

GUSTAV  
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## CHAPTER 1

The February chill was made a bit less harsh due to a south wind. The cobblestone streets felt hard on his feet, the centuries old aroma of pig and cow dung from the farms to the West given another layer of definition by the smokestacks from the newly built factories that churned out fine leather purses from one end, and broken-down workers from the other. Everywhere there was growth, ‘progress’ according to those who had more gold in their pocket than mud under their eyelids. One of the recipients of industrialization which promised to liberate the working man from meaningless toil in the farm fields woke up that day a bit later than expected. He found himself once again haunted by memories of a childhood under well-stocked foster parents who saw fit to raise him up to be righteous, obedient but above all successful. A quarter-century of growing up in a country run by clocks taught Gustav Schmitt to always be late when he could be, and most particularly when he could get away with it. Clean-shaven on the face with a head full of long wavy hair that obeyed its own rules, and a Herclean body that just came that way with no particular requirement to keep it in shape with hard labor or strenuous work, firey tortured eyes more Promethianly godlike than obediently human, he walked to his destination slowly.

The nearly graduated medical student was late for the appointment at the hospital. Most particularly because it wasn’t really a hospital. By generally accepted but never spoken of definition it was a ‘place of containment’, for disorders less ugly than lepracy and more ancient than the bubonic plague. “There are many kinds of diseases in the world of men, and not all of them are caused by women,” he remembered from Professor Doctor Guttenburg’s lectures when the old coot was waxing about his wife, life and the kind of ailments doctors would really see in the world. Herr Guttenburg was the oldest professor in Hamburg, but also the youngest between his always open ears. Every time he would pontificate or discover something while officially lecturing about something else, he would append it by saying ‘as I see it’, or ‘as it seems now’ or his most famous expresison of true wisdom—‘but what the hell do I know?’ Everything was subject to examination and re-examination under Guttenburg’s over-sized, bright blue and chronically bloodshot eyes. It was a miracle that Professor Guttenburg was allowed to keep his position, but such miracles seemed to be needed, particularly in Hamburg.

The city had not really evolved very much. The overgrown small town had produced no great minds, and whatever minds had grown to be great left for places elsewhere. Indeed, Hamburg’s problems had to do with its lack of the kind of ‘problems’ that led to solutions which enhance the human spirit rather than merely maintaining the human condition.

Gustav contemplated it all, and as always, wondered what Professor Guttenburg would have said about it. He had vanished from his post two months ago, under mysterious circumstances. The Dean of the University said that he “died in a fatal accident, mortally wounded and met an inevitable finality.” Gustav smelled something foul, that the Professor must be Alive somewhere, most particularly because of so many words that emphasized death and finality. He hoped, and prayed, that the Professor who had enough love for God to question His motives and existence was not experiencing finality in the destination he was called to visit, at the Bergermeister’s mandate. The ‘containment’ facility, which was at the end of the day for those

who went home to their own beds, and tortured life for those who ‘slept’ there, the Insane Asylum.

The appointment was to see a woman, one whose name Gustav didn’t recognize. Perhaps a patient assigned to him by his new Medicine Professor, Herr Professor Doctor ‘something’ by name. A forgettable very official old fart who thought himself to be unforgettable by everyone around him.

“Ah yes, ‘Maria 5”, the kind Clerk in an offensively clean uniform at the front desk with the receding hairline, military issue handlebar mustache and transparently honest eyes smiled upon seeing the letter summoning Gustav to the appointment. “She finally requested to see you, Herr Professor Doctor Schmitt.”

“I’m not a professor, or a doctor, and as for being a ‘Herr’ anything...” the medical student who was more interested in diseases than people slurred out of his mouth with an arrogance that he observed to be larger than any of his humble friends had ever noted.

The Clerk smiled, gave Gustav back the officially stamped summons for him to appear, and led him down a dimly lit hallway which smelled of blood, pus and urine. The impish administrative assistant seemed immune to the smell, and the ‘presences’ that seemed to speak out of the darkness, at least to Gustav. Almost-doctor Schmitt knew it was illogical to give credence to things imagined, that whatever could be proved scientifically was the only thing that was to be trusted. But, as Professor Guttenburg said, again and again, “scientific discovery starts with questioning science itself, then considers everything as possibly true, or possibly false, the only conclusions that can be trusted being provisional at best. Functional if such is required.”

Gustav’s journey down the first hallway, to the second, and to the third seemed to be a journey into a pit, each turn arousing his nostrils to the human realities of diseases of the body and mind. The sounds of the ‘tenants’ in this hotel talking to themselves, or the ghosts who had become their constant companions, scared the crap out of him. Most particularly disturbing to Gustav’s comfortably-predictable life were the patients who seemed content in their illusions, for reasons that eluded him. Maybe one of the demoted persons (i.e., ‘patients’) locked up in their cells for their own protection was Professor Guttenburg, or maybe he was ‘Maria 5’. The man’s man Professor had mused about what it might be like seeing life as a woman, and related tales about Indians in the Americas whose medicine men lived as women for several years of their training so they could effectively treat the body, mind and spirits of the members of the ‘fairer’ and ‘more interesting’ gender of their tribes. And Guttenburg had chosen to remove rather than grow more hair on his face as he advanced up the ranks in the University which needed him more than anyone, including Guttenburg himself, would ever know.

It was a place of ‘instruction’, this ‘containment center’. One of the patients greeted Gustav with an open mouth, no voice coming out of it, the parts within the oral cavity having been burnt out by acid which still stunk of its chemical content. An accident, no doubt. Another patient with a pale face kept his hand up at his forehead, fixed in a salute, an incision line recently sewn up with catgut and wire just underneath it. But the demons were being looked after by Jesus as

well, or in His place, a woman looking more like a man whose wrists and ankles were bolt-locked to a metal cross, lamentations and prayers spewing out of the left side of her mouth while drool and blood dripped out of the right.

Gustav noted a young woman in one of the cells who was more alive than dead. With a bath, removal of the lice from her knotted hair and a dress that was more cloth than holes she could have been Hilda, the Conservatory dancer he thought he loved just prior to waltzing himself into enrollment at the Faculty of Medicine. Another reminded him of Lisel, a Nurse who he fell in lust with, though he thought it was love and to her demise, she did as well. Another of Elizabeth, a patient who he just wanted to be with who he cured of cholera, and who went home a healthy woman to her husband, who she never mentioned during her convalescence. And another of Eva, whose name still was on the motorized wheelchair he had drawn up plans for in order to transport paralyzed people, or perhaps populations, from one place to another without their feet ever touching the ground. Seeing the women stripped bear of the more attractive aspects of their natures, he noted something...They were all blonde, blue eyed, of slightly taller stature than other female humans, and had exaggeratedly chiseled faces, atop bodies which seemed to be naturally thin.

“They remind you of someone, Herr Doctor Professor Schmitt?” The Clerk smiled, startling Gustav into looking into a mirror he had long forgotten, and actively ignored.

Gustav didn't answer, accepting the nameless Clerk's 'promotion', recalling that same 'mold' of a woman from his past. A distant past which was never quite defined. A past which he had actively forgotten, or which he had been protected from. He had been protected by so much in his of 'life'. Plague. Poverty. Humiliation from others. And the thing he experienced so little or but was scared of most...Struggle. So much came easily to Gustav, even after his wealthy foster parents' death. He was told at the age of 9 that he was adopted, but it didn't really matter. What Gustav felt for them was more respect than love anyway. And when they died from an outbreak of small pox when on business in St. Petersburg, Gustav respected their memory by shifting his focus from becoming a mathematician and zoologist to becoming a doctor. It seemed logical and, more accurately, natural, Nature being the highest expression of logic after all. But the sight of 'Maria 5' seemed to be anything but logical.

She lay on a bed, not a cot. A bed covered with fine linen, with candles that smelled more like flowers than rancid wax along its side. The flames illuminated her white face, its skin tight, the deep wrinkles hidden under a wide smile. Her hair was white, but seemed in the flames to be blonde. Her eyes, bright blue. Young and old at the same time. She extended her hand, a wrinkled appendage bearing hollow pox scars inflicted by nature, deep wrist and elbow indentations embedded by shackles, and old slash marks on her wrist undoubtedly inserted by herself. The dress she was fitted with was of a noble woman, but it neither fit her sagging breast, atrophied hips nor emaciated shoulders. By every definition of 'disease' she was one of the inflicted but she seemed more Alive than any patient, or doctor, Gustav had ever encountered, with the exception of Professor Guttenburg of course.

There was something else in the room which didn't fit. A piano, a manuscript on it. "Come, it is time to continue your father's destiny," the old woman whose physique matched that of all the young women Gustav had ever been drawn to said in an accent that reeked of old Vienna.

Gustav peeked at the manuscript. "L. von Beethoven?" he said, finally making out the ink marks under the blood stains. The Clerk rolled his eyes, gave Gustav a 'good luck' tap on the shoulder and left him with his patient.

"The Leonora Overture number five," Maria 5 smiled through a dry cough revealing a death rattle behind it.

"Beethoven only wrote four Leonora overtures," Gustav replied, recalling his painful required tutorials in music 'appreciation'.

"It was a prelude to your father's second opera," Maria 5 smiled back.

"Beethoven only wrote ONE opera, Madamme" Gustav said, respectfully bowing his head to the woman who for reasons of birth or madness considered herself a lady. "Fidelio, by name. An opera about liberation of global consciousness and the awakening of universal rather than selective compassion limited to family and friends only," he continued, remembering yet another one of Professor Guttenburgs self-absorbed rants which the old fart had hoped was being listened to by SOMEBODY.

"Yes", Maria replied with a blank stare that penetrated through Gustav's eyes. "Your father wrote one opera, so I suppose he wants you to write his next one. Which of course will be your own after it is finished. He left you some notes to get you started."

Maria's trembling hands retrieved more papers from a cleaned up and de-fumigated piss bucket next to her bed and handed them to Gustav. Seeing that her fingers could not hold onto them he snatched them quickly and assertively, then examined her hands and took her pulse. It was irregular, but firm. Her breath reeked of acetone and kidney toxins, the death rattle behind it getting louder. With her other hand she pointed to the piano. "You play it... You play it!" she asked, then demanded, then insisted with the utmost desperation.

"But I..." Gustav said apologetically, knowing that he was as adapt at playing any musical instrument as Professor Guttenburg was at being capable of sustaining a healthy relationship with a wife and/or family. Out of the corner of his eye he noted the happily subservient Clerk through the small holes carved into the door, waiting, contemplating, reading a copy of a book he hardly would have expected. "Common Sense", the 'how AND why to' manual for the American Revolution by Thomas Paine, a manual for Political Revolution, recently translated into German.

"You play it!" Maria 5 ranted, her trembling fingers fixed on the manuscript above the weather-faded bloodstained keyboard with whatever breath was still lingering in her degenerating lungs while Gustav felt assaulted by the constellation of contradictions and illogical mandates inflicted upon him.

As if he knew when Maria would exhaust her energy and Gustav would run out of libertarian aristocratic 'calm', the Clerk re-entered the room, sat at the piano and gave Gustav his swaggerstick. "Conduct me," he whispered into the now sweat-soaked Gustav's ear, upon which he played the pieces in the manuscripts. Gustav pretended to conduct him, but was being conducted himself by something or someone else. Most immediately, the smile Maria emanated from her eyes.

"I knew you would come back and finish what your father started, Maestro," she said. She hummed along with the melody which, to Gustav's ears anyway, sounded Beethoven-like, but then again so much did. When pushed to it, he could barely tell the difference between Mozart, Beethoven and Hyden. It was all mathematics of sound that he could not figure out, and certainly didn't dance to, but which, on occasion, did move him. He found himself being moved by the music even more when he saw Maria smile her way into sleep while humming harmony to it. It felt...symmetrical somehow. "Now it is your turn, my son," she said as her final words before giving in to exhaustion and trusting herself to slumber. Her eyes shut closed, then started to blink, her fingers moving in the manner of a pianist with the song she was humming though her parched, blistered lips.

"She was a pianist, so we think," the Clerk said, anticipating Gustav's first question. "Some say Beethoven's Immortal Beloved who the Maestro never wrote about or to with anything except musical notes," he continued, answering the next question lingering in the troubled mind of the aristocrat raised to be a libertarian. "Who had a son with the Maestro who, well..."

"Isn't me!" Gustav insisted. "It can't be!"

"Why?"

"Because I'm tone deaf," Gustav said. "And as unmusical as anyone can be. I'm a man of science, not art. Of logic, not feeling. Of sanity, not--"

"Lunacy?" Gustav interjected, appending his thunderous suggestion with a hearty yet terrifying laugh. "The only really pathological madness is effortless sanity, you know," he continued in a tone that sounded 'Guttenburgian'. The Clerk continued, his featureless face acquiring to Gustav's perspective more ancient wrinkles and haunting shadows with every word he seemed to 'prophetize'. "It does answer many questions such as...Why you acquired so many advantages in your purse, and between your ears. Your mind. Your eyes, which you are still growing into."

"You're as mad as she is," Gustav asserted in a hushed angry voice.

"Yes, she is clearly mad," the Clerk conceded. "But as for me..." He kissed Maria on the forehead with more tenderness than any healthy family member displayed to a sick one, at least in Gustav's experience. There were so many questions the young man wanted to ask this old one, but one which came to mind that was something Gustav hardly expected.



He moved closer to the civil servant who seemed so interested in Social Revolution, and the jailor of the woman he sought to liberate above all else. “Who are you?” Gustav asked, leaving open the nature and context of the answer.

“All men are brothers”, he replied, using the exact words from Ode to Joy by Schiller, given life and applicability to the world by Beethoven’s music in his 9<sup>th</sup> symphony. The Clerk pocketed the ‘Beethoven’ manuscripts, pulled a blanket over Maria’s emaciated chest and led Gustav outside the cell, closing the door gently on her while she continued to hum something ‘Beethovenian’ amidst the missed key and slurred voice.

“What do you want, ‘brother’?” Gustav asked the Clerk.

“Visions cost money, Herr Professor Doctor Schmitt,” the Clerk replied humbly but with more self-respect than any aristocrat Gustav ever met.

“I told you, I’m not a Professor or a Doctor or a---“ Gustav insisted, his rebuttal ended by a punch in the stomach from the Clerk, the stuffing of the manuscripts into his pocket, along with the Thomas Paine book. Footsteps approached, boots echoing the presence of someone important, and powerful.

Gustav looked up to observe the Clerk snap to a salute, becoming a mechanized man for a Prussian Army Major who barely noticed him. The Major and his entourage of overly dressed, offensively impressive and well armed soldiers smelled of ‘sterility’, his eyes reeking of the most horrible of human diseases, and the ultimate consequence of ignorance, cruelty. Behind the Major was the result of that communicable pathology, a sane man shackled in chains, recently beaten by whips down his back and torso, the trail of blood trickling down his face, his chest reeking of recently burnt flesh tainted with lamp oil, his lips desperately muttering “I’m a free man...A free thinker! You’re the prisoners.”

Gustav froze as the man was put into a ‘room’. His voice sounded familiar. His face seemed even more familiar. He heard the door close on the man who soon would have no name, or voice, unless it was silenced or made obedient. The Clerk remained at attention until the Major and his guards had left the hallway. But the Clerk’s eyes remained on Gustav.

“What? What are you staring at!” Gustav blasted back, his stomach churning with fear, terror and shame.

“That ‘patient’ reminds you of someone, Herr Doctor?”

“What he said does...” Gustav replied, remembering that those words came from Professor Guttenburg, perhaps from one of the voices of one of his students who had the courage and conviction to heal the collective human spirit rather than just patch up diseased bodies. Maybe it was Johan, Karl, or Manheim...or one of the other students Gustav had gone to school with who did their assigned job of learning, and their Calling to question. “What can we do for him?” Gustav asked. “What can I do for him?”

“You are your father’s son,” the Clerk said, winking his eye. “It is time to save the few by activating the many.”

With that, the Clerk led Gustav outside for a smoke, a piece of sausage, a beer and a talk, patient to doctor.

## CHAPTER 2

Gustav looked over the proclamation, or more accurately wish list presented by the Clerk out of range of his superiors and subordinates in a cluster of woods just inside the two story high fence adorned with flowers and stone-carved angels. He introduced himself, provisionally, as Hans, with no surname. Much of the writing in the Proclamation was mis-spelled, certainly not in Hoch Deutch. But the grammatical mistakes belying something very naïve, yet appealing, about the demands. “Freedom of the Press. Right to trial by one’s peers with equal protection under the law, even for crooked lawyers. No person to be owned by another. The right to strike for better wages. Every official from traffic policeman to king elected by fair and open elections. And this one...most interesting.”

“Yes, giving women the right to vote, brother Gustav,” Hans answered, wiping the crumbs out of his regulation-sized, meticulously-waxed mustache.

“Insuring that elections are ruled by feelings rather than brains,” Gustav mused.

“Perhaps there should be more people with brains who feel more than they think,” Hans asserted. He took another sip of his beer and unwrapped another newspaper, sneaking it to Gustav for a view.

“Hmm...interesting,” Gustav commented in academic tone, stroking his chin.

“Interesting! Do all you doctors dissect the brains and balls out of each other in medical school before you graduate!” Gustav barked as discretely as he could. “This newspaper, printed in private, and distributed discretely, says that King Louis Phillipe just abdicated the French throne! It means that the Revolution that started in America has spread finally to Europe! Imagine when it comes here! Imagine when all of the Germans in all of the piss-ant little kingdoms from Bavaria to Prussia unite! One leader to insure that all Germans have equal rights and freedom.”

“Or one leader to take those rights and freedoms away,” Gustav commented. “Remember Napoleon who liberated Europe from the Inquisition then decided to re-enslave it again with him as Holy Emperor?”

“United we stand, divided we fall, brother Gustav,” Hans asserted. “We are free to make our own revolution. Like my uncle did in America after he and everyone from his village with balls and brains deserted King George’s British Army and fought with General Washington, for freedom.”

“For profit, underneath all of the illusions and self-deceptions,” Gustav offered. “General Washington’s, and his, most probably.”

“For his survival, and dignity!” Hans blasted back, angered, disappointed and ashamed. “As a human being, and a man. Neither of which YOU seem to be.” Hans lowered his eyes, shook his head and turned around and pointed to an angel in stone, wearing newly grown ivy on his torso, bird shit on his cheeks, and a smear of very human blood atop his pointed crown of chisselled flowers.

Gustav felt the claustrophobia of his home continent coming on again. How he yearned for the freedom of travel, and saw the value of such for everyone around him. Yes, freedom from political restraint could get people to actually travel more than 30 miles from where they were born and would die, but technology would, could and should provide them the opportunity to do so. Given enough time, and money of course, the still unmarried stud could figure out a way to provide mankind a way to move as freely and rapidly on earth as the gods did on Mount Olympus, once he found the right Fire to insert into the travelers and their man-made Promethian charriots. But, for the meantime, Gustav could feel another lecture coming on about the dignity of sacrifice, the effectiveness of martyrdom and the elevation of libertarian politics to a religious

necessity. He prepared himself to explain his own position on political solutions for the world's pathologies, one more time. How many times had he argued for a sustainable revolution rather than one that merely exported one political brand of communicable toxins and exchanged it for another. And for science to rule over passion, machines of his own making perhaps to be used in that transition, once he figured out a workable fuel for the wheels to keep them moving. But the fresh red blood on the ancient gray wall in front of Gustav's face was personal, to Hans anyway.

"Your uncle's blood?" Gustav inquired.

Hans bowed his head, nodding it slightly with solemn affirmation.

Gustav considered all of the coincidences that had happened since his tardy arrival at the 'hospital'. The young male prisoner who could very well have been his classmates, or if caught in indiscrete expression of free thought, himself. The young women who all reminded him of the older one. Maria's death rattle voice that sounded so maternal, the music played by Hans which felt so paternal, and fraternal. And of course King Louis Phillippe's abdication of the throne in France, the evidence of such in black and white print directly under his nose. Gustav found his attention fixed on the musical manuscript Maria had put into his pocket. The most obvious thought came to his lips. "In a few weeks, assuming that I don't cause any political trouble with the police or find myself in bed with a daughter of one of the professors, I graduate," he said. "Then I will be in a world where my asking questions about medicine or anything else will not only be discouraged, but forbidden."

"Yes, Herr Professor Doctor Schmitt," Hans said. He turned around, the tears having stopped running down his ugly, engorged 'commoner' cheeks, a wide smile overtaking his face.

"Being a Doctor is enough!" Gustav asserted.

"Whatever you say, Maestro," Hans replied. "But I promised your mother that you would finish the symphonies your father started." He looked at his watch, noting that it was time for him to get back to 'work', filling every pocket in Gustav's coat with more 'Beethoven' manuscripts.

"You finish these damned symphonies!" Gustav blasted back under hushed breath, noting that the guard was changing and Hans would soon have to adopt his assumed identity as one of them. They walked back to the hospital building together, Gustav with his terrified face held high, hoping that the Prussian Major wouldn't see what he was thinking, or feeling, behind it.

'Hans', or whoever he really was, lowered his head, affording him the freedom to go unnoticed, and ignored. "We'll complete these unfinished Beethovenian masterpieces together," he proclaimed. "Sell them, and you, to the highest bidder."

"I'm not a slave or goddamn servant," Gustav grunted as quietly as he could while giving the Major an aristocratic 'all is as it should be and we must both look after the little people for their own good' grin. "And, besides, if I'm Beethoven's only son, that makes me a fucking king."

“In the service of the Revolution, and everyone it can liberate, Herr Schmitt.” Having reached the gate, Hans wrote out a note and personally signed it. He clicked his heels and bowed ‘good day’ to the ‘nobleman’ with him.

“Your handwriting looks much like that of the very married Bergermeister who I am told is on holiday with his ‘niece’, ‘Hans’”, Gustav noted. “Which makes you a great forger, or maybe you really are the Bergermeister himself and----” He looked up. Hans was gone. In front of Gustav’s confounded eyes was the world as it always had been in Hamburg. A world that would never be the same again, most particularly if the order to answer the call to freedom was answered. The time and place were appended by another request that had to be addressed, clearly written in blood-colored red ink. “Do not be late... There are already too many delays.”

### CHAPTER 3

Gustav arrived at the café at the prescribed time and place, one of the oldest and still respected culinary establishments in Hamburg. All was, to the eye anyway, the same as it always had been. The ladies aspiring to be baronesses gossiped about barons, and other ladies. The gentlemen, who were anything BUT gentle behind their power-obsessed and status-seeking eyes, spoke about issues of personal profit, non-revolutionary politics, the young noblemen hearing but listening to nothing their elders were saying. Their attire seemed on that day to be so clean and impressive, but highly dysfunctional. Like gilded coffins around bodies made frail and breakable by underuse, most particularly the military officers who seemed to think that the broad shoulders and muscular chests tailored into their uniforms reflected anything underneath them.

