out from under their hands.

He did not come back to consciousness before his end.

Vince held him in his arms.
Tears flowing down his cheeks
Wailing a suppressed prayer through his clenched jaw.

Two years of working side by side.
Two years of carefully looking out for one another.
Two years of successfully dodging the SS jackboot.
The exemplary executions.
The starvation and the bone-crunching hard labour.
And on the first day of freedom the mistake of assuming that a forced lock meant that someone had ransacked and then left the trailer put an end to it all.

Dirk was dead.

To hide their presence they carefully carried him back to the pine coppice shelter that they had left only ten minutes before.
They used the shovel they found in the trailer and dug three shallow graves.
Towards the evening they raided an isolated farmhouse.
The Luger the deserters had carried came handy as a means to convince the farmer that they meant business.
They had seen too many deaths.
Threatening the farmer was all they had the stomach for.
They left with a little food, the farmer's jackets and trousers, to replace their blue and white striped K-Z pyjamas, and a bicycle.
By the end of the month they were on their long march home.

Only to learn, that each one of them was a lone survivor.

###

Summary

15 year old Victor Bloeman listened to his dying grandfather recall his ordeal as an inmate of the Nazi-Concentration-Camp Mittelwerk/Camp Dora where he was forced to build V2 rockets. Years later Victor drops out of University and takes up a job as a sub-manager in a super-farm that his well-connected father has arranged for him.

There he is in charge of a shed of 1000 cows that never leave the shed. Is it the drugs he took on campus or the memory of his grandfather's tale? One day whilst at work in "his shed" he looks into the eyes of one of the cows in his care and he realises that he looks into the eyes of a fellow being.

He uses his knowledge of stage set design, his true vocation, to create a space where he hides "his cow". Eventually Victor's cow gives birth to a bull calf. Will Victor be able to hide "his cow and her calf?" How will the presence of a bull calf affect the other cows in the shed?

About the Author

Rory Te' Tigo is a sculptor, artist and author. He lives in West-Cornwall, Great Britain. He was born in Germany half a decade after the end of WW2. In his experience it was impossible in Germany not to be confronted with people that somehow had either been a victim or a perpetrator of Nazi brutality. And more often than not people were both. Victims and perpetrators. The evil of fascism led to the loss of compassion and humanity in all people that it touched. Te' Tigo holds a B.A. degree in fine art. It is possible to find him on Google and in wikipedia to learn more about his art.

Characters

Victor (Vic) Bloeman

USA - Son of Carl, D. Bloeman

Carl, D. Bloeman

USA - Father of Victor Bloeman

Vincent Bloeman

The Netherlands - Father of Carl, D. Bloeman

Susan Karlson

USA - a Redneck farm worker

Martin Urban

USA - Super Farm head manager

025Z6/762193>

USA - a cow

Bov

USA - a bull calf

Dirk van der Park

The Netherlands - jeweller, stage magician, resistance fighter

Eduard van der Park The Netherlands - Uncle of Dirk van der Park

Swantje van der Park

The Netherlands - Wife of Dirk van der Park

Mr. X

Germany - A Rocketeer

Mr. Y

Germany - SS Officer in charge of Mittelbau Dora

Animals Timeline

12,000 years ago end of the Ice-Age

Within a few centuries colonisation of the previously ice covered land by “the post-glacial sub-tropical primordial scrubland and forest”

Family Tree Jacobovic / Bloeman

ca. 1815

* Moshe and Judith Jacobovic Odessa, Russia later renamed themselves as Carl and Sophia Bloeman

ca. 1855 * Vincent Bloeman Grand-Parents born ,Amsterdam, Holland

ca. 1890 * Vincent Bloeman Parents near Leiden, Holland

ca. 1944 + Auschwitz / Birkenau

1921 * Vincent Bloeman / near Leiden, Holland

1943/45 works as slave labourer in Concentration Camp Mittelwerk/Dora

1946/48 lives in Israel

1948 moves to New York

1958 Vincent’s wife Rachael dies in car accident

1995 +Vincent Bloeman / New York, USA

1953 * Carl Bloeman / New York, USA

1980 * Victor Bloeman / New York USA

1991 Carl’s wife leaves him for younger man

2009 /11Victor Bloeman works in Super Farm

Times of Mr. X. & Y.

