

During World War II - leaving the old continent

After the Bombing of Rotterdam by the Nazi's in May 1940 it was no less than a miracle that the family of Cary survived. Apart from that, the first few years of the war were pretty quiet. The spending of wages by German soldiers made economy flourish as it hadn't since the late twenties. unemployment all but disappeared. as the war progressed, life became increasingly harder and German government noticeably grimmer. the resistance was successful in several attempts to sabotage Nazi infrastructure and government. but the response of the occupier was always very cruel and relentless: for every German killed they picked 10 Dutchmen randomly from the streets and shot them in public. When the Third Reich started losing the war against Russia massively and bombings of the Allies heavily afflicted German war industry and men were getting scarce due to the heavy losses at the Eastern front, the Nazi regime decided to take all men above the age of 18 in the occupied territories, seize them, take them to Germany and put them to work in war factories. Cary's father was to be one of them. As always Nazi troops gathered quickly and rigorously closing both ends of the street, this time the street of Cary's house. Within minutes they banged on their door. "Aufmachen! Aufmachen! Oder wir brechen die Tür!" They always said things twice, never more never less if they wanted to let you know you should respond immediately. Otherwise, they would force the door without any hesitation. resisting was no option and totally futile. Cary held her little brother tightly to her chest, barely able to hold her tears. Little Lewis, surprised by her motherly hug, held his eyes wide open in surprise, still remembering the fight they had over their scarce toys in the morning.

Soldiers rushed in and asked Cary's mother where her husband was. before she was able to speak he appeared. "Hier bin ich", Lewis spoke in German with a strong Dutch accent. "Mitkommen! Sofort!", the soldiers shouted. The latter word counted as a stronger repeat of the first. Although Lewis did not hesitate nor resist, the soldiers seemed to enjoy sticking two rifles into his back, pushing him outwards.

For Cary it felt like she would never see any of her father again. Her mother Christa had quite a different feeling. She couldn't know how wrong she was -or was she? She now was responsible for both the kids as well as the ice cream hornet factory, of all that was left over the of it. after the short economic boom that started just after the German invasion, the little company was struggling for survival and so were the Trusco's.

Christa couldn't cry. it was just one of the traits that made her who she was and what she was. tough, hard, relentless, scrupulous. you could hardly tell if she had feelings at all. Lewis was about the same. hardworking, quiet, strong, dark hair that looked like ebony. Her hair was lighter but her eyes were dark brown, next to black. Lewis had blue greyish eyes with a tone of green in it.

The war will soon be over, Christa figured. but how soon would soon be, actually? next year or somewhere in 1944? 1944 would be quite different from anything people expected. No one could foresee a liberation war that would be so much different from the blitz krieg that started the war.

JUST ANOTHER FAMILY

Adrian inherited the fish store of his father. While his father would be roaming the streets with his fish car, first moved by hand later by horse, Adrian now had his own store in the middle of the city. The Duc family tried hard to forget about the poverty their parents and grandparents lived in, now owning a shop for themselves. Only days later the only thing that remained of the store was the cast iron cash register. Only coins had survived the blazing fire that consumed all paper and wood that the store contained. "Daddy, look, your cash machine!", Georgie shouted ecclesiastically. "Don't you want to take it?".

- "Son, we'll take the money from it. I guess we won't be needing it for a long while. But be careful, the machine may still be hot. I don't want you to burn your fingers, the bandage box was lost in the fire as well". Adrian was always able to make a serious statement combined with humor and or a precaution. actually especially when expressing a warning. Georgie would soon be showing the same trait that was so typical for the Duc family.

Adrian wound his handkerchief round his left hand and held his hand on top of the drawer of the cash register. Only warm like melted butter he noticed. He moved the key in the lock and the drawer opened with a cracking sound yet surprisingly smoothly. 25 Guilders and 55 cents, Adrian counted. that should help his family through the next few weeks, maybe months as there were hardly any bills to be paid without a home nor a shop. and hardly anyone had any money whatsoever so there would be some extra money power added to the few Guilders that were left. Some were silver, so they had real value, he figured.