Gustav ordered a small coffee and large strudel, then another coffee, then another strudel. He had arrived on time, but was kept waiting, each minute that passed arousing more fear, anxiety and anger. By the time that cycle had reached an hour or so, Gustav figured it was another way Hans was teaching him a lesson. Rather than waste time, or let himself be too closely observed by the ‘gentleman officers’, he helped himself to a read of the ‘Hamburg Journal’. The publication was the oldest in the city that was officially an independent state, but which in reality was run by an emerging group of monarchs who wore no crowns, who were now being called ‘Industrial Capitalists’ by those in the know. Of course no such mention of that term could be seen in the Hamburg Journal, which coincidentally made no mention of any news from France

except for some notes on the fashion page and mention of another round of concerts by composers, the reviews all comparing them one way or another to Beethoven. Gustav found it ironic that the music of the composer who insisted that everyone follow their own inner drummer was being used as a standard measure the quality of artistic expression. Again, he remembered one of Professor Guttenburg's mottos and mandates. "It's a poor student that doesn't excell his teacher." Yes, it was probably stolen from someone, but a mandate that Gustav still didn't obey. Perhaps because he was, officially at least, still a student who was about to be allowed to be called a doctor. Or perhaps because he had seen how complicated the 'system' really was, and how agonized Guttenburg became fighting it alone. One thing that Guttenburg warned his students about was to "not confuse or be pulled into mischief. Such is NOT revolution. By keeping the masses obsessed with mischief, thinking that this is valuable, the real bosses prevent Real Revolution."

Guttenberg did give historical and contemporary examples of such, to those students who he could trust. And to the others as well. "Say you knew the commoners loved drunk, pagan orgies, so the authorities made them illegal. Such insures that the commoners slither out of work, home and church ten minutes early to pleasure themselves between the legs and pickle their brains on beer, wine and schnops all night... They think that the harder they fuck, and the drunker they get, the freer they are. But the next day, the work whistle blows and they all find themselves having spent all their money spent on drink and all their energy expended on women not worthy of their souls or passions. They come back to work as slaves, for even lower pay, to do it all over again the next day the masters give them time off. The Generals give the foot-soldiers, who bled their guts out winning a battle, permission to rape the women and drink the wine in the conquered city. Meanwhile, Generals and their financial backers, sober and soundly celebrate, take the gold, artworks and anything else of real value for themselves."

Yes, Professor Guttenburg was dry about some of his analogies, and perhaps could have been turned around by a woman who understood his mind rather than loved his heart, but he did recognize 'politically approved laughter' as the worst kind of medicine, leaving to his students the job of figuring out what that actually meant. The Hamburg Journal kept up with the times on this, the last two pages of the well-funded publication containing its normal fill of stories. France, the butt of most German jokes, was the source of the humor this week. French pastries clogging the blood vessels feeding the brains of well fed diners. Napoleon's ressurected ghost seeking to liberate Europe again atop a horse far smarter than he was, said equine beast leading the demented old ghost to a British scarecrow while he pleasures himself with a Polish mare, that female equine beast being a mechanical contraption built of metal and rotted wood with an engine that burnt itself out once turned on. The Italian Pope preaching to the Masses not knowing that a goat has eaten a hole in his robes, opening up a porthole to his groin causing Nuns much fascination. Perhaps there was something between the lines in them, perhaps not. Only the artist and a critical reader would know for sure.

But what attracted Gustav most was a satirical story which was more fact than fiction. "Old woman thinking she is Beethoven's wife dies in mental ward," it read, the likeness of Maria 5 drawn in frightening accuracy next to the ghost of Beethoven above her. Out of the mouth of the woman came, in captions, "what are we going to do with our son?" Said son was portrayed as someone who resembled, facially anyway, Gustav, sucking his thumb,

reading a book, "Platos' Republic", its title upside down, the 'brat's' thumb in his mouth along with a silver spoon up his ass. "What do we do about your son?" 'Maria' asked again. Ludwig's answer..."Lots of music lessons."

Gustav closed the newspaper. He felt a pair of eyes staring at him, sizing him up. He dared to look up, noting a woman of noble birth and very notably attractive features alluringly smiling at him while her escort, a middle aged, well armed, officer with a large mustache engorged himself on a piece of cake. He looked around him, noting that no one else had read the publication. Hoping they didn't anyway. Entering at just the right moment, Hans, his mustache shaved off, his hair cropped down almost to the scalp. Wearing the frock of a gentleman, his military enlisted man's boots under them. He sat down and helped himself to the lion's share of his host's strudel, throwing it down his gullet with utmost urgency. "This came for you," he muttered in poorly pronounced Latin with very incorrect grammar, handing Gustav a steam-opened, resealed envelope.

Gustav felt a wide smile descent upon him, from the woman at the next table. He dared not look up, noting from the corner of his eye the angry, heavily armed military officer next to her turning his head toward his 'niece', then to him. Gustav turns away, back to the envelope, and opened it. All manner of things raced through Gustav's mind, from how he would explain to the officer that he had more passion for his Work than any woman, to why said officer, wearing a uniform he didn't recognize, was so well armed in a time when there was supposed to be no wars anywhere near Hamburg. Gustav froze.

"Open it, you idiot," the recently shorn guest at Gustav's table insisted.

Gustav obeyed, not believing what was in front of him as he blew open the envelope. "My diploma..."

"I knew some people," he said by way of explanation, with a voice that emanated both self-made confidence and trustable authority.

"But I was still supposed to take some more courses," Gustav replied through an open mouth, which felt parched and salty.

"You've learned whatever Hamburg has to teach you, Gustav. Your real professors agree. It's time we expand your education, and that of everyone else."

"Where?" Gustav inquired of the commoner who seemed to now speak Hoch Duetch all too naturally.

Hans coughed, an envelope from his breast pocket falling on the floor. He pushed it over to Gustav with the tip of his boot, the tip of which were stained with what looked and smelled like fresh blood. With that, Hans got up, tipped his hat to Gustav, and walked out of the café. Gustav pretended to pull up his boot, sneaking the envelope inside it. He pretended to be arrogant, in control and 'doctorly'. He pretended to ignore the very attractive woman who took to him romantically. In better times, perhaps duller ones, he would have perhaps taken liberties

with her, even at the cost of having to risk a duel with her escort. But if such a duel were to happen with any man in uniform now, it would be about more than the favor or passions of a woman.

Gustav walked out of the café, still rich, still well educated, still respected by every citizen in every station of life. Except of course for those who saw no value in rank or station. Indeed, he would have to earn their respect, and friendship, very soon, someplace he didn't know about, in a 'curriculum' which he had accepted but not seen.

A man whistled a passage from Beethoven's fifth symphony within hearing range but from nowhere Gustav could see. Gustav looked up at the sky, imagining the old Maestro laughing at him. "I hope you don't shit on me like you probably shit on my mother," he found himself saying with words he dared not speak. And found himself putatively believing...maybe because he wanted to, or had to.

## CHAPTER 4

Despite his yearning to know the world as it is, Gustav felt more at home knowing how it was written about. He remembered books about the destination boldly printed on the First Class carriage ticket left by Hans. He recalled the lithographs of Berlin in its glory. From its founding as the center of the emerging Prussian rebel state to its establishment as a city that seemed to rule itself once that state's rebels had become established bankers, lawyers and, yes, even doctors.

Gustav felt accomplished on this trip from certainty to adventure, the soul passenger in a coach paid for by an anonymous patron who seemed to want him for the right reasons. He was now 'Doctor', a man of knowledge, wisdom and, if he could convince others of it, compassion. Professor Guttenburg would be proud of him now. The only thing Gustav wished was that the old fart was across from him in the pre-paid coach to trumpet out his views of the world to fellow passengers and diners at the taverns along the way through his mouth, and if they didn't heed or consider those inquisitive proclamations, through his ass. Here was a place where Gustav's medical miracles hypothesized on paper could be put into practice. And where, perhaps, the machinery he had designed based on the human body could be built. Particularly his mobile carriage, fueled, theoretically at least, by fire from the belly of the driver of such.

Guttenburg often described Berlin and its surrounding communities according to how they smelled and sounded, in poetic elegance. Of the farm fields he described them as lush pastures emanating an always changing but never imbalanced mixture of botanical masterpieces of Nature which rivaled any Parisian made perfume, Hamburgian ale or Cuban cigar. Of the city itself, he described the buildings as stones given life by their builders, which once built began gossiping amongst themselves as to the happinesses and miseries of the architects who gave them form and the stone masons who gave them life. Of the people, Guttenburg's Berlin was



one of a prideful people whose healthy admiration for cleanliness had degenerated into an obsession for it, often describing the average Berliner as someone who cleaned the inside of his anus prior to detritus emerging from it. As for the musicians, and the music, Guttenburg told his students... 'You feel it in your belly and hear it between your ears, the heart which I hope is still Alive in you educated and pleased in all ways that matter.'

As such, much to look forward to as Gustav's coach approached a village not 10 miles away from the city center...but that was then, and this was now. Signs stained with blood warned of an enemy that had already had its way with the population in this rural community. "Cholera: Keep Out" in front of a third of the shops in the village, all of them now abandoned, the signs faded by weather. The rats and field mice the only occupants of the once proud, beautifully-built shops. As for the fields, Nature had sought fit to challenge the most economic of the 30 German states with some other kinds of challenges. Guttenburg's 'pastures of plenty' had an abundance of nothing but stubby weeds, two years growth by Gustav's calculations, amidst broken stalks of rancid, degenerating wheat, corn and peas. Even the winter rye crops, the little that did dare sprout above the weed-covered ground, were speckled with mold and insect larvae. As for the people left in the village, without exception their bodies were two sizes smaller than their clothing, their complexions pale, their tired eyes looking downward. If any of them had been born to nobility or had worked themselves up to being bougie, they were living in something less ethereal now. Indeed, NO one here was upper or middle class anymore, every citizen belonging to the 'hungry and hurting class'. Perhaps Nature's way of cleaning things up, Gustav considered from the safety of his First Class coach compartment, full stomach and educated libertarian mind.

As for an explanation for it all, Gustav approached the coachman, who instructed him to pull his handkerchief over his mouth. "I'm a Doctor!" Gustav insisted, whipping out his leather case containing medicinals which were, in his hands anyway, mostly untested. "I can help! Do some good here," he assured the coachman.

"And will," the coachman assured him. "As long as you remain alive, and I deliver you to where patients need you even more than here." The burly old man a foot shorter than Gustav but far stronger, and perhaps wiser, grabbed Gustav's bag and threw it back on the coach. The coachman opened the door for his sole passenger and insisted that he reboard. As it seemed appropriate, and necessary to complete his prescribed journey, Gustav complied with the 'request'.

The driver ran away from the coach to yank his thirsty horses away from the green tinged water in the town water trough, sensing that the water smelled foul. The odor found its way into Gustav's nostrils as well, registering as something to be considered for a later date. He snuck out of the coach yet again, and noted something about the villagers as he called out to them. They all were going about their business of scrounging for roots, berries, and field mice, paying no heed to the 'noble doctor' who carried with him wondrous medicine for their ailing bodies and, in his aristocratic waistcoat pockets, manuscripts from, according to Maria 5 anyway, a composer whose music can make people see, feel and become one with the heavens. "I can help you!" Gustav asserted, again, to an audience of patients who seemed to consider HIM as the diseased one. The one to be quarantined. The one to be kept away. Maybe it was something

in the water trough, fed by multiple slow moving streams, Gustav proposed. One of those small organisms which could only be seen under a microscope with stains yet to be invented which toppled life forms much larger and 'advanced' with a silent laughter and sense of sadistic humor shared only by members of its own species. Or maybe Gustav's Italian-like aristocratic attire or the denomination of the coachman's Roman Catholic cross. Or perhaps the literature which spilled out of Gustav's pocket preaching Revolution, planted there by Hans for 'bedtime reading'. Yes, the people left in this village were terrified of something, and seemed to shun what they needed most---Gustav's still miraculously-alive optimism.

## CHAPTER 5

The books in the Hamburg library had stated that the ugly disease colorfully called 'cholera' which caused loose stools, then watery farts, then dehydrating runs that could not be plugged up with anything given by mouth or anal administration, was due to infected people breathing on each other. Guttenburg didn't seem to buy the explanation, proposing that it was a convenient logically-based lie which kings and their new masters, clever ministers and rich bankers, used to keep people from talking to each other. "The less people travel, the less they realize their full potential as people," the agnostic professor used to pontificate from the lectern with the zeal of a Calvinist preacher. And such seemed to be true. Travel between the 30 German 'states' was long, delayed more by soldiers at border check points than cold, bone-penetrating rain pouring from soot-stenched grey skies, stone bruises on the hoofs of one's horse, or broken axel wheels on a coach. And the modes of transportation were so primitive, the horse still being the fastest means of moving from one place to another. Then again, the Germans had no need of such innovations as a faster way to get from one place to another because fast, individualized travel didn't serve anyone's political agenda in the very successfully-isolated 30 German 'states'. For a culture that produced so many great men of music, science and literature, the Germans still had no centralized government. Perhaps this hindered their progress as a people, or perhaps it allowed it. As Gustav felt, and observed, it, a political system was as good or evil as the people running it. Perhaps as the people who allowed them to run it too.

As the coach made its way to Berlin, ideas of another sort crashed into 'Herr Doctor Schmitt' as the progressively unstable wheels of the coach bumped his already sore ass onto the hard seat of the carriage. He imagined, yet one more time, how this wagon on wooden wheels could be rebuilt according to his own designs, made to move by chemical energy rather than equine or human labor. Its wheels would allow for travel in any direction, and could move anything on top of it as fast as any horse, perhaps with the power of two, three or thirty horses. A small detail to be worked out was how to condense the power of so many steeds inside a box which could be place next to or in front of the driver. But as for drivers, this coachman was getting on Gustav's irritating nerves, his method of moving from one destination to another involving hitting as many potholes as possible, perhaps because the impact of such would be felt most intensely by his passenger.

Feeling nauseous, Gustav opened the window of the coach, desperately trying to pull as much cold air into his chest as possible. Along with the cold came smells from the recently infected village as it faded away from view. The smell of 'stagnant' water behind him diminished, the aroma of fresh new lakes apparent ahead.

Gustav recalled the coachman's observation of the water-trough, and his gut instinct to not let the horses drink from it that cued Gustav on to another way to considering how cholera was spread. Perhaps, the young doctor speculated, cholera is spread by something in stagnant water, not in air breathed out by infected people, and not an insect carried on the backs of rats, as had been proposed for the Black Plague. Perhaps the microbial spreader of cholera could be identified, isolated and selectively killed. Perhaps by merely cleaning up water supplies, and putting waste water under streets rather than on top of them, it would limit the spread of the disease. Perhaps as he was thinking about it, another physician somewhere else was thinking the same thing. Maybe one of them would, some day, be able to find a venue for their opinions, and supplies for their investigations. Both required money, of course, a commodity in which Gustav, for the moment anyway, was in short supply of. But such would change soon enough, he pondered. He had always been taken care of by somebody, even when he didn't deserve it. And now that, as a doctor, he was in the business of taking care of people, it was a scientific certainty that business for him would become very good. Perhaps he would enter politics, he thought, ideal for his station as a fashionably-libertarian member of the upper middle class, with noble breeding as well. Maybe Maria 5 was right...maybe he was the son of Ludwig von Beethoven. If so, or if not, people knowing it could elevate him up to a position of authority, and perhaps respect.

The coach finally arrived in Berlin, the driver opening the door at the final destination. In contrast to everywhere else on the journey, he did not bow to 'Doctor Schmitt', and made no effort to help him with his bags. All he did was hold out his hand and demand the sum of money owed to him, clearly identified as an extra 10 guilders. Gustav gladly paid the sum, smiling back with a slight bow which was received with an eye roll and hidden sneer of bitter condescension. And with good reason, Gustav reasoned. The wheels of the coach had been damaged by the rapidity of the journey and the shortcuts taken through the brush between the border checks, with even more damage done to the horses that drew it. Inflamed tendons and stoned bruised feet, by the looks of it, some open cuts just above the fetlocks which could perhaps use a stitch of two. "I'm not an animal doctor, but I think I can help," Gustav offered, taking out his medical bag, assessing the wounds, lymph nodes and heat under the inflamed tissue. He felt sorry for the horses who had been overworked in his service while he was in the coach, not cognizant of their enhanced quota of labors. "Horses are just people with two more legs, some more hair on their bodies, and a bigger asshole." Gustav said to the coachman while petting the Cleidsdale gelding whose eyes seemed more human than most people he had ever known, including himself.

"You better look after your bags," the driver slurred out of his mouth, disallowing Gustav a closer look at the horse, or himself. "This is Berlin."

Indeed it was Berlin, evidenced by Gustav's treating himself to a view of the houses and shops lining the square, each speaking something different to the ear that would listen. The cobblestone streets which resonated with sharp claps in response to of all whose souls dared to

step on them. And the emaciated trio of men with dirty faces and seedy eyes, wearing spotless morning coats, mismatched felt hats, sporting several mismatched pocket-watches out of each pocket. Their leader walked up to Gustav's luggage, offering to help him carry it inside. "Only one guilder each, Sir", he said with a bow that was clearly exaggerated while his assistants worked their way up the top of the carriage to steal a peek and a feel as to what was in the contents of the bags, particularly the one which bore the 'Beethoven' manuscripts entrusted to him by Hans, and Maria 5.

"I'll take them myself," Gustav said, attempting to show confidence, but knowing he was emanating fear, no matter how broadly he tried to hold his shoulders.

"But we need work, Sir. Would you, a man blessed with wealth, deny us, men afflicted with misfortune, the opportunity to work, Sir?" the second in command, lacking one foot below the ankle, said while the third allowed Gustav a look at his heavily bandaged left hand, grabbing hold of the Beethoven bag with his right, a rusty blood tinged knife under his belt.

Gustav considered the offer, assessed the options, then was stopped in mid-consideration by the driver approaching, allowing the 'doormen' a look at the two pistols under his belt. Two policemen followed him, their shiny pointed helmets making them seem nearly seven feet tall, their eyes as uniform in expression as their spotless, brass-buttoned grey coats.

The trio of 'workers' retreated as quickly as they arrived. Gustav retrieved his bags and looked behind him at the residential destination prescribed by 'Doctor Hans'. "Thank you," Gustav said to the coachmen with genuine gratitude, and with reluctance to the Policemen. "If there is anything I can do for you, at all, anything---"

"---An extra ten guilders," the coachman interjected, bitterly. Gustav provided the sum, with an extra two to boot, into the calloused, blood stained and blistered hands of the coachman, taking note the his own had hardly a blemish of wear on them.

Gustav then turned to the Policemen, who never had turned away from him. "And what can I do for you, gentlemen?" he asked, offering more coins.

"Stay out of trouble," said the one who seemed more senior, very sternly. His assistant's eyes seemed fixed on the bags which contained Hans' Revolutionary Literature', as well as Gustav's 'father's' perhaps earth shattered musical manuscripts. The second in command made a move to accept Gustav's gratuity, then stopped abruptly. Gustav noted that a detachment of very military cavalry had just moved in across the street. Their commander halted the detachment, arousing the attention of many onlookers. Concern and distrust of the uniformed intruders rapidly infested every man, woman and child not in uniform, said civilian populations representing workers, merchants, clergy, lawyers and even a few bankers.

The cavalry were armed with swords, pistols and muskets, made more impressive by their elevated heads from their mounted positions. But their distrustful, multi-classed, notably unarmed civilian onlookers were armed with something else...unity. Color also added its flavor to the stew which was about to boil over. King Fredrick William's cavalry's blue and grey

uniforms seemed more black and white. The gathering civilians, which escalated into a crowd, wore various ensembles, matching each other in that they were a combination of red, gold and black, those hues combined together in a flag one of them taunted the Commanding officer with it like a half-naked matador to a sharp-horned bull.

The battle between the color-mismatched groups was brief, fought with stares and unstated mandates. It ended four seconds later by the Commander sending a third of his mounted troops to the street to the left, another third to his right, and the remainder moving forward, as planned. The streets moved back to 'business as usual', the policemen with Gustav helping themselves to the coins still in Gustav's hand, taking the liberty of opening his fingers to retrieve them. Meanwhile, Gustav's stare remained on the heavily-mustached commanding Cavalry Officer, the cold eyes under his visar and the warm eyes of his horse. If only the commanding officer realized that he was atop an animal whose nature it is to be gentle and kind. And if only the crowds of people who gave way to those mounted 'beasts' knew that no horse would ever trample a human, most particularly if that human were to stand his ground, in the service of humanity.

Upstairs, in the room pre-rented with payments made for the next 4 months, was everything an aspiring doctor/scholar could want. Bookshelves pre-laden with volumes from Homer to Schiller, some of which had smelled of being read, some of which were fresh off the press, their pages still stuck together. Cupboards filled with brown bread from Frankfort, Bavarian cheese, Vienna sausage, Dansig herring, and canned vegetables from every place 'German' except, paradoxically, Prussia and Hamburg. All of course topped off with a piano in the center of the room. As for professional activities Gustav could do something with, a dining table was converted into a surgery, various kitchen utensils converted into tools designed to cut into human flesh rather than animal meat. On the wall hung a frame, with a note inserted in the middle of it--'insert diploma here, Herr Doctor Professor Schmitt'. It was signed 'your loving mother, Maria.'

Clearly the writing was that of Hans, if indeed that was his real name. But there was something very real about Hans, the guard at the mental asylum who was clearly someone else, or perhaps crazy himself. By following Han's orders as to how to be a free man, Gustav was well on his way to being a productive one as well. Indeed it was an 'open' world here in Berlin, and in some ways, 'open' in ways he didn't like nor trust. How Gustav needed to talk with Hans now! How now he was finally able to ask him questions without fearing half answers! And how frustrating, and terrifying, it was to discover Han's absence, maintained for an hour after Gustav's arrival, then the afternoon, then the rest of day and into the next morning. And in an apartment in which everything was in place, and in pristine condition, except for the broken lock on the door, and the spots of blood on the floor which were clearly illuminated by the morning sun shining into the dark room.

## CHAPTER 6

There were many things to do on this, the first day of Gustav's life as 'Doctor Schmitt', all of which would require him being outside the apartment. The first order of business was to repair the lock on the door, after leaving behind a note on it reading 'Cholera patients inside. Contagious'. Of course, when he came back, the sign was gone. As were a surprisingly few other items from the bougousee dwelling.

"They took the food, Herr Zinnas," Gustav noted to his guest as they entered the room. "But none of the books," he continued, confounded.