Mr. X (Werner von Braun)

March 23, 1912 - born Wirsitz, Germany

June 16, 1977 (aged 65) - died Alexandria, Virginia, USA

Mr. Y SS Sturmbann Fuehrer (fictional)

born ca. 1910

in charge of Mittelwerk/Dora

died 1945 fighting for 3rd

(ran away and hid, as soon as possible) body never found.

Animals Fact & Fiction

Chapter 1

The colonisation in Europe by warmer climate plants and animals after the ice age happened within a very short time, as described in this chapter. Cows, like all mammals, do dream but what the cows dream of is total fiction.

Chapter 2

This chapter is totally fictitious. Never the less so called “legal highs” are real in 2016. There is a continual battle between drug dealers and the police to close the legality gap.

Chapter 3

This chapter is fiction

Chapter 4

This chapter is fiction

Chapter 5

This chapter is both fact and fiction. Of course I can't know what that German Rocketeer might have thought of or experienced during his last days. Many facts about this Rocketeer I took from wikipedia.

Chapter 6

This chapter is mostly fiction never the less someone must have taken the decision to feed offal to cows causing the B.S.E. crisis and someone invented the “Kept Animal Husbandry System” i.e. “Super Farms”.

Chapter 7

This Chapter is total fiction. But pogroms happened as described. It is doubtful that a Russian Jew and his wife could escape Russia as described in this chapter.

Chapter 8

This Chapter is total fiction.

Chapter 9

The character of Dirk van der Park is fictional. The description of Nazi slave labour camps is real but not as brutal as these camps were in reality. The V2 or Aggregate 4 rocket killed approximately 2000 people as a weapon of war but about 20000 slave labourers were killed making this first ballistic missile. Mittelwerk-Dora and its tunnel system did exist but after the construction of the tunnel system the slave labourers were housed in a barrack complex next to the Kohenstein hill. The tunnel system the slave labourers had dug out of the Kohenstein hill was too valuable as a factory site to house the slave labourers. The 5 slave labourers killed every day to stop sabotage were not hung from a portal crane but from the entrance to the tunnel system. This way every day the slaves had to walk underneath these victims to their work place.

Chapter 10

This chapter is total fiction, except "Super Farms" exist.

Chapter 11

This Chapter depicts my core believes.

Chapter 12

This chapter is total fiction

Chapter 13

This chapter is based on fact according to wikipedia. But the two operatives of the Polish resistance Armia Krajowa did not survive the air raid on the Peenemuende research facility.

Chapter 14

This chapter is based on fiction.

Chapter 15

This chapter is based on fiction.

Chapter 16

Whilst in this story the slave labourers were simply abandoned by their Nazi guards most of the inmates of Mittelbau-Dora were “evacuated” before the Americans liberated the Kohenstein tunnel system and the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp. Evacuated meant the slaves were taken on death marches through the remaining shrinking territory of the Third Reich. Therefore this chapter is mainly fiction. But it is well documented that, after the allies liberated Nazi Concentration and Slave Labour camps, roaming groups of former inmates were haunting the countryside near the camps for months. Having been brutalised by their experience in those camps, they mostly felt free to ransack, steal and terrorise the population around their former places of incarceration.

Locations

Leiden - A university town in the Dutch province of South Holland.

Amsterdam-The capital of Holland.

Peenemunde/ Trassenheide -A Nazi-German rocket research station on the island of Usedom in the Baltic Sea.

Mittelbau-Dora -A Nazi-Germany Concentration and Slave Labour Camp located in an underground tunnel system in the Kohenstein a hill near Nordhausen a town in Thuringia/Germany.

Disclaimer

This novella is a work of fiction. Any resemblance of the characters and events I describe in it to real people and events is purely coincidental and not intentional. The author also would like to clarify that he is not degrading the suffering of holocaust victims by likening them to farm animals. Instead the intent is to highlight the continued suffering of all living beings from a lack of compassion.