Georgie was the youngest of 5 brothers and one sister. His two eldest brothers, 16 and 14 years older than him, already had a bar of their own at the southern part of the city, the part that was not bombed, at least not for now. This part of the city was known as the farmer side and very unpopular amongst anyone above middle class, yet enormously popular with sailors and women of mature pleasure. Adrian soon found a small mansion fit for establishing a new fish store at the other side of the river together with his wife Helen. Life would soon be just like normal, Adrian felt sure about that. Georgie, 11 years of age, soon started to help his mother and elder sister in the kitchen as they started to serve complete fish and chips meals inspired buy sailors from the British Isles that already started demanding this type of food that made them feel so much at home when the store was in the city, just before the war. The Duc brothers both gave their pubs familiar names like "The Sailor" and "The Captain". But that was all just before the war started. Soon Nazi rule unfavored the English names of the pubs and sailors from France, Scandinavia and England were no more. Now it was stiff lipped Germans in their green and grey uniforms that roamed the pubs. Adrian and Helen also served the Nazi folk but now their meals were renamed Fisch und gebachen Kartoffeln, that sounded anything but appealing as the Fish and chips did. Although the Ducs had some Jewish ancestry, according to Jewish tradition nor German regulation none of them was Jewish. Georgies grandmother actually spoke Jiddish for some reason no one actually new. Within months, as the occupation grew grimmer and more fearsome, people that suffered most from German rule started to envy as well as dislike the Ducs and dislike soon turned into hate as people actually started getting hungry.

By 1943 it was more than obvious that German rule would soon be ended. messages of great losses by the Nazi's at the Eastern front reached people by radio, although having one was strictly forbidden. In the harbor, just footsteps away form the pubs and the fish store one would hear stories, about anything happening in the world, fresher than a fish hanging from the hook on a rod. The arrogance of German officers was no longer supported buy their blitz krieg victories and now became a kind of viciousness, that one could expect from men, representing an authority still in power but seeing its might deteriorate on a daily basis. not only this made life in the streets grimmer, people got a harder time getting food at all.

Georgies other brothers still got their jobs in the harbor and even when the fish store had to close because their was no fish supply, they managed to smuggle flat tins of fish and beans across the checkpoint that prevented most smuggling in the harbor. they also started fishing in the harbor with stacks of hay. After one night in the mercy waters at the quay eel was swarming with the hay. an easy catch. But dangerous as the night watch prevented them from going out at night and in the morning. Soon their richly filled haystacks were being stolen on a regular basis, forcing them to find different spots to find their prey.

1944. Georgie rushed in. "Mommie, mommie! A man just fell down in the street! I think he's hurt!"

-"Come in Georgie!" Helen opened the window while she wanted to peak out without getting in the cold and moreover without getting involved. She could see a woman rushing towards the man on the ground, hitting another man trying to rob the dead body. The robber ran of. The woman started crying, silently. She was uttering words unspoken but it was clear they had all to do with death and sorrow.

"You think he's dead mommie?", Georgie wondered.

-"I guess so, honey", she replied, knowing that her little son wouldn't stop asking questions. How would she explain to him how come some people dropped dead in the streets by starvation while others, like them, survived? Adrian often suggested it had something to do with a survival instinct in the family bloodline. Vaguely she knew they came from far surviving

the fiercest times but most stories were word of mouth family legend. She decided to give her husband some honor and her son some pride. Those things often mattered more than wealth but cost none.

-"you know, your father and I do all we can to survive these harsh times. By hard work and good thinking we are able to survive..."

"And thanks to uncle Walter and Eric!", Georgie exclaimed.

-"darling, I hadn't finished yet. What I wanted to add is that smart, unselfish cooperation sometimes is essential for your survival. Remember that. And in some cases you need to know when and how to stop such cooperation. That is the hardest if you are an honest and loyal person."

"that doesn't make sense, mum!"

-"Sometimes things just don't make a lot of sense. You will just have to trust on your own inner self and your heart. Never stop thinking with your head but do it swiftly and don't hesitate. Your heart and inner self will tell you wisely what to do. Your mind is merely a check up. That's why sometimes you will have to trust on yourself only."

Georgie opened his mouth as he wanted to speak out but the words just didn't seem to get together. He stored the phrases his mother spoke in his mind knowing he would want to think them over again and would maybe need them when he grew up.

200 miles away, Germany on riding train.

"Lewis! Grab my hand!", Jack shouted. Jack, John and Lewis escaped from the working camp together. Circumstances worsened in the labor camp. Food was not only getting scarcer, it was also gross, a worker that labored all day mending and making Nazi war material could hardly live on it. They knew the Jews had a much worse destiny but the last few months they seen more friends pass away than they could stand. Especially the deaths of the younger workers hit them hard. On two occasions allied bombings on a neighboring factory where Messerschmitts were produced was leveled to the ground and killed all but a few of the in workers in the event and, worse most of them died in the blazing fire after the the bombardment while guards refused to open the doors of the factory as the fire raged among the machines in the halls. Anyway, fleeing from the labor camp was the right thing to do, although they all risked their lives in doing so.

Lewis grabbed his hand and jumped on the train. They could hear animals squeeling as they jumped on the roof of the running train. They should reach the border in an hour or two but these days that was no guarantee for safety.