"That's because they were hungry," replied the 17 year old apprentice locksmith as he looked at the door, assessing what could be done with it to make it secure. "And the piano was too big to bring to the pawn shop on their aching backs," he smirked, but with a smile tempered with a hard life and many thoughts about how to change it.

"Indeed yes, Herr Zinnas," Gustav continued, taking note of the early aging lines and thinning hair on the lad who was described as his 'master' as being a 'lad' of no more than 17 years. It was, by convention, inappropriate for Gustav to address him as 'Herr', and it felt artificial, bordering on pretentious. This 'lad' who seemed to bow to no master, but seemed to be in need of a teacher. Or better, a mentor. Or better still, a friend, such as what Guttenburg had been for Gustav.

As 'Herr Zinnas's chiseled a hole into the door prior to inserting one of the best locks available at his employer's shop, he noted the piano. "You play this musical contraption, Doctor Schmitt?"

"I have...eh...relatives who did, very well, so I am told, Herr Zinnas." Gustav felt his, or Maria 5's secret had been found out, along with the location of the manuscripts which, if sold through the right routes, could make anyone richer than Beethoven himself ever was. He continued, daring to play a few notes on the keyboard, as he remembered them from the manuscripts. As expected, mathematical sounds came out of his fingertips, certainly not any music. He found, to his amazement, that such saddened him. "We all have our abilities, and disabilities, Herr Zinnas," he confessed

"Each gives according to their abilities, and takes according to their needs, Doctor Schmitt," the 17 year old freedom-loving apprentice locksmith allowed to be released from his freedom-serving soul said, while fitting the new lock to the fresh hole in the door.

"Gustav," the good and perhaps getting better doctor insisted

"Doctor Gustav?" the locksmith replied, testing the lock designed to keep occupier and world apart.

“Gustav...just Gustav,” the answer, appended with an open hand, accidentally dropping a pamphlet given to him by the still absent and perhaps captured ‘Hans’.

“Ernst”, the man disguising himself as a lad said in reply, firmly shaking his own laborer’s hand with the nobleman who fancied himself a scholar, perhaps a liberator.

‘Doctor Gustav’ heard another detachment of cavalry go through the streets, followed by a screaming of someone being taken to places they didn’t want to do, followed by the mounted units slithering off into streets which took on an awful silence. Ernst kept working, taking out his frustration on the wood, for the moment anyway, until a few shot rang out. Ernst froze, unable to move, paralyzed by fear. “Informers and secret police are everywhere,” he said by way of warning. “Of course, for our own protection,” he added, speaking from the tighter-lipped side of his face.

But something had to be done, or said, and as men are what they do, Gustav asked technical questions about locksmithing using the familiar tense, to which Ernst gave his reply with less verbage in formal tenses. Some man to man jokes about women, avoiding any tense at all, led to relaxation of the exchange of dialogue, the subjects becoming medicine and carpentry, with an equal exchange of volume of verbage.

Ever bored with the world of forms and formalities, Gustav slipped into talking about Kantian philosophy and Socratic ideals, and passion filled ideas about, or based in, books by Spaniard Cervantes, American James Fenimore Cooper and hit sensation from Paris Alexander Dumas. But soon he realized that his mouth was getting tired, and that his mind was getting tired of hearing how ‘smart’ he was relative to the other person he was ‘sharing’ the conversation.. The silence around him rickoshayed the causes of that pathology. “I’m sorry,” he confessed. “I seem to sound smart, and know much about many books because I read only a few books and move conversation to talking only about them. Women, bless and curse their hearts, just let me ramble on and on till they ramble off with someone else. As for men, such as yourself, well...I didn’t mean to, you know.”

Ernst, now having completed his assigned job as a locksmith, undertook his job as a man, and something Higher than that. “You know, Herr Doctor Gustav,” he said in familiar tense. “It’s interesting that in German, and French, we have different tenses for the familiar and formal. ‘Du’ if we like someone or are supposed to rule over them. ‘Sie’ if we respect or fear them, and invite them to rule over us. Unlike English in which both forms of ‘you’ are the same.”

“Maybe because the English are lazier speakers than we are,” Gustav mused. “They don’t have as many rules of grammar to learn. And can express themselves faster. They say ‘shit’, we say ‘shiese’.”

“Or it’s because they’re ruled by Pariliment rather than a King in England, by Congress and a President in America. All of which are elected,” Erst suggested.

“They’re still ruled by money,” Gustav countered, feeling compelled to bring some reality into the ‘all you need is Enlightenment’ revolutionary rant he anticipated coming back to him. “The

English are better at self rule than...some other places, because they are good with money, and always have been.”

“There was no such thing as money in England after the Romans left in 400 AD,” Ernst countered. “Roman gold was worthless, and the whole country used barter, trade and the reality that everyone gives according to their ability and takes according to their needs, for the next 500 years! And they were far better than any of our ancestors on the continent for it.”

Gustav continued as a self-absorbed professor while while Ernst spoke as a student. Though many of his facts about European history were wrong, most of them were correct, or even more frightening, right. Gustav couldn't help by stare at his hole-ridden boots, his torn clothing and his blistered hands, wondering how smart or accomplished the apprentice laborer would have been had he had the educational opportunities he himself had. The new doctor felt small, inferior and threatened. The day would come when 'lads' like Erst would displace 'men' like Gustav, perhaps in their own lifetime. There were some issues that did need to be asked, and considered. Gustav gave voice to it first. Issues got to 'freedom', that elusive word that neither the new doctor nor the already accomplished locksmith apprentice knew very much about. Both spoke in half truths, not fully believing the other was totally truthful about their real affiliations and connections to the powers that be.

“Freedom of the press is the most important right of all,” Gustav proposed. “This is the most important right which, ideally, all societies must strive for first.”

“Ignoring, of course, the insignificant rights that the ruling and middle class already have?” Erst sneared back. “Such as the right to a fair trial, right to carry arms, right to a good wage, and a right to not go hungry. And the right to be respected!”

“They are all the same. We're in agreement, me and you” Gustav asserted.

“On only one thing, for now.” Ernst said, calmly. “That you owe me twenty guilders,” he continued, using the formal 'Sie' form of address.

Most of the morning had passed already, and Gustav had much to do other than argue politics with a laborer who, by himself anyway, couldn't do very much to change anything. He paid Ernst, bid him a sincere 'good day', and 'good life', and closed the door behind him. Gustav found himself locked in his new apartment, looking out the window at the now empty streets. They would not be empty for long. Logic and intuition both confirmed this. He felt the emptiness in his still well-stocked room. He yearned to have a talk with Professor Guttenburg. A conference with his new patron, Hans. And a discourse with his 'daddy' Ludwig von B. None were there, as the 22 year old medical/scientific protegee felt very alone, and responsible for the Revolution which was about to happen, very fast.

## CHAPTER 7

It was said by someone, this time NOT Professor Guttenberg, that people of highest intelligence discourse about ideas, people of lower abilities argue about events (such as politics) and those of the lowest rungs of the human family gossip about other people, who did what to who and what



they were wearing at the time. Matters of wardrobe seemed to be of importance when Gustav prepared to go out into the street. Not so much the style of the coat, or the cut of the cloth, but its colors. The appropriate wardrobe hues to match the eyes of proud people who valued freedom more than comfort or security were the gold, red and black colors in the flag representing a new country which called itself 'Germany' by the many classes of people who felt united and liberated by it. All except the King, his ministers, his bankers and of course his soldiers were sporting this new combination of hues.

Gustav searched his bags for the appropriate garb before going out onto the streets. Gold, or more accurately dark yellow, could be found and there was certainly no shortage of black. But as for red, here it was lacking. He thought about cutting his palms to stain some of his virgin white shirts and handkerchiefs red, considering it excessive at first but then thought it necessary. Besides, a colorfully placed painless cut made by a scalpel could be passed off as a painful wound inflicted by a tyrant's sword. And if Gustav was lucky, maybe a tyrant's sword would lacerate his flesh while he was fighting for a noble cause.

Gustav questioned everything, but most intensely his own courage, and had no idea as to the anatomy of that attribute, or accident. He had skillfully avoided being conscripted into the military because he was smart, and intelligent, knowing fully well that the military contained the stupidest people in society who thought they were doing something smart, or necessary. Like his 'father', Beethoven, Gustav valued brains over balls. But was such a thing really true? He reasoned that Beethoven changed the world through his music, battling inner demons rather than real people. Cervantes and Schiller did it with words. DaVinci through painting. Galen through science. But did these men actually have the courage of their conviction? Galeleo, facing the firing squad, recanted his theories when pressed to do so by the Church and Beethoven fled Vienna when Napoleon invaded rather than stand and fight the tyrant who he once considered a liberator.

The books Gustav had read and stories Professor Guttenburg shared with only the most trusted of his students said that the human animal becomes one of three creatures once the bullets start flying. Creature A, the 'fighter' is caught up with the romance and selective compassion of the situation, firing back bullets with the ferocity of a wounded lioness defending her cubs. Creature B, the 'flighter' runs away from the gunfire, preserving its life with reflexes built into its biology, like the horse. Creature C becomes part of the machinery of war, terrified between his ears while his body oscillates between the necessities of fleeing or fighting, as defined by the needs of those around him, or the lion who is barking out orders.

But what of doctors, charged with the mandate to save lives, and serve all equally? Where do they fit in? And was Gustav a real 'doctor'? He had yet to practice on anyone with that title in an unsupervised manner and he was scared shit-less, even as he put on his blood-dyed shirt and placed his black coat over it, being sure it was buttoned well over the brownish-yellow sash. He would offer his services to all who would access them, then assess which one of his patients would become his friends, and comrade. He'd keep an eye out in the cafes for a recently cropped and clean shaven impish man going by the name of Hans, a larger statured one who might just be the former Professor Guttenburg, and a deaf ghost in the sky humming musical

ideas down to him between rain clouds. It beat having no plan at all, and as for where Berlin was going, 'change' was the only plan on anyone's calendar.

His first stop was a building that looked like a hospital. Outside of it an old woman sold books. He looked at the title, "The Communist Manifesto", a rather ragged copy of what looked like a recently printed work. He asked the old hag who seemed more like someone who cleaned floors than one who sold books, "Does this mean that you are a Communist?"

"It means that I'm trying to sell books to have my daughter looked at by a doctor who knows his ass from his elbow," her raspy reply through a nearly toothless mouth scarred with scurvy.

"Or his brain from his mind?" Gustav inquired.

"Do you want to help pay for my daughter's operation or not!" the woman who, under normal circumstances, would have the mannerisms of a servant ranted. "Who the hell are you to try to trick me with fancy words that you can twist around to mean anything you want? It's us workers who will change the world, and who must change it. You aristocrats think you are so much better than we are, don't you."

"No," Gustav said. "We just happened to be more educated," he explained. "In some ways anyway," he confessed, handing the woman four coins from his pockets, three more than her asking price. She looked at the coins, bit into them with three of her remaining teeth and smiled.

Gustav looked at the last page of the book, hoping that it would make its point clearly. "Workers of the world unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains." It seemed simple enough, along with most of the language laying out ten principles for world revolution. He perused the torn cover for mention of the author, thinking that perhaps it was Hans. Or perhaps it was Professor Gutenberg. Both seemed to embrace the ideals and ideas between the covers.

"Engels" the woman spat out. "Who is manning the workers barricades as we speak," she continued with a diction Gustav now recognized as more Hungarian than German.

"The barricades in Paris?" Gustav inquired, opening his coat to allow her to see the colors of the revolution in which he was clad.

"In Baden, you bourgeois imbecile who thinks that he knows the global economic needs of the proletariat in their class struggle to deal with the collective" her reply, mispronouncing the newly-coined political terms that appeared so often in the text of the primer. She pulled ten more Communist Manifestos, along with a some most probably stolen Capitalist watches, candlesticks, and cutlery, placing them on the table in front of her. Customers came by to look at them. Some wearing the colors of the German flag, others not so. Gustav observed the buyers while thinking of the vendor and her wares. He recognized one of the onlookers as the heavily mustached policeman who assisted him with his bags upon his arrival in Berlin, his pressed and polished uniform now replaced by a common laborer's jacket and trousers, with spit-shined cavalry boots under them. He seemed very interested in the book, and the woman selling it.

She seemed pleased by such, most particularly when he asked her what her name was and where she came from in the manner of a suitor out to court a beautiful lady... along with some other questions about her family which only a policeman would ask.

Before the old woman could answer, Gustav stepped in. "She's my grandmother. A little crazy in the head, but that's because she spent the last ten years in a Hungarian hospital. After a carriage accident made her, you know---"

Before Gustav could find the socially appropriate euphemism for 'gone fishing in a watering hole somewhere in dreamland', he felt a jab go into his jaw. Behind it was a fist that seemed linked to an iron hand. "I'm not crazy!" the nearly toothless woman claimed, after having loosened some of Gustav's choppers. "This overdressed idiot is the one who needs to see a doctor."

"I see a goddamn doctor every day!" Gustav heard coming out of his own mouth. Both the 'buyer' and the crazy woman looked at him for an explanation, as did several members of the crowd that had gathered around them. "Every time I look into a mirror," he continues, manufacturing his bag filled with medical goods and his diploma as proof. "Now who is in charge of this hospital?" he demanded of the gawking congregation of onlookers, a fairly large proportion of the tri-colored civilians displaying pistols and knives under their coats. "I heard you need doctors," he continued, noticing two people missing from the congregation---the old woman, and the policeman.

An elderly man who seemed to know what he was doing moved up through the crowd. His stubbled face was covered with soot, his head as bald as a baby's bottom, his legs bleeding through the soles of his hole-ridden shoes. He smiled widely. "Welcome back, Doctor Schmitt!" he pronounced with a distinctively Polish accent, leading Gustav inside.

"But the old woman's daughter---"

"---is now under the right hands," the Polish host assured him.

"And the old woman?" Gustav asked.

The impish man remained silent, leading the new doctor to his new patients, and comrades who had taken clandestinely taken over the hospital from the old bosses. Gustav noted that his Polish escort had taken it upon himself to bag the old lady's belongings, most importantly the books she was selling. Gustav had to ask one more question. "Why, Hans?"

"When?" is the question you would ask if you had any brains on those broad and wasted shoulders of yours, Doctor Gustav," he answered.

"Alright," Gustav asked. "When?"

"Very soon."

## CHAPTER 7

Gustav's work was cut out for him, and he found himself smarter than he thought he was in relationship to those in the world outside university walls. He was not only the most qualified doctor in the new 'Free German People's Hospital', but the only one in the facility, which he found out very quickly, had been a sewing factory until it was taken over after the cholera outbreak and some bad gambling investments by the owner had shut it down. There were shortages of everything except for pieces of cloth, spools of thread and needles designed very well to darn wool socks but highly inefficient at sewing up human flesh.

The nurses, seasoned battle axes against the diseases in the real world, knew more than Gustav did, but he could never let them know that he knew that. At least in front of the patients. Every patient felt like an examination, the inquisitor being the women in the white uniforms who insisted that he listen more than talk. But there was manner of communication in which he was very, very good.

“So, your fingers know how to talk to tissue,” a Nurse answering to the the name of Elsa noted when Gustav patched up the belly wounds of a man who ‘ran into a carriage’, according to the official police report, divining the location of some lead balls still resident in his intestine, and preparing to make an incision in the exact location where it lay. He pulled out the bullets from the patient and dropped them into a tray. “You have a gift from God,” she said.

“I have the obligation to BE God,” he replied. “To the people who God fucked over,” he continued.

“The people who people oppressed,” Elsa answered, a hand carved crucifix hanging around her tired and sweat-soaked neck very evident. “God is with our Cause, you know. Unless you have a problem with that, Herr Professor Doctor Schmitt”

“Just as long as God keeps his Church out of State affairs, that’s fine with me,” Gustav said. “But I thought you Socialists were all aethiests or cynical agnostics,” he continued.

“You have to believe in something,” Elsa said. “What do you believe in, other than your own arrogance and ‘noble’ breeding, Maestro Gustav?”

“Yes, the possibility of having an Immortal Beloved of my own,” the young doctor felt but did not give voice to as he let his eyes lead his heart into falling even deeper in love and lust with Elsa. He stared into her eyes, his heart opening up to her warm soul, his logic-intoxicated mind building walls which would warn her to keep her distance. After getting no reply back to from her, he continued to sew up the patients’ wounds.

But something was wrong. Gustav hadn’t told her about his being Beethoven’s son. Someone else must have, and it had to be Hans. Who knows what else Hans was telling people about Gustav which wasn’t true, or that he couldn’t live up to. Anticipating such, Gustav continued. “I’m just a doctor who knows how to do surgery, and who, with a little bit of time in the world outside university walls, will be able to use science to figure out how to stop any disease, any time, anywhere.”

“Except, of course, the disease of cruelty and greed, which creates more children dying of diseases that are created by people, and machines, and the toxins they produce,” Elsa continued.

Gustav looked around him at the ward funded by the community of workers who were arming themselves more and more each day. She was right. Political solutions had to be found, or made to happen. But for the moment, sewing up belly wounds and lead shot which accidentally got into the abdomens of mischevious young adolescents who wandered too close to military cavalry outposts were his first and only priority. Along finding ways to avoid having to be courageous by being smart instead.

“You know, if we propose what we want to King ‘Willy’ and his ministers, making it look like what we want is what he wants, it could, you know---“ Gustav proposed to Elsa, anticipating yet another hot retort back from the lips his mind loved to argue with yet his heart yearned to kiss.

The proposal was accepted, but by another party far less beautiful and far more trustworthy. “Write down your suggestions and demands for the New Germany down and we’ll all take it to the King tomorrow,” Hans, said, pushing a blank piece of paper into Gustav’s face, under which was a fresh copy of the Communist Manifesto as a writing pad.

“And what if I decide to write on the paper what isn’t in this book?” Gustav challenged.

Hans laughed, patting his student on the back in the exact manner in which Professor Guttenburg did, when in private. His heart was warm, and open. Without saying a word, Hans had conveyed to Gustav that his opinions and proposals would be part of the proposition to the King. With one provision...that he give voice to them himself. Such was the Revolution, in which the orphaned and chronically alienated Gustav finally found a home.

## CHAPTER 8

Gustav chose to spend his days at the People’s Hospital and his nights at the apartment which he jokingly called his ‘urban cottage’. It soon stopped becoming his own as Hans invited ‘guests’ over for dinner and drinks. They would arrive at different times, often after dark. The discussions were always about politics, as it always was between men who are tired of bitching about women, but this time it was about how to design a new socio-political system rather than choosing from pre-existing ones.

The discussions were lively, invigorating, and went well past the allotted hour, the shades always drawn. “Remember, Comrades, the right to assembly is still not something the Prussian King or any King thinks we are entitled to,” Hans would remind them each time they would meet. “Unless the assembly is gathering to pickle their brains on beer that the King’s ministers manufacture and the King collects taxes on,” he would continue to the assemblies who he hoped would drink responsibly, or not at all.

As for those assemblies, the discussants were mostly men. Amongst the women who came were Elsa, of course, whose claim that women were people too were listened to as long as the men had something interesting and alluring to look at. She cleverly flirted her issues into the manifestos very well, a skill which the obsessively cerebral Gustav admired as well as despised. Musical accompaniment and spice was added to the soup by Juanita Cruz, a Spanish gypsy guitar player

who was perhaps more Basque than Spanish, perhaps Jewish, or perhaps Catholic, ashamed at how the Church still held her country's sense of vitality and purpose hostage. Hans, of course, remained who he was, the first to greet people at the door, the last to speak, in a quiet voice, with few words, after every issue was hotly debated by the congregation representing every imaginable class and caste in Prussia.

Though he never revealed his surname it to anyone, even Elsa, Hans was the real Christian name of the short, stocky man who rules so much above him from his commoner position below. Upon further investigation, Gustav found out that he really was part Prussian and part Polish, preferring now to be prideful rather than deceptive regarding the latter. As to whether he was in this 'One Free Europe, One Liberator for All' Revolution to get Poland to become its own country again rather than to remain a colony of Russia and Prussia was an issue he was not of himself.

As the news about the revolts in Austria, France and Italy poured into the People's Hospital, a facility that actually did more to feed the sick than cure them, Gustav wondered why the masses in the United Kingdom had not united with the rest of Europe in shaking off the yolk of the monarchy's. Spain was not involved because of the love-hate relationship its citizens had for the church and the lazy nature of the average Spaniard. The Greeks, who the books say invented democracy, were still busy arguing with each other as to which one of them kicked the Turks out of their country back in 1830, when in actual fact it was the British and French who had to come to the rescue of the infuending ancestors of Plato, Socrates and Hippocrates. As for the Russians, they were still busy being self destructive to themselves, the serfs still officially owned by landowners. As for the Americans, there were no expatriates hanging about trying to make their mark as reporters, novelists or liberating adventurers. Such was good news, so it seemed, as the German people, and their 'comrades' were now being allowed to make their own mistakes, and innovations.

Gustav woke up the morning of March 18<sup>th</sup> more tired than usual, and cold, despite the fact that Elsa stayed the night, sharing Gustav's blanket and bed. She had been too tired to walk back home the previous night and 'Papa Hans', as he came to be called by all, said it was too dangerous for her to be walking alone after the meeting had adjourned, conveniently declining walking her home himself because he had 'other Revolutionary commitments'.

Gustav stole a gaze at Elsa as the morning sun peaked its way over the horizon. She seemed to be dreaming about something, with a wide smile never seen while awake. Gustav wondered what paradise she was living in for those golden moments. Maybe its nature was political, maybe spiritual or maybe personal. He hoped, and found himself praying, that it was the latter, and that he was somehow involved.

He looked back down on the street, fearing that he may wake her from the well deserved pleasures she seemed to be enjoying in slumber. With the oncoming light, small groups of people came onto the streets from all corners of the city, but this time they were not just workers. Hats of all classes could be seen, and below them, clothing of gold, black and red, gathered under many flags bearing the same colors. Some of the flags had different designs, but none seemed to fly higher than another. The central collecting point was the People's Hospital, their

estimated time of arrival very soon. On the other side of town, the clamor of horses with mounted soldiers gathered outside the King's Palace. And the banks. And the houses of those whose economic benefit from the Industrial Revolution was most obvious.

Gustav heard a loud thunderbolt, then looked up. The sky had answered its call to duty with black clouds creeping their way over the clear blue sky. "Rain today?" Elsa commented as she woke up. "It should make the turn out more honest," she related by way of commentary.

"We'll have to have the painters portray it accurately for the history books," he smiled back.

The moment of agreement, and love, felt like an eternity. For Gustav, and as he felt it, for Elsa as well. Such 'moments of eternity' was what defined life, big L. It was where one, on the inside, always was, always is and always will be. At least according to the lyrics of a Basque folk song Juanita was fond of playing, and which rang through every bone of Gustav's non-musical body.

But as measured by the clock, 'eternity' was to last only ten seconds of so. Horses arrived downstairs, punctuated by a rapid cascade of boots moving up the staircase. Then, a knock on the door. It scared Elsa, causing Gustav to merely startle. He found himself reflexly hiding her in a closet, inserting a kitchen knife under his coat, and easing his way to the door, stepping lightly on the floor. Gustav peeked through a hole in the door, laying his hand on two loaded pistols on either side of it. The fact that he had never fired such weapons anywhere or for any reason seemed immaterial. Whoever was at the other side of the door chose to merely knock, showing nothing but a greyish-black cloth as to his identity. Elsa shook, Gustav rushing over to her to keep her silent, placing himself between her trembling body and the door which was juggling, the immovable lock which was being unhinged by a master at the other end.

Gustav opened the rear window and instructed Elsa to jump into a cart of manure below. "You'll break your legs, but the soldiers and their doctors will destroy your mind," he warned her. But the cart moved forward. And the door opened, the intruders smiling as they saw Gustav protecting Elsa with two one shot pistols aimed at five times as many men. One of them looked familiar, arousing, to Gustav's surprise, primal rage.

"What the hell are you doing here!" he demanded.

"Change in plans," Hans smiled. "Didn't anyone tell you we'd be coming by before dawn...and today?" Behind him were ten men, four of them laborers who wore their dishevelled clothing brimming with confidence, the remainder seeming more merchantly or academic, with no less strength in their newly found convictions. One of them was Ernst. Hans directed him to the papers laying on the desk, the others to food, books and stashes of money he had hidden in places Gustav didn't know about.

Gustav didn't ask about the reason for the miscommunication. Hans had more important things to talk with him about. "We must have scared you, eh?" he said. "I see you didn't piss in your pants," he mused. "The rest should be easy," he continued, getting a look at Elsa, and the communication which had established itself between her and Gustav. "Or maybe it won't be,"



he warned, sternly and compassionately.

With that, Hans led the gold, black and red clad band of free men down the stairs, waiting for Gustav to gather his belongings, and perspectives. Elsa chose, for reasons of her own, to not join them. As for her explanation. “I had a nightmare last night.”

“Which we will turn into a dream!” Hans announced, beckoning Gustav to join him. He did, after he left both pistols and all of his knives with Elsa.

“You might need at least one of those,” Hans warned.

“Not if I have one of these!” Gustav asserted, pointing to his head. “And now, one of these,” he added, pointing to his heart, kissing Elsa on her forehead. It eased her fear. It gave Gustav courage. It made Hans even more impatient. The impish leader of the men who were about to propose a leaderless society to the King of Prussia hummed a passage from Beethoven’s Ninth, giving it definition by singing Schiller’s immortal words ‘Allas Menchen Verden Bruter’ (all men become brothers). It reminded Gustav of his duty, his newly found passions, and perhaps his destiny.

## CHAPTER 9

The ‘stroler’ to the King’s Palace, as Hans put it, started out with a few men, and even fewer women, merging together on the streets. Exchanging stories about the world as it was and as it should be, then exchanging clothing. Workers wore merchants’ morning coats. Lawyer and even a few rouge magistrates traded their bowlers and top hats for the the one-size-fits-all caps of miners, farmers and dock laborers. Academics, of which there were a suprizingly large number, were learning their lessons on the streets instead of the library.

They all marched under the same banner, each carrying different documents for the King’s consideration. But they all desired and deserved two things. Dignity and freedom, for themselves and their families. As well as for the onlookers from the windows who arose early that day, gazing down at the streets, wondering which way the whole thing would go, and in which direction they should go as well. Wondering no doubt how an army of civilians armed with little more than ideas, or more dangerously, ideals, could instill any kind of change in a world ruled by money, guns and iron.

“Still more of them than more of us,” Hans commented to Gustav as the old man, now young in spirit, gazed upon the fence-sitters leaning out their windows and lining the streets. “Which is as it should be, I suppose. A Revolution in which everyone is involved and everyone is in agreement is no Revolution at all. Particularly when it becomes ‘fashionable’” he continued, sneering cynically at the group of well-dressed students and professors, still holding their books, led from their sojourn to the University by a rather charsmatic professorial leader of sorts, younger than the rest. Gustav helped himself to look at them.

“No, they don’t have the balls to arm themselves,” Hans grunted. “And I don’t know if they have the balls to defend anyone except themselves,” he lamented. “And none of them are or

know about Professor Guttenburg, my dear Doctor Gustav,” he continued, with a warmth rarely displayed for anyone.

Gustav looked at his new mentor, and he seemed to be telling the truth. In front of them, the line of cavalymen closed in, presenting a barricade which they meet in a matter of seconds. A few peace-promoting protesters left the march, most were thinking about doing so. The cavalry walked their horses forward, then trotted them in a high stepped, short-gaited display of style, horsemanship, and power.

“They march so impressively,” Hans grunted to Gustav. “Which means we have to sing more expressively,” he added. With that, he broke into Beethoven’s Ninth, “Allas Menchen Verden Bruter” he began, and continued acapella. Soon afterwards a man with a flute joined in. A potter who would be late to work today beat the rhythm of it on his wears. Juanita joined in, providing beautifully constructed harmony to the music, and an ample view of her even more beautiful anatomy for male onlookers.

A mass of voices joined in on the chorus, taking over Han’s lead. Doubtful and scared petitioners stayed in ranks, inspiring those who had left to rejoin them, this time with the blessing of their wives and lovers. “You see,” Hans whispered to Gustav. “Men fight because the women are watching. And with the right motivation, joining them, Maestro.”

Ahead, the cavalry held its ground, supported by infantry from the flanks. Still, the ‘dance’ of united libertarians moved forward against the wall of marching soldiers.

Hans sung again, wacking a startled, gleeful, and still non-singing Doctor Gustav to join in. “I can’t sing,” the head-heavy young physician said.

“You mean he won’t sing,” grumbled a voice from behind, a laborer clad in a coat more holes than cloth, a pale face scarred black with coal soot. “Our ‘good doctor’ thinks he’s above singing this simple tune.” Others seemed to agree.

“I can’t sing!” Gustav asserted.

“You must!” Hans countered with a punch into the good doctor’s belly. “And he will... This man is Beethoven’s son!” he declared. “No other than the son of Beethoven’s Immortal Beloved! Who will write more songs that we will sing! Beethovens don’t sing songs of liberation. They write them!”

The how and why of it didn’t make sense, but it happened. Hans’ bold proclamation that the brilliant young doctor who happened upon the Revolution in Prussia was Beethoven’s son was not only believed by the crowd, but it inspired it. Music poured out of the mouths of everyone, in languages other than German as well. Every devise possible to produce music was played at maximal volume, amplified by the joyful expressions of people who, for the first time, felt that they could change the world.

Even the horses seemed moved, and some of the military riders. The commander closed ranks as the procession moved within firing range of them. The infantry, commanded from the rear, aimed its rifles at the crowd which kept coming at them. Hans held out his hand, as did a number of other 'Hans's' from other groups. Some of the women and children in the crowd smiled at the soldiers. Some smiled back. All kept singing, inspired to do so by the very Beethovenian looking Gustav, who found himself elevated above the crowd atop the shoulders of men who he never knew but now had to trust. He conducted the assembly in the symphony feeling the spirit of something bigger than himself moving his hands, and heart. Perhaps it was the belief of the free-thinking people that he was the son of the great libertarian Beethoven that did it. Or perhaps it was Beethoven himself, finally having an internal dialogue with his son. Or perhaps it was Gustav who was playing, and composing on the spot, improvisations with his own voice to his 'father's' symphony for his own Immortal Beloved, Elsa. He felt connected to both life and death at the same time, as did everyone below and around him. If it was the latter, it would be a magnificent death, with more life in it than he ever imagined possible, a sensation which was communicable.

The disease of martyrdom and blind optimism spread like syphilis through a seaport brothel. For reasons that could be felt, but not explained, a messenger from the Palace galloped in behind the cavalry, handing an envelope to its Commander. The overly mustached prototype of Prussian militarism opened it, with his leather gloves and raised his hand, while reading it. The crowd stopped singing, and started praying. He looked back at the Palace, stroking the thick neck of his 17 hand horse, then handed the note back to his Second in Command, his stone cold face revealing nothing of its contents.

A bugler blasted out a tune that Gustav did not recognize. But Hans and several other peace loving souls who had been forced to spend time in the army knew it. "Retreat...Give Way", he translated regarding the bugler's message to the troops, appending it with another round of Beethoven's Ninth, conducted by a now very ecstatic "Gustav von Beethoven".

The crowd proceeded onward to the Palace, now visible to all in the distance. The square in front of it was cleared, soldiers at attention lining it with guns at their sides, rather than pointed at human beings. Behind them stood more curious fence-sitters, less in number than those who had joined the jubilant and hopeful crowd. A window opened on the third story, a man in a blue morning coat, unarmed, walking out, beckoning his 'guests' to enter his realm with both arms extended. He stood on the balcony, his vigilant eyes saying 'open for any business' to all of his subjects.

Gustav felt it to so "Papal", gathering a view of it all from his vantage point above the crowd with a sense of Royal Purpose himself, till he caught the disapproving and vengeful stare of the Cavalry Officer. Gustav tried to answer it with gleeful song, then felt himself pulled back into the crowd. "Hans, I was just trying to---" he said, as he turned to his 'protector'.

"---Keep opening a door that's already opened," Ernst Zimmas shot back in a very professorial tone. Gustav noted that there was a line of people being allowed to drop petitions off to the King, his Majesty King Fredrick William reading them all with eyes that looked sincere. The doctor turned musical revolutionary grabbed hold of a proclamation from his pocket and showed it to Zimmas. "King Willy is going to really want to read this," he insisted. "A win-win

proposition for him, us and even that Prussian Cavalry Commander who craps out shits in formation.”

“And Papa Hans really wants you to stay alive,” 17 going on 70 apprentice locksmith Zimmas insisted.

“Fuck what Papa Hans and all the other ‘Papas’ want!” Gustav grunted back. “It’s what all of us want now! You, me, and---“

Before the twenty two year old ‘veteran’ of Revolution could finish explaining what his rapidly expanding mind was formulating, and discovering, shots rang out, from out of nowhere.. He felt Zimmas’ hand push him down onto the pavement, then the bodies of others on top of him, preventing him from seeing anything except the cobblestone streets, a few laborers attempting to fire old pistols, two misfiring, one landing a bullet straight into the jaw of its holder.

Calls of shock, then pain, then pleas for help rang out everywhere, but Gustav was trapped, a wagon now atop his back, its wheel trapping his leg inside a pothole. More gunshots led to streams of blood flowing down the cobblestone streets. “I’m a doctor!” he screamed out. “I’m a doctor!” The Cavalry and Infantry advanced to soul shattering bugel theme which was anything ‘retreat’.

A pair of hands, fair in complexion, but now stained with blood, and shaking with fear, came into Gustav’s view, out of his reach. They grabbed hold of the wagon. The bearer of them called out to stubbier and stronger appendages for assistance. Just as Gustav could smell the horsemen coming, he looked at the hands of his first liberator and hugged her. Indeed it was Elsa, her fear converted into commitment, the moment feeling like that liberating moment that Leonora found and rescued her political liberating husband from a tyrant’s prison.

But this opera was clearly to have another ending, as evidenced by Gustav seeing the source of the stream of blood that had become a river. “Ernst!” he cried out, trying to get hold of his body. Seeing in his outstretched hand a copy of the proposal that Gustav himself wanted to present to the king. Ignoring the common sense to run for cover, and insure the safety of his rescuers, Gustav ran towards the oncoming army of soldiers now charged with dispersing the crowd and grabbed hold of Ernst. His eyes were indeed Alive, but his pulse was gone. As was most of his liver. And his leg. And his lungs, which lay deflated against his chest. Gustav knew he was dead, but would not accept it. Hans moved in and slapped him into compliance, then unconsciousness. A nightmare worse than the one which kept Elsa awake the night before had just begun.

## CHAPTER 10

Gustav felt dead inside when he woke up in the hospital ward, next to people who were, physically anyway, worse than he was. The resurrection of his father's, or perhaps his own, musicality froze in agonizing suspension. The reality of taking care of the world as it is overtook him. His head diagnosed everything correctly, his hands finding the quickest and fastest way to patch flesh torn apart. Indeed, he was considered a miracle worker. But he felt dead inside. Perhaps it was because soon after he felt joy in his soul, so much tragedy happened around him. A natural reflex to shut down his ability to feel happiness, or enthusiasm. A required response to fix those whose bodies had been broken, amplified in intensity by guilt for not having been one of the dead, or at least the physically wounded.

The most severely injured was a printer, by the look of the permanent black ink under his fingernails. As for the hands and arms connecting them, he was most emphatic about the prospects very directly involving those appendages. "If you can't save both of my arms, Herr Doctor, don't save me," he pleaded as Else gently ripped off the shirt glued onto his flesh and exposed tendons by the clotting blood. She smiled reassuringly as Gustav got a clear look at the bone underneath, already smelling of something putrid. He had seen human bodies which were dead, but none that were dying. At least not close up like this, and while being addressed as 'Herr Doctor'.

Gustav noted that the man's left arm was less muscled than the right, the one which sustained less damage. Though he was totally capable of designing and building mechanical arms which could operate by a brilliant series of pulleys and wires, such was unacceptable for this patient, and man. "I can save your right arm, but as for the left, we may have to---" he said, then stopped

Gustav found the edge of his scalpel blade make its presence known just under his throat, recalling what structures lay under it in all manner of medical detail. It was a bizarre brand of self-examination, but one which allowed him to avoid other forms of that very necessary process, being called upon with increasing intensity with each patient that came into the former sewing factory which now served as a facility to stitch up people who needed 'mending'. As for the mending, he was the head seamstress now.

"I can't go back to work with one arm," the printer insisted.

“And if you do?” Gustav said, considering the biological situation and surgical options.

“My employer will ask how I lost one of them,” he answered. “He can tell the difference between getting shot in hunting accident and accidentally shooting yourself in the foot to avoid getting sent to the front.”

“And he knows that you don’t own a gun,” Gustav added.

“Why should we have to own guns?” the printer exclaimed, converting his pain into sarcasm. “The King protects us from getting shot by foreign armies. Our employers give us jobs so we don’t have to protect ourselves from the wolves in the woods. And the Ministers on Sunday morning tell us that good Christians are protected by faith. Like the ‘faith’ that was supposed to protect my son, who was conscripted by the King, into fighting another war with another ‘king’ that turned out to be---“ He couldn’t go on, the pain of his wounds overtaking him, the grief for his missing son paralyzing his anger and bravado.

Gustav found himself wondering which King, which war, and most importantly, which strategy he would use to reattach fragile flesh which had been severed by hard steel and the harder rules of physics. But there was one thing that iron of man and unchangable laws of physics didn’t share with flesh. Biological tissue had a ‘desire’ to heal itself and did so whenever appropriated guided by insightful doctors, and ordered to do so by well motivated patients. The latter was in place and, hopefully, the former would emerge.

Elsa, as always, was ahead of Gustav. She poured a mixture of Napoleonic brandy and Chinese opium into the printer’s mouth, both obtained by less than ethical means of course. She carried over the cart of surgical materials and tools. Some of the latter came from Gustav’s own personal supply, some from what the nurses had on hand, and the others which, thankfully, had been re-designed by Gustav and hammered into shape by the laboring staff. He needed them all, and used them all, seeking advise from Elsa, the ghost of his deceased mentor and friend, Professor Guttenburg, and, when those two didn’t work, God.

Gustav found himself offering yet one more piece of his soul to the Creator if one more tendon stitch would stay in place. If one more nerve sheath would fall into place with another instead of being splintered by bone. If one more bone fragment could be wired into place to where it was supposed to go. And if one more Promethian manipulation of tissue around fragile arteries would serve to strengthen those conductors of life-promoting blood rather than spurt open a volcano which would bleed his patient dry, and dead.

Sweat covered Gustav’s brow, pouring into his eyes, until all he could see was what was visible with the tips of his fingers. He thought of stopping, but dared not to. Finally, everything was in place, the appendages on the printer still attached to his torso. He felt victorious, accomplished and connected to humanity in a way he never felt before. It was a strange feeling, seeing the printer wake up on the cot, lifting his arms up, putting on his shirt, and lift up a pen and paper to write a note to his wife.

“He’s leaving her,” Elsa commented to Gustav, reading the face of the tearful farewell the printer was writing to his wife without having to see a word he was committing to paper .

“But he can go back to his job now. I just fixed him up!” Gustav asserted.

“Some things, you can’t fix up,” Elsa replied, somberly. “At least not on your own.”

What she didn’t say was much more than what she did. As for the filler between the lines, Gustav looked to Hans.

“You saved a printer today, Doctor,” Papa Hans said to his new protegee.

“Who will print what he saw, and did,” Gustav answered. “Maybe what I did, too?” he dared to proposed.

“Or what you WILL do,” Hans’ reply. “Some of which might even be printed in the history books, or newspapers. But most of which, of course will not.”

Gustav felt what Hans was really saying, and conveying. Events recorded in history books and newspapers are not the real actions that change the world. The ones that could not be recorded, or weren’t, were the ones which really mattered, their effect enhanced by their being kept unknown by all except a few.

“Yes, Herr Maestro Doctor Professor,” Hans concluded. “It was no accident that you met Ernst Zimmas. And that he died. Therefore, the honor and responsibility of what has to be done next goes to you.”

## CHAPTER 11

The streets were quiet for the next few days. Soldiers patrolled with the discretion of Policemen. Workers, most of them anyway, went back to work. But as for colors worn by those in the streets, and those watching them, black was the predominant hue, with small amounts of red and gold. However, one man wore an equal balance of them, fashioned and displayed in the United Free German flag, his eyes wide open, arms outstretched as he advanced towards the King's Palace, unopposed.

Gustav walked slowly as he carried Ernst Zimmas' body, shrouded in the flag for which he died. Women and children were amongst the mourners behind him. Some cried for Ernst. Others for the second man, according to official accounts anyway, who died in their first 'stroll' to the King's Palace to have a 'respectful and overdue discussion'. Papa Hans and the other Hans' decided that his identity was kept hidden for reasons the history books would never know. Perhaps he had a jealous mistress or a perhaps a still-indentured son in the ranks of the Prussian Army or because he wasn't as young, charismatic or smart as Ernst.

Those closest to what was really happening wept for the wounded who would never be the same, or die weeks later. History, after all, only recorded martyrs who lose their lives on the day of the 'fighting', not those who will die soon afterwards due to gangrene, or suffer worse fates for years to come having lost their ability to see, walk or hear.

Gustav contemplated the latter as the procession played the third movement of Beethoven's seventh. The 'durge' was performed by an ambulatory group of wounded musicians. Many were limping, some which were half blind, and by the sounds of the exaggerated sounds coming out of his second harmony trumpet, one had lost a good portion of his hearing. The 'class-less orchestra' conducted themselves, and each other. And their mastery was given tribute not by applause but by silence. From the workers who stopped their labors and took off their hats. To a few junior officers who bowed their heads while their men snapped to respectful attention. And to 'King Willy' himself, who came out to look at the body, despite the advice of his Ministers, the latter giving blessings to the fallen lad after Gustav laid him on the bottom of the Palace steps.

Gustav saw King Willy for the first time, face to face, man to man. The handsome, intelligent yet still cloistered Monarch seemed more mortal than kinglike, more compassionate than commanding. The dirty job of being authoritative fell to those behind him. The wall of Ministers at the top of the steps seemed as impersonal as ever. And the Generals with them seemed even less compliant with their emotions.

"This wasn't supposed to happen," His Majesty offered with a sorrowful heart.



“But it did,” Gustav replied with an angry grunt.

“Yes, it did,” the King said, caught between everyone’s agenda, not knowing which one he believed in himself. With that he walked back up to his Palace and entered. The door shut behind him. The soldiers around it instructed the gathering to leave. They did so. Gustav joined them, carrying Ernst’s body and laying it onto a coffin which was then carried by eight other pole bearers. He recognized none of them, and they didn’t seem to care who he was, or who his father was, either.

## CHAPTER 12

It had been only two days, but it felt like two years to Gustav's mind. Two decades to his soul. "Time is measured by the intensity and variation of experience", he remembered from Professor Guttenburg somewhere. Maybe the Professor was still alive someplace, though all logic and intuition said he wasn't. At least no place accessible to his pre-maturally graduated student who needed him most now.

But there were some good things about the accelerated educations which overtook Gustav, as well as the German people. As for the former, it was time to play hooky and reflect on the real meaning of his current educational curriculum.

Having left his instructions with Elsa, Gustav excused himself from medical duties early that day at the People's Hospital with the excuse that he had to get some medicinals elsewhere. He took his time going to the only place which resembled 'home', not telling even Elsa that such was his final destination. She had awoken so much in him which he thought had slumbered. He dared to see himself and her in the persons of couples coming home from the taverns, arm in arm, hand in hand, loving eyes to affectionate hearts. Perhaps he should have kissed her rather than hugged her. Slept with her rather than merely alongside. Told her that he loved her rather than all those other words of respect, bondship and friendship which came far more easily out of his trembling lips. Then again, as he played out what would happen next, the play went into the second act, the stage taking place on the now darkened streets, the natural light of the sun and the glow of twilight replaced by lanterns and candles. He saw her inside the dress displayed at the clothing shop, a low cut green Parisian gown that matched her eyes, walking along the street to the café around the corner, laughing and smiling. At the café, he imagined himself and Elsa sitting outside, speaking about everything except what they really meant till the wee hours of the night, keeping the owner and the waiters on the job until it was time to say good night, or make it an eventful one. Then a walk along the river, back to her place, or his place, for a contrived excuse about a political pamphlet or medical article of mutual interest. Then the ultimate 'so what are we going to do' in front of a doorstep in which the actions of their hands, arms and lips would give voice to what was inevitable. Then a golden night which would seem and feel like blissful eternity. Then, a few more nights of such, followed by several days of gradually letting everyone else know about what was going on. Then, him meeting her parents, then her meeting his ghosts. Then, a marriage, perhaps before or after one of his sperm connected to one of her ova. Then, a child, maybe two, during which they would both realize that the vows they took in front of the Minister, and each other, to remain as they were for each other were both impossible to keep and destructive to maintain. Then a few years of putting up with each other out of a sense of responsibility, then duty, then drudgery, until one of them thankfully dies of misery and regret, at the age of maybe 60, or 70 or eighty. Releasing the other partner to endure what was left of their lives alone, wondering 'what if' about some other lover, or some other career, or some other Calling which was inconsistent with the marriage, and finally being reunited with

their once-loved one...buried by the Undertaker in the shop in front of Gustav's eyes, next to each other, for eternity.

Was such one of the thoughts and projections which happened to Ludwig von Beethoven on the night when he consummated his relationship with his soulmate, the Immortal Beloved according to recorded history, 'Maria 5' according to very possibly real events? Would Beethoven had done what he was destined to do if he allowed Maria to be his destiny? Perhaps wanting was indeed better than having, for the world, and for the two lovers involved in the Christmas package which would always be special because it was never opened. The dream of love which was never acted upon. Yes, it felt right to keep Elsa as a 'wish' rather than a reality. After all, who knew where the Revolution would blow Gustav, or for that matter, Elsa? Maybe she had a happier destiny without him, and he a more effective one without her. At least they would not produce a child who would grow up to be an orphan, given to rich patrons where he or she would receive everything possible except a real family, or the truth about his or her real origins.

Gustav opened the door to the apartment and lit the lantern. His night vision being mediocre even on the brightest of nights, he lighted some candles and felt himself guided by the music between his ears to the keyboard. For reasons he could not understand, he could feel music between his ears, louder than any sound in the 'real' world, and ten times more intense. The music started as the melodies in the manuscripts which, thus far anyway, were still Beethoven's works which remained in the family. Then the harmonies would be filled in by Gustav's mathematical brain, then become expanded into syncopated themes that set up and moved beyond counterpoint into a whole other dimension of beat, rhythm and tone. Somehow, Gustav's fingers, trained to play notes but never able to play music, were able to make those imaginations manifestations in the real world. He wrote some of them down, and trusted his fingers to do the rest, hoping that he could remember them. Thinking of Elsa helped, in ways he dared not examine but still accepted. He felt elevated, accomplished, worthy to be called 'graduated' by the absent Professor Guttenburg and Alive by his deceased legendary father, Ludwig. He looked up to the sky, then to the bookshelf illuminated by the rising moon and stopped---abruptly.

Gone were the rest of the manuscripts. Gone were the writings regarding the 'musicality' and operatic score of revolution composed in verse by Hans, himself and the other members of the Free People's Committee at their clandestine meetings. Gone were all books that dealt with anything except hard science and standardized medicine, save one.

"Plato's Republic", a voice rang out from behind Gustav, naming the book remaining on the shelves, bringing his auditory consciousness into the kind that heard the numerous mistakes and miscalculations on the keyboard above and beyond the few notes that were indeed really musical. As feared, the source of that voice was someone who was very familiar.

"Yes, 'Maestro Doctor', we have met before," the tall pale-faced figure clad in black said as he moved forward, the light shining on his large white mustache, eyes cold as steel above it. "At the petitioning march," he continued, helping himself to a read of the book left. "Plato said that music should make men strong, but it can also make them smart."

“So then, the music that makes your soldiers march to wars of your making are inferior to the ones that my father wrote,” Gustav smiled back through angry eyes at the Cavalry Commander who saw him lead the Revolutionary ‘Strole’ to the King by conducting them in Beethoven’s Ninth, then to Ernst’s funeral with Ludwig’s dirge from the seventh. “Are you so afraid of Beethoven’s tenth symphony, and my first, that you stole all of the notes he wrote, and entrusted to me?” Gustav advanced.

“We’re protecting them from vandals,” the plain-clothed Commander, and probably Policeman as well, replied with an expressionless stare.

Gustav turned to the keyboard and let his fingers play some Beethoven as the world knew it, some as he remembered from Maria 5’s manuscripts, and some from his own extrapolations, which would be labeled Ludwig von Beethoven’s tenth, or perhaps Gustav Schmitt’s first. It didn’t matter much, except that the original manuscripts were valuable to keep Gustav’s memory accurate, and to cash in for money to turn the Revolutionary ideals into some kind of reality. “You know, Colonel, Major, or whatever your REAL rank is. The manuscripts your men are keeping so vandals don’t destroy them, as well as the plans written by rebels, and the names listed by them as Comrades, are all fabricated. Me and my friends, most of whom are imaginary, love to fabricate. It keeps us busy, and insures that you still have a job.”

“So you won’t mind if we keep these fabrications,” the Commander said, calling Gustav’s bluff.

The Maestro Physician continued to play, finding his notes containing less boldness, his the victorious crescendos falling into diminishing passage of sadness, fear and stagnation. He pulled away from the keyboard and faced his ‘protector’. Gustav assessed his visitor’s strengths and weaknesses, particularly the ones he could fix. “By your eyes, you seem to have increased intra-ocular pressure. Perhaps get migraines. And the yellow tinge around your temples indicates that you are anemic or have liver disease. And the smell of your breath is very uremic, Perhaps your kidneys are not doing so well.”

“True enough,” the Commander smiled, with admiration. “I suppose that you have some medicinals you can recommend?”

“Yes...I think I do.” Gustav worked out the curative formulary on a scrap of paper, as his duty as a physician to ‘above all do no harm’, then considered a greater harm if he didn’t consider the Commander’s deeper pathology, the diseases of cruelty and moral ignorance. And the even more insidious pandemic of what would happen if he was a carrier for more of it. Clearly this servant of the King served agendas which involved doing more harm to His Majesty’s subjects than good, even if the King had something to say about it. It would be, of course, for His Majesty’s own good, and of course the financial benefits of his many industrial backers whose crowns were worn privately in their overstocked purses and clandestine bank accounts. The formulary found itself containing substances that would sedate the mind, then cause pain to the body, then incapacitate it. Yes, it was the necessary thing to do. And something that was done quickly, without the Commander suspecting a thing. Until Gustav smiled at him with a doctorly grin, holding it out to him with a firm grip.

“A miracle treatment? Of your own concocting?” he said, glancing over at the notes. “Indeed you exceed your reputation as a brilliant scientist, Herr Doctor Schmitt.”

“Everyone gives according to their ability, takes according to their needs,” Gustav dared to say, expressing the Revolution’s mandate with an aristocratic arrogance. “I am at your service,” he boasted with a pushed out chest.

“As am I at yours,” the Commander said, with a sincere bow. “And the patients you are serving,” he continued. “Especially those at the People’s Hospital and the other facilities which are housing deluded people who can use this fine medicinal,” he continued. “We admitted them to our own treatment facilities in the last few hours, and I am sure that the miracle medicine in your hand will do miracle for THEM!”

Gustav dropped the bottle of the paralytic elixer on the floor just before the Commander took hold of it. He felt seen through. Found out. Like a piece of prey ready to be eaten by its predator. However, he would not die afraid.

“You hide your fear well,” the Commander smiled in a fatherly tone. “And as for your intelligence, you will find that it can be redirected to productive purposes,” he continued, helping himself to another glance at Plato’s Republic. “The Revolution will fail. Even Marx predicts that it will. And even if it succeeds, how will anarchists ever agree on a government to rule them?”

The Commander helped himself to a bottle of brandy and a few loaves of bread, then loaded most of the rest of the food into his suitcase. “Two days of food for you to get two days away from here,”

“And what if I want to bring someone else with me?” Gustav asked.

“She will never leave her responsibilities, or her patients,” the Commander replied. “Nature will see to that, and if Nature won’t, we will.”

With that, the Commander bowed again to Gustav and left as quietly as he entered. He stopped at the door to comment on the lock. “Your locksmith did good work, but...well, we can recommend a new one, when you come to your senses, Herr Doctor. And decide to cure the masses of their idealistic histeria so they can go on living their lives in...well, so they can go on living anyway..And if you seek a philosopher-king to lead you, including King Fredrich William, please know that he was always a King, and was never a philosopher,” The door closed quietly but rang out an echoing blast of terror and finality.

## CHAPTER 13

Hans ate his sausages with small bites the mannerisms of an aristocratic, then licked the plate clean like a peasant. The café he ate in provided him with no bill for services rendered, as did the tailor who provided him with a new suit, and a cobbler who provided him with new footwear.

Gustav sat opposite him at the table, nursing a beer and bowl of potato soup, wondering how Hans got his expenses paid. And who he really was. How Papa Hans got Gustav a diploma before he had graduated from all of his medical courses. How he was the one to find Maria 5. And why he decided to inform Gustav of his biological father's origins, and final notes, this late in his life. For the moment, it was sufficient to know that he was someone who knew things about the world as it is, in the same way as Professor Guttenburg knew about the world as it should be.

"The Commander's name is Fredrich Sergei Hesse," the impish leader of the movement which was waiting to see where it would move to next, said to Gustav, still offering no eye contact but somehow seeing everything Gustav was thinking. "His official rank is that of Major, but his real rank is probably much higher. He's the kind of asshole in the lower ranks who knows how to manipulate morons who were born into or lucked into higher positions," he continued.

"So, you're an asshole and I'm a moron?" Gustav parled back, in a not-so-joking manner, demanding to speak to him eye to eye.

"You will be a moron to yourself, and an asshole to everyone who's counting on you if you don't get those manuscripts entrusted to you back," Hans continued, denying Gustav any expression or glance.

"The secret political manuscripts and ledgers the committee wrote during the 'card games' we had at my apartment, yes," Gustav said.

"And the still undiscovered and highly valuable musical compositions your father wrote for the world, and to be entrusted to you, Herr Doctor Schmitt."

Gustav had to ask. "Did my father know about me?"

"Your mother said he did, and that he was a virgin, biologically anyway, when she met him. Then again, she barely knew about you with the brain, body and financial problems she had," Hans said. "In her happier moments, she re-lived the magical moments with her beloved Maestro Ludwig."

"And in her saddest moments?" Gustav inquired.

Hans put down his knife and fork, and looked at Gustav. Directly and intensely. "She loved you very much but knew you were better off with foster parents than with her in the poor house, or worse."

"The Nut House," Gustav sighed with laughter based in sadness and wisdom. "Maybe it beats the jail house. In the jailhouse other people torture you."

"And in the nuthouse you torture yourself." Hans resumed his meal. "In either case, it's time we make a visit to Major Hesse." He slipped Gustav an envelope which upon opening contained a map, the rectangular boxes and straight roads broken up by runny red marks which upon feeling

them were more blood than ink. “He gives the King what he has to, and stores what he wants for himself in a cottage.”

“Which is heavily guarded, I assume,” Gustav surmised.

“Only by men who are armed with guns and bayonettes,” Hans smirked.

“And we are armed with?”

“Necessity, Gustav!” Hans proclaimed, noting a young Policeman with scared but obedient eyes outside. Stopping. Staring. Recognizing him, as well as Gustav. Shaking in terror in response to Hans’s stern stare and Gustav’s compassionate smile. Whistling for soldiers on patrol to come to his aid.

Hans slipped Gustav the rest of the instructions as both men fled as quickly and discretely as possible, fading into the crowds of laborers and merchants shuffling their feet to work at now very protected stores and factories.

The meeting time was eight o’clock, under a bright but ominous full moon. The place, a cottage just outside Berlin not noticable from anywhere in town, but with a panoramic view of the city. The event, the arrival of a new ‘niece’ for dinner, requisitioned through the finest brothel in town. Gustav hid in the woods as the coach pulled up to the door, a woman in a fine dress gently being helped out by the coachman. She springled a healthy dose of perfume from a Parisian bottle onto her handkerchief and let it hang from, her slender, seductive wrists. Her demeanor was aristocratic, her body petite yet strong, her employer right next to Gustav.

“I don’t like it,” he said to Hans, now armed with three loaded pistols and a dagger, the assistants behind him equally equipped with weapons burrowed from places still not revealed to Gustav. “I really don’t like this,” the still voluntarily unarmed Gustav insisted.

“She doesn’t either,” Hans said as a smiling and well-satisfied Major Hesse came out of his cottage in camouflage civilian attire that he still wore with military bearing. The woman introduced herself as ‘Venus von Unterweld’, which satisfied Hesse well enough. He gave her a peck on the cheek, and escorted her up the stairs. The angelic-faced goddess turned around quickly to adjust her petticoat, winking an all-is-well signal to Hans.

“She’ll be alright,” Hans assured an angry Gustav as the young man recognized the bait the old man had sent into the shark’s cove.

“That’s Elsa we’re talking about!” Gustav grunted back, held back from pulling her back by Hans’ assistants. “MY Elsa!”

“Who is not one of my regular girls,” Hans revealed as the door closed behind the ‘happy’ couple, the laborers in the yard moving closer to the door, military issue guns evident under their hole ridden coats, some of which had blood on them. Gustav recognized one of the garments as coming from the other petitioner who was killed on the day of the massacre. The one who was

whisked away by the Military doctors, who no one knew, and who no one seemed to miss but maybe someone would identify one day.

“Why did you send Elsa in there?” Gustav demanded. He whipped out one of Hans’ pistols and pointed it at his head. “Bring her back.”

“After she finds what we need to steal back, and she is the only one we can trust with them,” Hans assured the angry doctor. “And now I know I can trust you, too.”

“WHY! You pathetic pimp! Manipulator! Imposter! Sadist who puts political ideals before real people! Why do YOU say YOU can finally trust ME!”

“Because I see the garbage in your soul now,” Hans said calmly. “The rage, The indignation. The willingness to grow some balls instead of dicking around with your brain. And your dedication, and love.”

“Yes, for the integrity of the ‘Cause’,” Gustav grunted back, ready to fire at Hans if he didn’t give the order to send his men into the house IMMEDIATELY. “You finally trust me because you fucking now see my goddamn love for the Cause?”

“No, because I feel your love for my daughter,” Hans said, a tear coming down his face. “Who I am proud of for doing what she is doing. And who...”

The door opened. Elsa emerged with her breasts pumped up three sizes larger than they actually were. She smiled at the ‘laborers’. They tipped their hats, and sprouted more weapons underneath their trousers between their legs as she gave them a view of her legs, and more, as she slipped into the coach.

From the window of the coach, Elsa winked an ‘all is well’ signal to Gustav, and a glance of the papers retrieved from her ‘uncle for the evening’ to her father for a lifetime. She sprinkled the air around her, exhausting the Parisian perfume bottle, then smashing it onto a rock outside. She knocked on the roof of the coach, signaling the driver to move forward.

“She works fast,” Gustav said, wondering about what else Elsa had lied to him about. “Did she put him to sleep that quickly.”

“Without loosening a single button,” Hans said, offering Gustav a look at the ingredients of a perfume bottle identical to Elsa’s.

Gustav smiled as he read the formulary for the perfume that charmed the most discriminant and dangerous Military Policeman in Berlin.

“Yes, Herr Doctor Professor Schmitt,” Hans said. “The formulary you invented and used to put people to sleep for surgery. With some mushroom powder my daughter got from that Gypsy Spaniard which makes them forget anything that happened before they surrendered themselves to slumber.”



Gustav felt flattered that finally he was amongst people who would use what he could develop at his chemical workbench. Perhaps this would be a revolution based in reason, supported by science, ruled by rationality and gently complimented by compassion. The human mind, he asserted to himself again, could solve any problem far more effectively than the human heart. Such were his thoughts as he and his perhaps future father-in-law slithered back to Berlin as the clouds moved in to cover the moon. He felt comfortable in the dark now. Until a bright light shone in his face the next morning.

## CHAPTER 14

The morning light felt wet, and hard. “Wake up! Up on your feet!” Gustav heard screamed at him with a face awakened by a bucket of cold water. He looked up and saw that it was indeed his apartment, but with guests he hardly expected and certainly didn’t welcome. Sharp bayonettes were poised at his body from all sides as he looked around, assuring himself that he was in his apartment, and that the dream Gustav had about bootheels rocking the staircase to heaven where Ludwig von B was trying to convince God to get off His ass and become more Human and humane to the beings He created.

Major Hesse's face was beet red, a handkerchief covering his mouth. Above it, Gustav could see half of a mustache, the other side of the upper lip shaved clean. He found himself laughing. "Did the saber slip this morning, Major?" Gustav asked.

Hesse commanded his men to search the room, commencing to tear open every cupboard and proceeding to the piano. "If you're looking for your virginity, or the Major's mustache, you might check the shit bucket." Gustav proclaimed.

"We'll find what you stole from me, and then find out who you stole it with!" he demanded.

"They were all supposed to be here, with me," Gustav said. "They were last night anyway," he continued, telling the truth as he knew it, or remembered it anyway.

"They aren't now!" Hesse pointed out.

"No, they're not," Gustav said. He wondered if maybe he had been given a dose of mind altering mushroom powder through a trans-cutaneous carrier of his own devise by someone else a few hours earlier. Or perhaps yesterday. Or perhaps the day before. The events of the last two days were so bizzare, it seemed like the most plausible of explanations. But the one he had to deal with more immediately was Hesse's rage, delivered with a bayonette slice into the upper portion of his right arm. He screamed in pain as he never did before, as he saw his own blood ooze out of the wound.

"Yes, pain, Herr Maestro Doctor. You can give it, manage it, and cure it, but you can't take it," Hesse stated calmly and assertively. He appended his claim by having one of his men insert another wound into the left leg, even more excruciatingly painful.

Time and space lost all meaning to Gustav. The agnostic who had lost any belief in an afterlife was pulled into an experienced that reminded him of the hell he thought he had outgrown as a child after he learned to read books about that condition with a critical mind.

"The next flesh wounds will cut tendons, nerves, then bones. With the kind of injuries that even you can't fix. Or Professor Guttenburg either."

The mention of Guttenburg shocked Gustav into a state of arousal. Hesse knew it, and stopped the 'festivities'.

"Yes, I can bring you together, Herr Doctor Schmitt."

"You know where he is?"

"I can find him. Will find him. Just like I will find that bitch who made a fool of me last night," he sneered. "And who will make a fool of you too," he warned, shifting into a warm, fatherly tone. "You know, Doctor. You are a man of sound reason, not blind passion. In need of patrons who can support your work. And who appreciate your brilliance. The Comrades, who deserted

you, may write the history books, but we publish them. We know everything, and have the right to know everything. And you will tell us about..everything. For everyone's good."

Gustav looked at what was left of his now torn apart apartment. Memories came back about the month here that would be recorded in his mind as an eternity. The table over which ideas and ideals about everything were debated, argued about and connected. The window from which he gazed at the stars above and the people below who had achieved so much to become godlike. The bed which he and Elsa re-defined love as innovatively as Beethoven's love for his real lover, music, evolved. And the door, where he first met Ernst Zimmas, now lined with fresh blood, and bits of clothing that he recalled Hans wearing the previous night. With bits of the hankerchief Elsa left behind. Perhaps they fled, or were captured. Perhaps Hesse had taken them away and all of this was a trick to make Gustav feel betrayed by his friends so that he would betray the entire revolution. Yes, Hesse seemed like a man who knew everything. But he didn't know where the manuscripts were. And would do anything to find out. Be it for good or bad, Gustav did know where they were. He swore to himself that he wouldn't reveal where he, Hans and Elsa buried them. He knew that if Hesse got hold of the papers, it would be the end of the Revolution. And for such a man to have Beethoven's last compositions was equally shameful and dangerous.

"I don't know where the manuscripts and ledgers are," Gustav said, looking straight into Hesse's face.

"You look straight at me, with no blinking, or looking to the side" he noted.

"Yes, I did," Gustav said, proud of his intellect and grateful for his courage.

"Which is another way I KNOW you are lying!" Hesse screamed, motioning with his fingers for his men to move in. Edging their bayonettes ever closer to his chest, his testicals, and his eyes until all he could see was steel and all he could feel was piercing flesh, broken up by something completely unexpected clammering in his ears. It was indeed Beethoven, the Ninth Symphony, Ode to Joy, being sung by one man, just outside the smashed window. In a voice that was familiar to both Gustav and Hesse, as well as the soldiers under his command. The Sergeant looked out the window, summoning Hesse to look for himself. The other soldiers abandoned their posts one by one as more voices joined into the singer. Finally, Gustav looked out, confirming what his ears only dared to imagine.

"Philosopher-King Fredrich Wilhelm," he commented to Hesse. "He does have a royal voice."

Hesse's face turned beet red, that hue being warn by 'King Willy', along with gold and black, under a banner of the United Free Germany flag, walking the streets with his ministers behind him attired in the same colors. In their wake, a celebration by all. The working class. Merchant class. Middle class, Clergy class. Even the soldiers patrolling the streets breathed easier, laying down their guns and accepting the hugs of under-aged laboring children running up to them, then handshakes from their parents. Exchanging of hats, jackets and ideas between all. Jails and other 'places of containment' opening up their doors, human souls walking out of them

and looking up at the sun, squinting painfully at its brightness, shocked into the joy of being Alive again.

Gustav hummed his father's Ode to Joy and smiled at Hesse. He offered his hand in friendship. Hesse declined the offer, storming out of the apartment, slamming the door behind him. It fell off the hinges. No matter, there were no boundaries between men anyway anymore, for better or worse.

## CHAPTER 15

As predicted by Hesse's unvoiced prophesy, the street trolleys, riverboats and railroads didn't run on time in the absence of a King to rule over them, but everyone seemed to get to where they needed to go and got done what they needed to do. The stores sold more bread than ever, and prices were affordable to most everyone. Most of the factories still operated, but employers had to pay something to workers other than money to keep them at their post. Respect was due, and given, though not by choice. However, laws laid down by kings, ministers and clergymen were still imprinted into the minds of Prussians, and for that matter, everyone in the collection of kingdoms which soon might be called Germany. As for the soldiers, most of them kept to their barracks, and themselves. The Police still kept order, but were just as afraid of lawbreakers as lawbreakers had been afraid of them.

The morning newspaper printed five more pages than usual, a copy of it delivered to Gustav's new office, clinic and home by the printer whose hands he had saved from the amputation block. "Revolutions everywhere, Doctor!" the printer exclaimed with glee.

"How many where people got hurt, or killed?" Gustav asked.

"Whose people?" the reply. "Ours or theirs?"

Gustav put down his paper, inferring very clearly his distain for the division of humanity into Revolutionaries and Counter-Revolutionaries. He agreed with Marx and Engels on many things, but as for bloodshed being the price of Enlightenment, the Socialist Ideal or even liberty, this was still an issue of contention.

The printer backed down from political issues and took note of more recreational ones. "I see you have a piano in your laboratory."

"Yes," Gustav replied, looking with relief at the dirt stained Beethoven manuscripts and his own musical notations expanding the themes, tones and textures, in writing which wound up being very similar to the old Master's.

The printer approached the piano, his nose smelling something in the air, by the desk. "Leather binding" he said, taking notice of the loose papers within the coverings stained with dirt as well.

"Your library of musical, medical and political ideas seem to have been dug up from the grave," the Printer commented.

"Hidden and uncovered by..." he hesitated then decided to define Elsa to the printer, and himself. "...a very, very close good friend," he continued with a warm smile.

"Who wears a fragrant perfume," the Printer said as he smelled the papers. "Either your friend is a woman you are secretly in love with, or a man who you had better not be in love with."

"A woman with many secrets," Gustav offered to the Printer who no doubt would be a reporter in a week, an editor of his own newspaper in a month.

"It must be hard, Professor Doctor Schmitt," the soon-to-be-editor said.

"To know a woman with secrets, or secretly be in love with a man?" the recently and prematurely graduated overloaded-with-new-ideas medical student commented, comfortable with that form of acknowledgment.

"To know so much and have the world understand so little," the printer lamented. "A fate we all probably share, one way or the other," he smiled. "But as for matters we CAN do something about," he continued boldly. "There is talk about forming a new government. Some from idiots. Some from assholes. Some from people who can manipulate both of these subspecies of human I suppose we all fall into at one time or another."

“And this concerns me because...” Gustav asked, remembering how many times he told Hans that he wanted to liberate humanity from tyrants, then let Nature take its course as to how they should rule themselves.

“The people who fund this research laboratory of yours, and the clinic which probably serves the same purpose one way or another require you to be concerned about it.”

“You mean Hans does. The man we all trust who has no last name, at least one who he has shared with anyone, except, one which he may share with...hmmm,” Gustav fell into himself again, remembering Elsa as he first met her. As he learned about her when working with her. As he dreamed about her when sharing his bed and breakfast. And as she so convincingly became Major Hesse’s ‘niece’ as the service of her father. Who was she, really? And who was her father? For that matter, who really was Gustav’s father, and mother? Perhaps it didn’t matter, now that the main bylaw on the books about to be re-written was ‘All men become brothers’, as was written by Schiller, converted to music by Beethoven, and turned into what was looking like a reality by the masses who seemed to freely follow Hans’ and Gustav’s leads.

Gustav looked at the clock above the stacks of books containing biomedical ideas he formulated as a student, soon to be shared with and, looking it at the other way, tested on human and veterinary patients. Ethics, from the perspective of the mind rather than the heart, entered into his thinking once again. Who is to be valued most? A horse with a small brain who would work itself to death in service of its rider, or a mounted human being with a large and mostly unused brain who fancied himself, or herself, master of all other life forms? And as for serving science or medicine, which was most important? Should he devote his time, energy and what ultimately would be limited resources to finding cures for diseases that commonly inflict the many, or indulge in the task of saving and transforming a few lives in peril? And what of the human soul? If an unexamined life is not worth living, then how pathologic was most of humanity? How much Life did human beings NOT experience? How un-Alive was the ‘average’ person? Why was there so much blind service of others or the sadistic oppression of others? Music could transform it, but then again, who dictates who can play music, and whose music can be listened to? And what to do about men like Major Hesse whose passion, and perhaps Naturally-designed purpose, was to be sure that whatever the dance step, people marched to someone else’s tune rather than their own?

Hans knocked at the door, opened it before Gustav was able to grab the handle, and gave him an envelope. Inside, tickets for passage and an address for lodging.

“Frankfort,” the Printer said, helping himself to a close examination of the envelope and the pre-packed bags, filled with papers, more dirt-stained musical manuscripts and books.

“Small town with more cows than people,” Gustav snickered. “I can be more effective to healing people’s bodies, and activating their minds, here, in Berlin.”

“Frankfort.” Hans insisted, sternly. Another agenda brewed behind a troubled grimace as he turned around and walked away.

“Yes, Frankfort” the printer said, admiringly. “You’ve been promoted.”

“You mean assigned,” Gustav pushed the printer aside, looking at what ‘Uncle Hans’ had prepared for him THIS time. “I’m bringing Else with me.”

“Only if she wants to go,” the reply, appended by Gustav being handed a letter.

Gustav grabbed the letter, turning around to read it. It was unopened, thankfully. It smelled of her touch, somehow. Gustav’s eyes smiled as he read the first line in a script which seemed surprisingly literate, and lyrical. “My dear Gustav”, he read to himself. As for the contents of the letter, it was brief, and penetratingly direct. “It is best that you listen to our ‘boss’, and go to Frankfort, immediately. The new German Parliament needs your brains and your father Ludwig’s Vision. I will come join you soon. How soon and if I do depends on how well you do your job, and the People’s job, in Frankfort. Go now, and do not try to find me, please. Long live the Revolutions, Elsa.”

Gustav felt the voice of Hans, his new ‘boss’, coming through the words of his new beloved. Her passion was always for people, not politics. It was unlike Elsa to obey orders from anyone, even someone she loved. He allowed the printer to approach him, then the letter. “Can you make sense of it?” the once again thrown to the wolves Gustav asked the printer. “Maybe you can read something between the lines, or within the calligraphy., Herr Professor Printer.”

The printer read the letter three times, smelled it, then felt the ink with his fingers. Gustav stared at his face as he tried on different ideas regarding what might be going on with Elsa. It seemed like this commoner knew women better than any man of letters did. Gustav hoped so, and prayed so, as he stroked his ink-stained mustache and uttered his final conclusion. “Women live in a different world than we do, my friend. We have to obey what they say, and try to accept what they mean.”

“And what does she mean?” Gustav asked, feeling angry and vulnerable at the woman he loved more than he calculated possible. “What the hell does she mean!!!?”

“That, for now, you have to go to Frankfort, Herr Professor Doctor Schmitt” the printer concluded.

Gustav looked at the diploma on the wall bearing some of those titles and took stock of his situation. “I’m taking that with me!” he insisted, taking the diploma down from the wall. At least this couldn’t be taken away from him. At least this recognition of accomplishment wouldn’t keep him guessing, who was with one beat respected as a Visionary and the other guided as a naïve child. His fingers felt cold, shaking as they found something behind the diploma which was not there when he hung it up.

It felt soft, and hard. A dried sunflower tied to note, in Elsa’s handwriting, though the script seemed to be a bit shaky in places. “Do not take this to Frankfort with you,” it read. “Build your own Visions there instead. For both of us.”

Gustav showed it to the printer, hoping for some insights. The printer seemed to know about Frankfort, and seemed to also know things about Hans and Elsa which he wasn't telling. Again, he kept his secrets behind his oversized brown eyes. Again, Gustav felt the need to hide his ignorance, and most importantly his fear. Something he learned from dealing with patients. As a doctor who now felt he was both the main surgeon at the operating table, and the patient under the knife of people he had to trust but didn't really know.

## CHAPTER 16

As predicted, Frankfort smelled more of cows than people. The 'town' was more like a village, and certainly didn't qualify as a city in its own right. The buildings were no more than three stories tall, and the highest structures of all were still the Church steeples. It seemed a welcome change to those cities where Gustav had been where the tallest structures were smokestacks in newly built factories. He found it refreshing to breath the air here. It seemed clearer and it was. The means of doing business here also was more basic to the human condition. Carts brought into town by farmers outnumbered markets which sold food, barter being the method of exchange of goods more than exchange of gold coins. It was a family town as well. Mothers and fathers together, with children accompanying them. A grandparent with a gimped leg, hunched back or defective mind always in tow, both tolerated and respected. It seemed like the main 'industry' in Frankfort was keeping families alive, happy if possible. Of course, the latter was crucially dependent on the new industry in town...enlightenment, its source being a large building converted into a Parliament, the real meaning of the term not known to most of the people who built the structure and those upgrading it for its new occupants. The possible threat to it always evident, in the form of soldiers strolling about guarding it, wearing uniforms Gustav didn't recognize.

Gustav recognized one of the men in the uniforms displaying the red, gold and black colors of the new German flag, and emerging Republic. He stood between Gustav and the door to the Parliamtary assembly to which he was now assigned. He turned away from his men, revealing his rank as a Captain, perhaps a middle grade lieutenant. His marched with a dignified and



respectful gait, halted himself twenty feet in front of Gustav, and tipped his hat with a subtle bow.

“Herr Professor Doctor Maestro,” Hesse said with a welcoming smile. “Good to see you again.”

“What are you doing here?” Gustav asked, noting the man in front of him transformed into someone who seemed very...human.

“I was re-assigned,” Hesse said, bowing again to Gustav, instructing his men to assist him with the rest of him with his bags. “It is a new day,” he proclaimed looking up at the clear blue sky, the German flag above the Parliament building blowing proudly in a brisk, confident, mind-clearing wind. “For all of us, Herr Doctor,” he said again, bowing, glancing at Gustav’s satchel, special attention drawn to the musical compositions in them, as well as a mechanical one.

“A carriage that can carry someone with no legs, on his own power,” Gustav said proudly of the doodling which came to him one day when trying to figure out second choice modes of transportation for those robbed of their own biological means of travel. “A motorized wheelchair,” he said. “Or perhaps a motorized charriot to carry those who had good legs. Faster than a horse.”

“What do you feed this mechanical horse of yours that can go wherever its rider wants to?” Hesse asked.

“For the moment, power of will,” Gustav related, and confessed, having still not figured out how to make the contraption on paper work in reality.

“I am sure that you and your esteemed colleagues will figure out what the correct fuel and carriers are for the power of will,” Hesse said, bowing with the reverence and humility of conquered general who feared that one day the world will need no more armies.

Gustav felt relieved by the reversal of positions. The young doctor, now representative of the Free German People of Berlin, felt encouraged by Hesse asking his men to help carry Gustav’s bags rather than ordering them, the word ‘please’ coming from his mouth through a demilitarized mustache now allowed to flow on its own rather than held in place rigidly with wax. He felt inappropriate letting someone else carry his bags, entering the People’s Parliamentary building carrying nothing except a small satchel containing his most precious documents, most importantly the Beethoven manuscripts entrusted to him by Maria 5, then Hans, and now Elsa. But, as Hesse stated, and seemed to accept, it was a new day. An un-precedented chance for scholars to be treated like kings, and reason to be valued above brute force.

With each step towards the building, Gustav felt the vibration of discourse and Enlightenment from inside from the soles of his feet to the ears covered by his overgrown, tastefully shabby Beethovenian hair. “If my father Ludwig could only hear us now,” he thought, and said.

“He is,” Hesse said, giving Gustav a hearty pat on the back upon reaching the door. “It’s all up to you now,” he announced, from a place that Gustav felt himself trusting.

Gustav walked up the steps to the main hall, and felt one person's presence above them all. Indeed, Professor Gutenberg's was here. His spirit echoed through the voice of every free thinking and as well as each open eared man. There were even a few women here, though some of the qualifications of being accepted into the assembly seemed to revolve around how visually appealing they were to men. The podium, was occupied by a man who looked like he should be in charge, and seemed to be, but this President, or Minister, or Coordinator, seemed as confused about what to do as the assembly people seemed committed to their own opinions, their deepest feelings invested into those ideas and ideals. For the moment, more muttering than screaming. It provided appropriate accompaniment to Gustav feeling Beethoven's music, his last string quartets most particularly. Dialogues between musical instruments which welcomed all layers to be added, integrated and embellished. The music of the old master, and friend, and father, was of course chaotic upon first examination, as was the banter between representatives in this, what seemed to be this 'Professor's Parliament', by the manner of speech, dress and demeanor. Gustav postulated that perhaps the debaters should voice their hypotheses and ideas through music rather than words, in order to find more universal grounding and expansions, but such could be proposed once the meeting came to 'order'. The young scholar rapidly graduated into the company of older ones put it on his ever-growing list of suggestions to offer, and assert, to his colleagues.

The assembly was finally called to order with a carpenter's hammer rather than a judge's gavel. The man wielding it showed the splinted and blood stained handle to the gathering, as was appropriate. A deep silence overtook the room, as the speaker, clad in a plain mostly black suit mentioned Ersnt Zimmas and bowed his head in prayer. Each member of the assembly did the same, praying to whatever God they worshipped, or wished they could trust. Gustav felt a redefinition of the the Divinity which ruled, or should rule, human behavior. It overtook the room, and himself. Everyone was unified. It seemed appropriate to begin the assembly with Beethoven's Ode to Joy, but silence seemed better, and more appropriate. A communal mind which allowed all to contribute seemed to overtake the hall at that magic moment. This felt like the freedom which all Germans yearned for. The freedom that the fierce and firey German spirit was destined to realize. Gone were the restraints of order that, paradoxically, became part of the Germanic way of life under the Kings, Kaisers and Barons. Gone was the mandate to above all be 'on time' and obedient. After having been oppressed by tyrants of Church and State, as well as those of the German people's own making, the Aryan spirit was free to express itself. To be proud of the Fire Within rather than to quench it. Finally, the freedom to breath. To speak. To sing. And to laugh. To dance, assuming that one doesn't have two left feet, and even if one did, the freedom to fall on the floor and get up on one's own power. "The freedom to be responsible, and vigilant through a document that would eventually make itself redundant and unnecessary," according to the speaker's own humble and well thought out words.

As everyone sat down, Gustav expected the speaker to take out the Communist Manifesto, with impish Hans' delivering copies of such to each of the four hundred representatives who had gathered. But each of the representatives, some assigned to be there, some self assigned to come, were issued a package containing three items. A stack of blank papers, a pen, and ink. More or less, the same amount of paper and ink to each of the assembly persons. He noted that

some thanked the 'clerks' with thank you's which were Polish and Hungarian. Such caused concerns by some, but not by most, thankfully. And thankfully, the speaker brought the assembly to harmony, rather than order, with a mandate. "A bill of basic rights is what we all must write, and abide by," he stated with the authority of a judge, a sixty year old face and arm recently lacerated by swords and bullets. Gustav noted that the stitch pattern would lead to scars and possibly infection, the latter of which he could smell. But such were minor details. Curing the now freed country of Germany, however it could be defined, in ANY language was the essential task at hand.

The speaker seemed wise, and smart. He took out a long list, reading the first item. "Freedom of the press," he announced, agreed to by a roar of enthusiastic affirmations. Confirmed by a show of hands, some of the assembly members raising both arms up. "Right to a fair trial", came next, along with "trial by jury of one's peers". As for who was one's peers, Gustav thought before he gave his 'aye' to it. How can one define one's peers? More workers' blood than professor's blood was shed in Berlin and Baden and other places the history books would not take very much note of, and this room seemed to be more of a university than a community hall. Then again, any laborer who took a bath, donned a suit and upgraded his speech to Hoch Deutch rather than local dialect could appear like or become a professor. Close examination of many of the 'professors' and other academics in the room's hands revealed blisters to Gustav's roving eye. These blister-handed thinking souls could have been academics who finally experienced the world they were discoursing about, or laborers whose reading they did between 14 hour shifts finally paid off.

The expositions of freedoms and votes of enthusiasm for them continued, moving on to "freedom of expression", to which Gustav rose to his feet before anyone else. His affirmation was supported by those who declared him the son of Beethoven, who is making his own rules with new music of a new republic. "Freedom of thought and independent investigation" became another rallying cry for Gustav, who yelled out the freedoms to "use science in the service of humanity instead of the the industrialists." Some of his former patients from Berlin hailed him as a brilliant healer and researcher. Gustav felt himself prouder for being recognized as being a brilliant scientist in a way that felt dangerous to his moral integrity and long term perspective, but it was time for celebration. "Freedom of religion" evoked less ayes at first, but the new Religion demanded that all agree, Jews displaying their faith with their hats, beards and prayer shalls daring to think that maybe it was for real this time. "Freedom from hunger" was approved, as was "freedom to negotiate for workers rights." Various specifications of such were proposed, the conditions of workers as mentioned by them shocking those whose blisterless hands were more used to holding pens and paper rather than picks and shovels. "Freedom of cultural expression" was heralded, in German, loudly, to distrust of Hungarians and Poles.

The list of freedoms got longer and longer. The specifications of such acquiring a legal tone with increasingly more verbage. The longer the claim, and preconditions to insure that it was inclusive, the more things lingered. Disagreement led to debate, which led to accusations, which led to insults, allowed of course because freedom of expression was passed.

Harmony became like chaos, as Gustav perceived it anyway. He watched as the speaker lost control of the room, and more representatives became possessed with their inner Passions. It

seemed, scientifically anyway, to be ineffective. The lower emotions of anger, jealousy and greed taking over. Anger rather than reason. But, Gustav pondered, maybe reason was over-rated. Love was certainly more powerful, and love of ideas and ideals sometimes is...messy, a condition which now Freed Germans, and Poles and Hungarians, needed to get used to. Gustav was reminded of another place where irrationality and lower emotions seemed to be correlated with positive results. The English Parliament was about cat calls, rude behavior and all manners of personal over-expression. Yet Britain was a democracy, a country that not really ruled by a king. And which spawned the most curious and promising democracy of them all...America.

Gustav, for the moment, watched, waited and contemplated what was going on, and how it would continue as he composed symphonies in the tradition of his father. Maybe one of the variations on the many themes he was composing in his head would be the new national anthem. At this point, anything could happen. FINALLY!

## CHAPTER 17

Gustav adjusted his medical diploma on the wall of the barn which now served as his new clinic, the morning sun blasting onto it, making each letter on it seem bolder and thicker. Elsa had asked him to leave it in Berlin, but he was glad that he ignored then defied her request to do so. He wondered what it would have been like to receive the diploma at a 'normal' ceremony in Hamburg with the normal fanfare accompanying the event, but felt even prouder that it was given to him early, in good faith, without him having to complete all of the prescribed coursework. Like his mentor, Professor Guttenburg, Gustav was far better at writing his own medical books anyway, and in the tradition of the old fart, what Gustav predicted and postulated in his rapidly expanding mind turned out to be true in the real world 98 percent of the time, biologically anyway.

It felt right to be here with his new trade. Negotiating with people was interesting, but negotiating with Nature with regard to the biological fates of people was the real challenge of a Promethian mind, and spirit. As for funding the endeavor, the Beethoven manuscripts willed to him by Maria 5 had brought in sufficient good will with bankers to secure a healthy loan for the facility. And as for any supplies he'd need in his medical Revolution, pre-payments for speaking engagements as Beethoven's son, and a new musical composer for a new Germany were coming in by the hour.

As for the patient load for the day, it was about what nature did to people rather than what people did to people, at least with swords, guns and shratnel. There was Johan Richter, his lips and toothless mouth still bleeding due to ulcers he incurred when on a Dutch freighter, his 40 year old bones as brittle as a ninety year old invalid, both curable by rose hips extract and a daily dose of sunlight. Frau Gotlieb, who drank her liver into a pickle that even Prometheus couldn't grow back, treatable with milk thistle, with an underlying mental disorder that had to be due to lack of an adrenal-like brain chemical, somehow replenished in part with Saint John's wart and chocolate. Asthma in the bright-eyed ten-years-tortured Tanenbaum twins, which responded to medicinals that upened up their airways and, interestingly, also made most of the blood in their legs sink into their ankles and more blood flow to the arm musculature, perhaps due to an unidentified type of receptor on blood vessels themselves. The Ranselhoff family and their neighbors, with diarrhea worse than that of their cows, no doubt due to something growing in their swamp-like drinking water which unless avoided or treated would cause another cholera epidemic. Violinist AND fiddler Deitrick Olson, whose crippling carpal tunnel constriction in the wrists was being cured by Gustav's improvised mechanical instrument which gently pulled the tendons into healing naturally, rather than the traditional method of tightly constricting them, forcing the connective tissue and nerves into convoluted painful knots which nearly drove Herr

Olson into accepting amputation as the only solution for his pain and encroaching paralysis. And Father Schiller's recent spells of weakness and unexpected irritability, along with his pale color, caused perhaps by too much lead in the barrels he used to store sacrificial wine and was inadvertently giving to his parishioners, successfully treated so far anyway with chelating agents that bound the toxic metal specifically.

Gustav even found himself diagnosing his own family while putting together the real life history of his mad yet clairvoyant father, ascertaining that old Ludwig perhaps was afflicted, or blessed, with mercury toxicity. He also undertook it upon himself to hypothesize the pathology of cruelty and propose a cure for ignorance, from a biological perspective, manifested most intensely by the first patient of the day.

Hesse came into the clinic in merchant's suit, though his boots were still military issue. "When I was discharged, they let me keep my boots," he confessed with shame and restrained anger, just as a blinding headache overcame him.

Gustav noted something in his eyes, a quivering in the pupil which seemed odd, with a slight tilting to the left. Another flash of something bolted inside the young doctor's head as he led Hesse to the wall, requesting that he read a chart containing letters of various size, as well as colors. "Tell me what you see," he asked, wondering why the medications he had prescribed for Hesse's ocular and neurological problems worked on all every other patient except him.

Hesse stared at the letters on the wall, but not on the chart. His eyes fixed on Gustav's medical diploma, possessed by something in it as he gritted his teeth to make sense of all the details.

"It's in Latin," Gustav said. "The script is supposed to be unreadable, with words that have meanings no one really knows, but pretends to appreciate, at least amongst one's colleagues." He went on and on about how academics played games with each other's minds and their own as well with the end goal of knowing, or appearing to know, something that no one else did, or could. But it fell on ears that were failing to hear the sounds, and eyes that kept squinting, no matter how close Hesse moved to the parchment.

Gustav saw and felt Hesse's frustration. The ideological enemy of the Revolution and basic morality maybe didn't deserve the best medical treatment possible, but he was in need of it. Gustav prescribed another round of medications for the iron fisted muscle man for the King's will whose hand now shook like a leaf in a brisk and firm wind. Hesse seemed old, helpless and, perhaps convertible to a more healthy moral perspective which the Revolutions needed. He sent the once powerful and now old man out the door with a fatherly pat on the back, assuring him that the headaches, blurred vision and weakening limbs was a temporary condition. Perhaps it was. One Guttenburgian fact which super-ceded all others was that all well motivated neurologically-afflicted patients get better, assuming of course that Nature had not turned sadistic, or there was a Promethian doctor such as Gustav as arbitrator between humanity and its Creator reminding both parties of their responsibilities to each other.

In the newly emerging tradition of being multifaceted and multidisciplinary, Gustav ended his medical duties at 3 pm, reserving the rest of the day for political, social and artistic pursuits. The most powerful carrier of such was still the printed word. En route to the publisher's office he saw evidence of such, an old printing press built in the manner of the original Guttenberg nearly four hundred years ago, collecting dust in a storage barn next to it. It seemed like a kitchen table smashed into a cheese press by a drunken carpenter, something a child could invent by modern 19<sup>th</sup> century standards, but there was a precision to it which seemed godlike. Metal casts for each letter, aligned by wooden boards which were stained black with ink and red with the blood of the typesetters. A compact cheese-like block that pressed the ink onto thin sheets of paper, all mounted atop three wooden stilts. Next to it was a replica of a Guttenburg Bible, the first book to be set to print on a press in the Western World.

Gustav's knowledge of history reminded him that this was the first time commoners could read the Bible for themselves. He wondered if such made them believe the stories within it stronger, or question them, or redefine them. If the Bible had not been printed, Luther would not have had the following he did. Wars between Protestants and Catholics would not have followed. Yes, knowledge was a dangerous and potentially deadly thing, but it beat ignorance. And tribute to that Promethian attribute required a visit to the owner of the barn, and the potential vendor of the 'cheese press'.

Publisher/printer Werner Ulmann had at first meeting seemed like a common, even simple minded man. All he did was correct grammar and set type, leaving the task of writing the words and formulating the ideas within them to the writer. But the manner in which he edited material given to him was such that the writer thought himself more brilliant than he was. At this third meeting with Ulmann, Gustav was even more impressed with his understated abilities. "I didn't know I was so great a writer," he said as he perused the now edited 'Cures for the Human Body, Mind and Spirit', a medical text written more like a satirical novel than a discourse on human biology. Within it lay designs on how magnets, wood and metal could be hammered into more effective devices for mending human bodies, moving human limbs and transporting human bodies could be made to happen, with various speculations as to what kind of Promethian Fire could give those devices life with ample poetic commentary amidst the mathematical formulas and engineering specifications. Gustav seemed more impressed with his work than ever, and for good reasons.

"I just made the words flow together a bit better," Ulmann smiled. Indeed he did, along with insertions in pen which matched not only Gustav's inner voice, but his penmanship as well. "And flushed out some ideas which you understated. Made the others a bit clearer to the common reader," he continued in a confident tone which did reek of some lingering resentment for parties he would never speak of.

Being short on time and overloaded with other worldly commitments for the day, Gustav's moved his attention to his father's manuscripts next, written in musical notes rather than words, the verses not yet finished. "I was thinking of completing them myself, but perhaps the first version of these should be Ludwig's alone," he stated.

“Yes, it would be kinder and wiser to let others finish these symphonies and string quartets,” Ulmann offered.

“Or improvise on them,” Gustav offered. “As long as they obeyed all of the notations that my father put on the music. Something Mozart and everyone else before him was too lazy to do. Perhaps such was the reason why Beethoven wrote only nine symphonies and Hyden wrote sketches for a hundred.”

“Yes, or perhaps Beethoven didn’t want to repeat himself, taking credit five times for one idea,” Ulmann said, with another agenda, pushing the most recent unedited medical manuscripts towards Gustav. Indeed the old fart was right. Gustav had repeated many themes, and many jokes, many times, thinking that they were new. Once again he felt corrected, but not chastised.

Something was going very right, with everything and everyone. The only thing missing was Elsa, who neither showed up to congratulate him on his political accomplishments, nor wrote to him to tell him about her failures and successes. As for the latter, a testimony to Gustav’s knowledge and intuition walked up to Herr Ulmann’s counter, proudly strutting his confident and sure footed stride. His eyes were wide open, bright and absorbed everything around him. With his rock solid hand he lifted up his hat and bowed to Gustav. “Good afternoon, Herr Schmitt,” Hesse said, transformed from a neurological nightmare to a man whose health and apparently spirit had been cured.

“Yes, it is a good afternoon,” Gustav replied, blissfully shocked that his medical extrapolations and biological ideas resulted in no less than a miracle cure for his least favorite man, but most favored patient.

“It is a miraculous afternoon,” Hesse declared with a bold voice, and wide smile. “And a great day.”

“Yes, a great day,” Gustav replied, finding himself believing it. Noting that Hesse’s eyes were now healed, and being used to read everything in front of him. The latest Wild Fronteer novel from America about Daniel Boone. The racy historical account about Catherine the Great from the perspective of her only female lover, perhaps truth or perhaps fiction. The humanized and humorized medico-philosophical, text written by the man who had now opened Hesse’s eyes, and the mind behind it.

The dour and actively-lifeless ex-Major now laughed, out loud, at the jokes Gustav had put into print which had merely made him smile briefly between the cheeks. The laughter was contagious as Hesse gave voice to them, providing a dimension to the quips and witicisms that Gustav didn’t realize he had put into them. Hesse’s laughter led Ulmann into hysterics, then every other customer who came into the publisher’s shop. Finally, the hero of the day, Gustav, joined in. He felt his gut bust open, his heart liberated, his mind freed from itself. Freed from grieving about Ernst Zimmas’ death, Professor Guttenburg’s sudden disappearance, and even his beloved Elsa’s absence. Vigilance took a needed holiday, as his body felt lighter, looser, then deeply connected once again...to a fist grabbing his arm and two guns pointed at his back.



He turned around and saw two policemen with soldier's eyes, then turned to their commander, who flashed his medical diploma in his face.

"This is yours?" Hesse said, in a voice which was firm, determined and as evil as it ever had been.

"Yes," Gustav said proudly, as he saw his now terrified audience of civilians backing up from him, prevented from leaving out the door by two more policemen, with kinder eyes, wearing the colors of the new Revolutionary German Public. Gustav recognized them from the assembly hall as friends, and saw in their faces the hurt looks of betrayal and disappointment.

"You earned this degree, 'Doctor' Schmitt?" Hesse asked Gustav.

"Yes." Gustav proclaimed regarding the diploma, awarded to him prematurely, by Hans, who was nowhere to be found, who declined to tell him who he knew at the University of Hamburg to make it happen, and to make it happen just in time so that Gustav's medical skills and recently-discovered musical pedigree as Beethoven's son could be used in a Revolution which Hans seemed to be engineering. "Yes, I earned this degree!" Gustav proclaimed. "I am a doctor."

"Who doctored this paper," Hesse related to the assembly of witnesses, most notably Ulmann, the man who would decide what gets printed and what could become readable. Hesse backed up his claim by producing several other diplomas from the University of Hamburg, demonstrating to Ulmann, then the rest of the group, the subtle differences in calligraphy with his sharp eyes and a magnifying glass. Then the differences in the ink used by scraping a portion off and mixing it with small vials of chemicals obtained from his coat pocket, producing for all to see a red solution from Gustav's parchment and a green hue from the ink obtained from the real diplomas.

"I am a doctor!" Gustav asserted, noting that some of the assembly were his own patients, now cured, but feeling betrayed. "All of you are witness to that!" he continued.

"Whatever you say, Meastro Ludwig von Beethoven the Second, or as your deluded mind may still think, the Ultimate," Hesse said in the manner of a compassionate doctor humoring a patient suffering from delerium and delusion. With that, he called in another gentleman who asked to Ulmann to produce the Beethoven manuscripts. Herr Salzburg, by name. A musicologist by reputation. A one-eyed man with a burnt, disfigured face on one side which he wore with pride. A fence-sitter by political affiliation, who survived four generations of political upheaval by rising to the top on the wave of 'neutrality'.

Salzburg inserted a monocle into his one good eye and carefully perused the parchments entrusted to Gustav by Maria 5, Hans and the old Master Himself perhaps. He looked up and faced the congregation of believers, disbelievers and agnostics, then looked into Gustav's pale white face. "I'm sorry, Herr Schmitt," he said to him softly.

"Those are real!" Gustav asserted, his inner mind knowing that the gentleman following Hesse's orders.

“Yes, but they are not authentic,” the soft-spoken reply, delivered with blunt impersonality.

All of Gustav’s admirers, friends and students shook their heads in disgust. Gustav struggled with whatever strength he had left to find a way to convince them that it was all a scam initiated by Hesse to turn Revolutionaries against each other, then against the Revolution. But first he had to overcome his worst enemy, his inner self doubt that suggested that maybe everything, from his prematurely-awarded diploma, to Maria S’s claim that he was Beethoven’s son, to even his awakened abilities as a scientist, musician and political leader, to Elsa’s love for him, were all fake. Orchestrated by Mother Nature and Father Fate in a sadistic alliance to see their favorite son squirm, suffer and repent.

While Gustav’s stuttering mouth tried to state counter-arguments to Hesse’s accusations, as well as to his own self-doubts about himself, both the Military and the Revolutionary policemen took clapped irons on his feet and hands, pulling him out the door. Slamming his aching head into a wagon, then gagging his mouth with a handkerchief douced with his own newly developed chemicals designed to rob the human mind of the consciousness of pain, and everything else. The world turned upside down as he fell into an uneasy and horror-infused slumber.

## CHAPTER 18

With regard to the reality that is was, it wasn’t so bad. Gustav skin felt a hot chill in the stagnant air, and could hear Beethoven’s music, and his own, between his ears with a thundering echo which was louder than anything else, even the already escalated sound of Silence. He could see the notes too, moving from left to right, and sometimes top to bottom, in front of his bloodshot eyes on the grey wall in front of him. Mice with enlarging ears grew large rabbit

heads and hopped up and down to the beat of the music and its intense ‘under-beats’. Six legged creatures moved in from the bottom of the ‘page’, collecting in small congregations then scattering about in a choreographic demonstration of free-form dance which honored the music, and the freedom of the art form itself. Some of the creatures resembled the mechanical devises he had drawn on paper, particularly the horse carrying charriot, now fueled by liquid fire emanating from the center of the earth. “Yes,” Gustav thought to himself as he found himself at one with the symphony as its Creator and Creation. “This is not so bad. It’s rather great,” he said to himself as he felt his head grow three times larger than his body, which seemed to shrivel up into a thin sliver of feather-light and very transient ‘flesh’.

Though part of him knew otherwise. His rational mind told him that this wasn’t a carriage zooming up through the sky into the heavens, but a holding cell. His real body felt the cold of the floor and the shackles around his wrist, most particularly the ones labelling him as mentally unstable. And as for the dancers to the music, they were in reality rats and roaches with less regard to well being of ‘renters’ of this cell than the ‘hotel keepers’ who had put him here.

Maestro Gustav felt his face, the long stubble feeling like harsh sandpaper. His skin felt cold but with a hot flash underneath it. His mouth, dry but hungering for something other than water. His limbs looked to be as if they belonged to another person. Time and space seemed meaningless. Sounds of even his own breathing felt to be as loud as winds pounding in from the North Sea, with the feeling of a south wind from the Bavarian mountains, given texture by souls around him in other locked ‘flying carriages’ which were going to more horrifying places than he, for the moment, was experiencing. One score went through his head as he realized that indeed this mental disease sanitorium was primary a jail, at least for him. It was the score from *Fidelio*, Beethoven’s only opera about a man who was imprisoned for his attempts to liberate an oppressed people from a cruel tyrant. And his wife, Leonora, who, so the opera said, liberates him once she liberates herself from selective compassion for him along, connecting to a Universal Compassion felt equally for everyone, in service of those who need it most and who can do the most with what is given.

Something else was going on as well. He recognized the symptoms as something he wrote himself. Someone had given him drugs which he himself had formulated for putting people into sleep which would allow them to have surgery done on their bodies. What kind of surgery was he in store for? Whatever it was, it would be a long operation, the details of which he recorded in an empty book left in his cell, along with pens and very small ink wells to draw from. He felt himself being watched through the cracks in the cell wall by eyes which wanted to see him fall. The hands of those observers seemed to know what he was thinking, as a tray of food was snuck into the cell. The aching in his belly said to eat it. However, the part of his mind which still wanted and needed to connect Reality to the way things really were in the world said to go hungry. He put it to a test with one of his ‘dancers’, a kindly enough mouse who he purposely didn’t name, to whom he fed a generous morsel of the aromatic stew. As predicted, and feared, the rodent seemed to become a roaring lion, then felt itself eaten by another creature outside itself, resulting in a tremors then a deep, uneasy sleep, from which he never woke up.

“Perhaps one can reach the stars by digging deeper into the ground, with intensity of Spirit that inspires the mind and leaves the lower and security-addicted brain behind”, he wrote with the

precious little ink he had. He concluded the entry with some musical notes, placing the book under his coat, trusting the emerging wave of exhaustion to take him to sleep, and perhaps a dream which would explain or redeem his current reality.

On the next 'day', or perhaps week, according to the elongated stubble which had become a beard, the music was less harmonic. The screaming from prisoners, or as they were called officially, 'patients' in cells around him became more intense. Gustav found himself emitting brief screams of panic, which he swore he would not do. He felt more hunger, and dared to drink the water given to him, and offered the food to the furry, long tailed 'dancers' who entered his cell. They seemed to survive the feeding, but then started to speak with him in rodent language which sounded like human speech. Indeed, by all accounts of time, he had not heard a human voice in a two weeks, other than of course the echoing screams of those around him. Low mutterings in the silence sounded like messages, but he knew they weren't real. He also knew that whatever madness he would 'accomplish' would be turned around by somebody, but it beat deadness. With the last of his ink, he wrote down a musical solution to the immediate problems at hand, as well as what he envisioned were the problems for and in the world outside. His own 'Plato's Republic', or rather 'Gustav's Utopian Reality' with a libretto set to music which he felt, or hoped, his father Ludwig would understand, and feel. When the ink ran out, he gathered his own feces and pounded them into ink. When that ran out, he used the tip of the pen to pierce his own flesh to continue to Opus in blood. Such would last longer on the page and, if he survived, and if the Work survived, would give a haunting novelty to the discourse. He could still see Elsa's angelic face, Hans' ugly chin, and Professor Guttenburg's piercing eyes. He could still hear Beethoven's music, and his own. But they were becoming cloudy, as he struggled to capture them on paper while the memories and relationship of them to the world somewhere on the other side of the walls was still alive. Hunger for a dignified death now overcame his hunger for food, as he knew that it would be deadly for his mind to eat what was given to him, and even more horrible for his soul if he resorted to dining on the meat of his four and six legged dancers, and friends. His frail and weakening body would die Sane, or at least in Divine Madness. A wish he held onto until he fainted, in the middle of the last chapter of writing his Magnum Opus, on paper which no doubt had been smuggled in to him by someone whose identity he perhaps may know, or perhaps may never know.

It could have been days, weeks, or years. Gustav tried to keep track of days as measured by the sunlight from the cracks in the ceiling of the cell, but could not see what was under it. Trays of food kept coming in, with no human voice behind them. He thought about using the food as another source of ink, but had run out of paper, and soon afterwards, ideas to write on them. The only thing left to paint on was the canvas of his mind, upon a background which became a blinding white, a vacuum-like black then a lifeless grey, which was the worse of all. He knew he had to hold on, but for what? Or for who?

His mind fought to stay Alive by frequent visits with his deceased father, Ludwig von Beethoven. His heart refused to stop beating because it yearned for and remembered Elsa. Both agendas were served by the memory of Fidelio, his absentee father's only opera. Gustav

found himself hating old Ludwig, but loving the opera, re-writing it in his aching head again and again. He cast himself as Florestan, a freedom-championing political prisoner thrown into a dark dungeon by Don Pizarro, hoping that his wife, Leonora would continue the struggle in his absence. Yes, Gustav's opera would not be written about Leonora disguising himself as a water boy to infiltrate the prison, unexpectedly becoming beloved by the jailer's daughter, then even more unexpectedly finding her heart and mind open to the plight of all political prisoners fighting and dying for the Cause of Freedom. Yes, this opera by Gustav von Beethoven-Schmitt would be about Leonora's husband. He could feel the libretto, hear every instrument in every passage of the music accompanying it, see the set design in every detail. But with one problem. The words in which he wrote this new Vision of Fidelio were in language he could feel, but not understand or produce, a tongue that came out of his parched and sore-infested mouth. The music was in vibrations from his gut rather than sounds in his ears. And as for the visualization of it on stage, and the audience liberated as a result of seeing it, the third eye in the middle of his forehead saw it but the ocular portholes alongside were as blind as Hesse's heart was dead.

On this day, which felt colder than most, Gustav felt it to be October. He could see smoke in front of his eyes, creating foggy ice on the mat of overgrown hair which his hairless face had now become. He stroked his head, taking care to not disturb the roaches which had found a home in it, and tried to remember what year it was. As for the Revolution, he wondered how it was going. His jailers had been the Revolutionaries and the Counter-Revolutionaries, after all. His Comrades had betrayed him to the civil authorities, and he had been denied due process to explain his fraud with regard to his being the son of Beethoven, a diploma'd physician-scientist, and a man. He turned once again to the still-unnamed rodents who stayed around for the morsels of food, or perhaps the joy of seeing a member of a superior species break down into dysfunctionality and terror. "Damn surname-less Hans who started all of this shit," he blasted out. "Damn Ernst Zimmar, who thanks to an accident of death will be written up in the history books instead of me. Damn the printer whose arms I saved from the amputation saw. Damn the publisher who was going to distribute my books. Damn Maria 5 for letting me grow up in a foster home where there was everything except love, vitality and the truth. And damn nurse-healer Elsa who probably is a whore after hours, or with every doctor with money, prestige or power."

There were others on the list of people to hate. People who had opened Gustav's heart and now broke it. People who had to be able to do SOMETHING for him. In the last month, by his beard length calculation anyway, the screaming from other 'residents' of this hotel had disappeared. Perhaps their mental problems were cured, their pathological yearning for freedom and expansion of their souls replaced by a newfound love for confinement of mind and satisfaction with the way things are. Those here for other reasons, perhaps real medical ailments, seemed to be liberated as well. Maybe they were all cured now. Maybe the entire world had cured itself, with Gustav as the only patient left, or perhaps the Christ-like Promethian hero whose journey into hell made possible everyone else's entry into Heaven.

Gustav looked at the paper manuscripts cataloging that sojourn. They had, thus far, only been eaten away by his new four legged friends at the corners. He considered about giving the rest of it to them, as they were his only audience and world now. But after looking into "Big Ones"

eyes as he looked lustfully at “Little One”, following up with his urge and mandate to perpetuate his species, Gustav hesitated. Still more work to be done, he thought to himself.

Daylight gave way to moonlight from above, the end of another 24 hours of surgery someone was doing on him. And, as evidenced by the lack of effect of the food on the rats, without any medications or anesthetic.

With that he inserted the manuscripts into his now button-less coat pocket, tying it closed with a bent fork, thinking once again about folding the sharp ends into his ribs, but not then doing so, for the first time. He said goodnight to the rats in front of him, the moon above him, and the Silence surrounding him on all sides, closing in with a deafening hush. He closed his eyes, hoping to wake up in another place, or perhaps dimension. He offered his soul up to whatever Deity may be able to provide such a service. Several hours, or perhaps days, later, the request was granted.

## CHAPTER 18

Every day since his admission to the ‘hospital’, Gustav had tried to open the door to his cell. Every day he exhausted himself trying to use his muscles to do so, and his mind to figure out how it could be unlocked. Every day the attempts failed. It was a ritual he attempted every day, after trying to he see with his ears the always silent meal giver. This ‘day’, said provider of enough sustenance to keep him from starving but never enough to feel fed, had quieter footsteps. And he displayed manners. He knocked this time. And, interestingly, with four repeating beats which registered on the musical scale as E, E, E, C, then D,D,D, G, the fourth note in each sequence elongated. It sounded like a door knock, anyway. Perhaps knucked on metal, or perhaps human bone on tin plates. It was repeated, again and again, with only a hint of a food tray under the slot. Every time Gustave tried to grab the tray, it was retrieved, its deliverer knocking out the eight note sequence again, and again. Louder and louder, then humming it in with a ghostlike raspy voice, which turned the notes into music that Gustav recognized.

“Papa?” he asked, recognizing the notes as being that of Beethoven’s fifth symphony. “Or shall I call you, father, friend, Comrade?” he continued feeling a chill in the air with his skin but not

his mind, through a body which felt like it was getting lighter, leaving flesh behind while something else was carrying him upward.

The door cell opened, as if by a silent wind, locking in place, affording Gustav . Again, the visitor knocked out the first refrain from the Fifth, then extended a pale, wrinkled hand into the food slot, its fingers asking for an answer. Begging for an answer. Then demanding an answer.

Gustav looked at his notes, gazing at the notes he put down for the second movement of his own 5<sup>th</sup> Leonora Overture. To the prefixes that contained the famous, and moving, 8 note introduction to Beethoven's fifth symphony. He hummed it out to the visitor, receiving nothing but silence. The ghost's hand ordered Gustav to produce something else. Knowing that he wrote with more authority and vitality than how he spoke, Gustav took the leap of faith and inserted his notes into the hand's palm. Its bearer pulled it out, then waited, humming the passages Gustav wrote two, three, then four times, commenting with a philosophical 'hmmmm'. Gustav flashed upon what it needed, by either remembering what he didn't put down on the page or discovering it fresh. He hummed it with trembling lips closed, then sung in one of the 'mad' languages of his own making, with a wide open mouth and, as he discovered, a widening smile.

The hand seemed satisfied, the door opening another inch, then locking shut. The ghost hummed a few more bars of the Fifth Symphony, then beckoned Gustav to 'speak' again, this time with a heightened sense of urgency and a 'nothing but the best will do' mandate.

Gustav moved closer to the door, trying to get a closer look at the visitor but the ghost moved aside, allowing him a view of nothing but a robe as black as a cold mountain night, and skin as white as freshly fallen snow. Again it hummed the first part of the passage to be completed, or refuted. Again, Gustav answered from his heart, mind, and gut. Again the door opened another inch, then closed shut.

The musical conversation between the ghost and Gustav continued, for a full melody, a bridge, and a counter melody, and finally, merging of the three into a fugue in which all themes acted as both servant and master to the music at hand, building, evolving and then finally pulling in with a triple pianissimo lowering of the volume with an escalating tension that came, came, came and finally broke out, and up, into Divine Laughter for student Gustav and his teacher at the other side of the door.

The scientist-physician felt himself falling off a cliff and soaring to the stars, all at the same time. The door to the cell opened, finally, but he didn't need to know who was at the other side of it now. He closed his eyes, and felt his guest breathing fire into the air in front of him. Maybe it was from his mouth, or maybe from his ass. Perhaps both. Beethoven's ghost, come to retrieve his son from the drudgeries of having to be in the realm of the living, would no doubt speak from both orifices.

Out of courtesy to his visitor, as well as a curiosity as to what his delusional mind wanted to see, Gustav finally did open his eyes. The ghost was hardly anyone he would suspect. And when he reached out to touch it, it didn't disappear like so many of the other illusions he had 'seen' in the

last few weeks of his madness, such as those of Hans, Professor Guttenburg, Elsa and, most frighteningly, himself.

“Yes, I am alive,” Maria 5 answered from a body which felt real, and was real. “You saved me from death, and made me well again. Or someone did, with the miracle medicines you invented which someday will be accepted and used by the rest of the world, my son,” she said with a voice that had lost its death rattle. A face and torso which were more flesh than bone. Eyes that smiled as they saw the world as it was. Legs that could hold up her 70 year old body. And non-shaking arms that reached out to hug Gustav, clothed in a clean, white hospital gown she wore like a lady rather than a patient, a man’s black overcoat over it which she flung about like a dancer, or a whore.

He pulled away. Terrified of the miracle in front of his eyes. “How!???” he demanded to know of the woman who seemed to know Beethoven’s music from the inside. And who seemed to resemble, around the eyes anyway, images Gustav had seen of himself in the mirror before his incarceration from world, and his internal ‘liberation’ from the realm of material forms soon afterwards. “How?!!!” he demanded once again.

“‘Why’, you mean,” she continued, strolling around the hallway of the ‘hospital’ with a limp that was consistent with the atrophied left leg Gustav remembered her many interesting and hard months earlier, in Hamburg.

“Alright, why?” Gustav said, noting that the facility was empty. The doors all open. The stench of urine and blood penetrating through the hallways.

“Because I am your mother,” she answered, edging into Gustav’s terrified face. “And we both know who your real father was...and still is,” the crazy woman smiled with certainty that was both affirmative and gentle.

“God protects drunks and fools,” Gustav recalled, but dared not say to Maria 5. By the look of her wrists and ankles, there were becoming healed from restraints that had been put into them. A week or two after the flesh had been constricted by the shackles and ropes, on first glance. She seemed to be well fed, but still mal-nurished. And she was alone. But how did she gain her freedom, when Gustav had been denied his.

“I snuck out of my room when no one was looking,” she whispered to Gustav, seeming to know his question before he could ask it. She pushed the hood off her head, revealing a short mop of badly shorn hair, producing what had been there from her pocket and the pair of sheers used to obtain the lush, three-foot long silver-white mane. “I put my hair on a pillow stuffed with straw and a blanket over it, then sneak away. I don’t want them to get into trouble, so sometimes I go back to my room and pretend I’m still there,” she continued. “The guards here are prisoners too, you know.”

“And they all seem to have liberated themselves,” Gustav said, noting no evidence of anyone in the hall, or any of the adjacent tunnels in the castle which had been converted into a ‘mental hospital’.



“Maybe they liberated their bodies, but as for their souls, my darling son,” she smiled as Gustav heard footsteps, slowly, one at a time, coming up from the top of a stairway whose entry was hidden by shadows. He silenced her gently and moved her aside, allowing the visitor to enter.

Gustav leaned against the wall adjacent to the stairway, holding Maria close to her. She seemed to welcome his warmth. He hoped she would not feel his fear. With every breath, the footsteps came closer and closer, then stopped on the other side of the wall. A large shadow was cast, its bearer turning around, slowly, towards Maria 5, who snuck her head out to say ‘hello’.

Gustav pulled Maria back, grabbed hold of the sheers in her pocket, then latched out at the intruder, reaching for what seemed to be the neck, prepared, finally, to fight back. His valour was rewarded by empty air, as he fell to the ground, atop a large dog bearing two heads. One his own, and the other the decapitated head of a ‘patient’ with long, blonde hair soaked with blood. He let it fall to the ground, but its eyes wanted to be seen, most particularly by its former bearer.

“She was a great girl,” Maria 5 said as Gustav identified the patient in question.

“Elsa!” Gustav grunted out of his trembling lips.

“She had some very good ideas,” Maria 5 continued, consoling her son with an ‘all is fine’ hug. “A good soul too. You know, having a good soul doesn’t always mean that you have great ideas, or even good ideas,” she continued. “I can remember your father, Ludwig, wrote great music. But the pianos he pounded to death before he made them play beautiful music. And the hearts he broke as well. But, God doesn’t give us challenges we can’t handle, or turn around into golden opportunities, like you,” she said, proudly, putting her arm on Gustav’s shoulder, looking at the manuscripts he had written, humming the score with a musical voice that didn’t miss a beat nor any of the puns within the notes.

Shock, anger, then rage overtook Gustav in rapid succession. Soon came action, which made him look into all the other cells. There they all lay, dead. The nameless printer whose arms Gustav had saved after they had been crushed during the procession to petition the King, both amputated days before his throat had been snapped with a rope. Herr Salzburg, the deformed one eyed musicalogist whose ‘testimony’ at the Ulmann’s Publishing House regarding the authenticity of Maria 5’s ‘lost’ Beethoven manuscripts made it be known to all in Hesse’s world, and Gustav’s, that they were forgeries. And Hans, his all knowing yet still sleezy eyes burnt out in a corpse that lay lifeless on the cold floor. Each with their throats slashed, their mouths burnt into a black pit with acid, slits on their foreheads with empty pockets underneath them sewn up ever-so meticulously with an overlocking continuous line of sutures.

“That lovable, sly imp told his doctor that you were a real doctor, to those who mattered anyway,” Maria 5 commented.

“So, he did forge my medical diploma,” Gustav surmised.

“So you could use it, when it was most needed,” she affirmed, humming another Beethoven tune to a dance step that had nothing to do with the music at first glance, but seemed to find its inner beat and rhythm.

“And who was his doctor?” Gustav asked of the crazy woman who now danced like a nimble nymph.

“A nice man with a handsome mustache” she said.

“By the name of Hesse, mother?” Gustav asked. “Who you sang for?”

“He met you before, you know. Before you were famous. In Hamburg, I remember him saying,” She said, waltzing herself in a  $\frac{3}{4}$  beat to a  $\frac{4}{4}$  melody towards a cell containing a piano surrounded by an ample supply of writing paper.

It finally hit Gustav like a trombone blasting its notes into the ears of a flautist in front of it, with a triple fortissimo thunderbolt. Hesse had been visiting Officer in the mental asylum in Hamburg where he first met Hans. The one in which Hans hid himself from his sight, and tried to shield Gustav from his view as well. The place where Hans had found Maria 5, and apparently had been found by Hesse as well. Of course Hesse would be leading the cavalry guard in Berlin, where Hans chose to lead his wing of the people’s Revolution. The Revolution which was centered around Beethoven’s ‘lost’ and now found son, and the Maestro’s lost, and to be expanded, music.

There was something about Maria’s singing which was very much Beethoven. He felt it in his gut, and confirmed it with his mind. And when she played the piano, the notes and music felt like it was Beyond Beethoven as well. Even her manner of playing seemed to be that of the old master, her delicate, flower-like feminine fingers clenching the keys with a sense of very masculine urgency. Not that of an angel dancing to Heaven’s music, but a Promethian mortal grabbing fate by the throat and forcing God and man to unite in one Cause for a yelp of victory, liberation, and laughter.

Yes, from Gustav’s undoubtedly deranged brain, it felt like Beethoven’s spirit had come into this crazy woman who claimed to have been his Immortal Beloved before her hair turned white and her sensuous legs had turned into brittle sticks. She apparently had been entrusted with Beethoven’s music, somehow. And he, somehow, had been charged with a more worldly place in which to make the music happen, and felt.

The exact connection became apparent when she latched up another piece of paper in mid passage and scribbled the notes down. In a handwriting which was identical to Beethoven’s. Laying down music which only the Master himself could have conceived.

Another thunderbolt hit Gustav as he watched Maria 5 work herself up into a volcano of Blissful fury, then collapse from utter exhaustion, falling into his supporting arms, looking up at Gustav with a warm and uniting smile.

“You wrote symphonies for Doctor Hesse?” he asked.

“Only because he asked me to, and because, well, he needed music to awaken his soul more than anyone else,” her reply.

With that she fell into a sound, and happy, sleep. Not yet to the other side of the great divide, but well on her way. Certainly to be delivered there by Mother Nature soon if she were not kept alive by a doctor who could deliver her from death. A doctor like Gustav.

Maybe Maria was Beethoven’s Immortal Beloved, the woman who opened his heart to the needs of man and woman kind. Maybe the manuscripts Maria 5 willed to Gustav were really that of Ludwig von Beethoven. And maybe the Old Master did impart his compositions to her after his death through her body, and the seeds of ‘Beyond Beethoven’ music to Gustav’s previously anti-musical mind. And maybe Ludwig von Beethoven’s music, or Gustav Beethoven-Schmitt’s music would inspire a Revolution which would transform not only the political systems of Europe, but the psychological mind and soul of mankind, and womankind, worldwide. But one thing was certain... ‘Doctor’ Hesse was gone, and no doubt doing things which were against Beethoven’s inner mandate, and contraindicated for humanity’s spiritual health.

## CHAPTER 19

Gustav’s feet ached as he climbed down the stairs from the ‘Hospital’s’ special ward, remembering everything he had drawn, written and drafted, or trying to anyway. For reasons he was grateful for, he could recall the stolen works in intricate detail, seeing the two dimensional images on paper now in three, nay, four dimensions. As for his faculties in the real world, that was another situation entirely.

He somehow found enough strength to carry Maria in his arms, which had become weak from disuse, barely able to be palpated. His clothing which he wore with such nobility were now little more than rags. His hairy face gave him the appearance of a beggar, made more frightening when his bloodshot eyes saw sunlight in its undiluted form for the first time in months.

The streets were still the same. The buildings still spoke to each other with voices the architects put into them. But the cobblestones were covered with snow, and traces of blood. There were no people to tell him why such was so. They all kept their distance. As did the soldiers patrolling the streets. So many soldiers, dragging so many people he recognized into wagons and taking them away. With NO one stopping them. And the few spectators in the buildings above them applauding the soldiers. The onlookers and the soldiers dressed in drab colors with hues that did not include red, black or gold.

A horse cart pulled up in front of Gustav, pulled by children who had been recently whipped, by the looks of their bloody backs. Gustav approached them, opening his mouth to try to speak. “A gorilla and a dead ghost!” the children exclaimed as they saw the hairy ragged beast Gustav had become, carrying an elderly skeleton with flabby skin in his arm.

“All I want is an apple from your cart,” he said, but to no avail. The cart remained in place, containing mostly straw and some rotten vegetables. He helped himself to a potato, his teeth feeling the pain of fresh food, blood flowing out of his gums. Soldiers approached, in full regalia, on a routine patrol. He hid Maria inside the straw bed and pulled the cart in the manner of an animal that he had become, at least to the eyes of this new ‘world’ which had overtaken the one he had been exiled from months ago.

Gustav wracked his aching head for people who he thought he could still trust, and wracked his brain for landmarks that would take him there. Professor Guttenburg came to mind, but by all evidence available he had been killed in a ‘tragic accident’ before the Revolutions in German had started. Ulmann came to mind. He was a publisher who seemed to show more regret at Gustav’s being dragged away. It seemed logical, and right to find Ulmann and set things right. But much had gone wrong, locally and globally.

To avoid being recognized, and to hide his face from the blinding sunlight, Gustav kept his head bowed as he pulled the cart. The view was worse than he imagined possible. In the blood-stained gutters and the walls of shops now occupied by obedient soldiers rather than free merchants, the headlines said it all. Revolutions in France, Austria and Italy had failed. As for a united Germany, such was in the works, but under an iron handed Kaiser rather than a philosopher king, in Prussia anyway. Gustav’s face met that of former King Fredrich William, now clad as a civilian. Soldiers behind him guarding him carefully on his way to a place of, apparently, someone else’s choosing.

“King Willy” halted his military ‘escort’, to the stern disapproval of its commander leader. He reached into his pocket and handed Gustav palmful coins, placing them into his dirt-encrusted fingers.

“Why?” Gustav asked through a gravelly old man’s voice he didn’t recognize as his own.

“Shit happens,” the King said with shame, and regret. The commander nodded to the King, and he moved on. Gustav bowed his head and made his way towards the only destination left.

Ulmann’s publishing shop was still operating, but with far fewer books in the window. They are all manuals about how to do this and that. How to operate machinery. How to plant crops. How to be an obedient and happy citizen. Gustav opened the door and carried Maria 5 in. She was in a happy place, a dream land from which she hummed and sang Beethoven’s music with warmth and accuracy.

“The sixth Beethoven piano concerto,” Ulmann noted, with a sentimental smile, looking up from his assigned work on typesetting a training manual for the new Prussian Army. “Which no official Beethoven cataloger even knows about but which I do believe was written by the Old Master. And perhaps those who were and should be continuing his work.”

“Works which I want to sell,” Gustav asserted.

“And I would buy it from you, for top value. And make it available to the world. Along with ‘Gustav’s Ideal’. And Thomas Paine’s Common Sense. And the Communist Manifesto. And former King Fredrick William’s REAL memoirs. But...” Ulmann couldn’t continue. His rock solid eyes and strong face shriveled up and gave way to a torrent of tears, folded inside his shaking hands. “The devil bought the blueprints to heaven and pocketed the money himself. And what he is doing with that money, and the blueprints...God help us all.”

Perhaps Hesse was indeed the devil incarnate. And even if he wasn’t, it was Gustav’s God given duty to find him and set things right. It wasn’t a matter of ‘why’, ‘who’ or ‘what’ was at the core of the evil in the Gustav’s world, it was a matter of ‘where’ now.

An inspector walked towards the shop, surrounded by soldiers with visors covering their faces, and hiding their eyes. Ulmann shuffled Gustav and his ‘mother’ out the back door, kicking them in the ass. “Get out you bums! No hand outs to beggars here!” he proclaimed as he snuck an envelope into the crotch of what was left of Gustav’s trousers, along with a pen and a jar of ink.

Amidst a pile of garbage in the back alley, Maria transitioned into a Rondo which was part Beethoven, part Mozart and part her own. She urged Gustav to write it down as she was channeling it. But more worldly matters had to be addressed, as Gustav’s eyes read the message Ulmann had given him as his last and final farewell. “Texas” he read, silently on the blood-stained advertisement for the ‘New Eden’. It made no sense that

## CHAPTER 20

If all roads in Europe led to Rome, then all roads to Paradise in the New World went through Purgatory, or in Gustav's case, anyway, Hamburg. No matter how much he tried to avoid it, this was the port from which his exit from Berlin, Germany and Europe seemed to be. Passage was cheapest, and least noticed from that river port leading to the ocean. And as for being noticed, such was a major problem for Gustav. A very accurate likeness of him was plastered on Wanted posters on all of the Police Stations, Riverports and Coach Stations around Berlin, a hefty price on his head for charges of treason, fraud, robbery and even murder. No doubt it was he who had been given the blame for the deaths of his fellow Revolutionaries in Hesse's 'hospital', planted upon him to insure that he get no support from his fellow Revolutionaries still at large, or still believing in the Revolution he had championed. A question lingering in Gustav's mind was why Hesse was in Texas. Was it something he was going to, or running from? The rules of human behavior, presumably based in biology and defined by the laws of physics which ruled the molecules within biological beings, were becoming redefined with every new crisis, or opportunity.

Yet. In this new post-Revolutionary age of 'order and prosperity', one old rule still held true—he who has the money makes the rules. Gustav's stomach growled with hunger as he walked the streets at the docks requesting which boats would be going to Texas, America or even England. Such wasn't so bad, as he had lost several pounds of flesh and many more layers of ego during his incarceration and now this, his new schooling. King Willy's hand outs provided seed money to get out of Berlin and keep Maria safely housed in various Inns, her self-cropped topknot replaced by a wig more beautiful than her own hair as a youth, freshly clad in clothes worthy of her former station, some stolen, some bought. As for keeping the exodus from Germany and to Texas fueled, every scrap of paper and each drop of ink from Ulmann was used to the fullest. Together, Gustav and Maria wrote 'Beethoven original' manuscripts and love letters, selling them to buyers ranging from butchers to Barons. Maria's handwriting matched the Maestro's perfectly, and Gustav's improvisations on the prose and music were pure Beethoven, and Beyond Beethoven. So he convinced others in the quickness of the moment, from his new identity, which a different name in each town, and sometimes each street.

As for that new identity, he was very lightheaded about it, literally. Having been known as a dashing, handsome cavalry-like man with a long wavy mane and clean shaven face, he inverted that identity. He strolled the streets of his home town by the river where he used to discourse to others, and himself, and could still hardly recognize himself in the reflection of the bookshop he had frequented as a youth, a mere year ago. The glow coming from his head in the sunlight was blinding as he ran his hands over the top of his head, feeling the exposed scalp on every inch of his razer shaved head except for a thin rim above the ears and above the neck, dyed whitish grey. "No grass grows on busy streets," he told himself through the thick mustache and overgrown goutee covering his mouth. It wasn't so much as he saw himself now as 'old', but as 'common', his nearly hairless head reminding him of other commoners who he thought as ugly, a species which he would never become. A species which Hans belonged to, along with many others who he now missed, admired and yearned to be united with. His thoughts, as always, came around to Elsa. He wondered if she would have accepted him as the old man which he now had become, at least to the world. He envisioned what it would have been like growing old with her. He allowed himself to see her face again behind his tired eyes, let himself feel her cheeks with his hands, taste her lips with his tongue, until he remembered the last memory of her. And the man who chopped her head from her body, and had placed the blame on him for the deed.

Gustav let his eyes fix upon a map in the window, focusing on the corner of the North American continent called 'Texas'. To get there, find Hesse, and extract satisfaction from him would take money, and lots of it. Gustav reached into his pocket and counted the sum of his War Treasury once again. Nearly all of what was needed for the Mission at hand. Most of it extracted from people whose hands had never done a day's honest work in their lives. Some of it, perhaps too much of it, falsely extorted from abused laborers who had done a week's penance of labor every day of their lives. But each of them had Beethoven manuscripts in on their dining room mantles or tenement walls. All of them were entertained with a brief performance of them by the bald old fart and his elder sister, the Baroness. And perhaps the music would live on through some of them, in truth, despite the false signatures on the bottom of each of the pages.

The former Truth-seeking academic found himself to be a fast learner in the art of deception, not so much for his own survival or anger at Hesse, but for the welfare of Maria 5. The old hag needed his protection, true, but he needed her even more. Perhaps for a sense of purpose. Perhaps she was a link to a destiny he did not yet completely understand, but had to follow. Or perhaps, he feared and surmised was true, because she was a first priority now because she was family, even if such a relationship was in her own imagination. Her imaginations made reality bearable, for herself, and now for Gustav as he faced the world naked, with a mandate to turn that emptiness into something positive for everyone, most importantly her.

Gustav felt inspiration coming on and availed himself of it. It seemed an acceptable thing to do, and he had earned it. Maria was safely in an Inn with all the medicinals she would need, and a paid servant to keep her fed, said servant being a Hungarian who spoke no German. With broken Russian, he had bargained three captains into taking him and his 'aunt' to America in first class compartments with the third class rates, in exchange for shares in his Siberian gold mines. Even Ludwig's ghost seemed to smile on Gustav, giving his approval for whatever plan was incubating in his now bald head, though Gustav still harbored resentment for the Old Maestro for abandoning him as a child. But, eccentric geniuses like Ludwig were required to be

assholes, he surmised, as he let the Fire from his belly channel itself through his brain, and into his hands, and onto paper for another composition. Indeed, he felt watched, and respected, by an onlooker with penetrating blue eyes, a younger face, a mop of blonde hair under an over-sized beret, and breath from a Nordically chisseled chin that was very, very real.

“You aren’t Beethoven,” Gustav round himself saying as he turned around to the apparition which turned out to be a very real man, with very piercing eyes, and a very worried look on his face.

“No...I’m not,” He opened his coat, revealing a sash bearing the red, gold and black of the once possible FREE German Republic.

“And I’m...” Gustav said, wanting to trust this man’s eyes who seemed more interested in the music than the man who wrote it. Knowing that Secret Police were very good at appearing to be ‘open’ , and those trained under Hesse were even better at that art.

“You’re a composer,” the young man sporting a beret said. “And a scholar?”, he continued sneaking a look into the satchel Gustav carried bearing books on medicine and politics which he was rewriting, for perhaps a publisher in Texas.

“I was...am...could be many things,” Gustav lamented. He looked at the man’s eyes, then his bag, packed with everything one needs to be well read, and well fed, and very mobile. He seemed to be an honest man, but one with extraordinary curiosity and restlessness.

‘Richard’ smiled, offering Gustav a look at his literary wares. Gustav was impressed with the boldness of the music, the optimism of the melodies, and the bravado of the rythms.

“Operas,” Richard said.

“The Flying Dutchman,” Gustav noted of the title. “Where does he fly to?”

“Somewhere far away from here,” the young man said, sadly, his left arm aching due to what seemed like a sword wound, recently inflicted and sewn up quite badly. “Why did it fail? They called our now dissolved Congress in Frankfort the ‘Professor’s Parliament’ Do you think we were all acting like selfish students and blind professors? Was it really too brainy ideals and not enough balls to defend them? Was the whole thing a Jewish banker’s conspiracy, as some say it was, in the rise and falling of it? You look like an old and wise man, tell me. Why did we it fail?”

Gustav smiled, feeling himself old before his time. “Because we need you, and others, to succeed.”

“Somewhere else, yes,” the young man said.

“Maybe for me,” Gustav replied, handing over the opera with a nod of high approval, slipping into a fantasy world in his mind which, perhaps, in ‘Maria and Ludwig land’, anyway, might



actually happen. “I have a feeling that you will be back here one day. And these operas will inspire Germans and everyone else to be proud of themselves and the godlike potentials within them. And that you’ll write more operas about the gods, and how we can become like like them, and even better than them. And how you will have your own opera house. A very expensive one which will put on the biggest and boldest operas ever.”

“Yes, right,” the young man with the broken dream and defeated spirit shook his head with utmost despair. “And Bismark and the Kaiser and the King of Bavaria will give me all the money and prestige I want.”

“All you can earn, and deserve,” Gustav offered, finding himself believing the fantasy projected as fact. With that Gustav extended his hand. “I wish you well in your temporary exile. My name is.... Gustav.”

“And mine is Richard,” the young man smiled, his spirit revived, his dreams given a breath of badly needed Life. “Richard Wagner.”

“You seem like a brilliant man, Gustav,” Richard said. “You have the hands of a doctor,” he noted.

“Everyone gives according to their ability, takes according to their needs,” Gustav replied. It was the first time since his incarceration he dared utter that universal ideal, and felt right to say it. “In the service of others, and freedom, we can do anything,” he continued.

“Including growing hair, doctor?” Richard said, revealing a bald spot under his long wavy blond mop.

“For you, maybe,” Gustav smiled, pulling back his thoughts, agendas and optimism.

With that, the town clock struck noon, summoning Richard Wagner to a fishing boat heading for the Big Open of the North Sea and Scandinavia, and the six hour countdown to Gustav getting Maria Five and himself onto a ship heading for the landlocked ocean of Texas.

## CHAPTER 21

The good ship 'Valkurie' had more strength in her name than in the construction of her hull. Indeed, it was a miracle that the beast was still afloat. But she was said to be able to make up in speed what she didn't have in stability, a claim which Gustav checked out with the dockmeister several times. Fares on her were reasonable and she was heading directly to Texas, with a habit of stopping only in Spanish Cuba to replenish her supplies of legal, and questionably immoral, cargo. But according to the Captain, Valkurie only transported conscripted African laborers who were in 'good condition and solid moral temperament' from Cuba to the mainland of the Lone Star State, just recently admitted to the United States, a country based on the proposition that all men were created equal. She also carried passengers who were asked few questions about where they came from, and even fewer about where they would be going.

Gustav escorted Maria onto the ship well after most everyone else was on board, and took her directly to the First Class compartment they had purchased with more false promises than cash. But there were some details that had to be tended to, even on the Valkurie, along with some things for the record so that she could sail legally, and be allowed into German ports, particularly now that the 'troubles' of the Revolutions were over.

Maria never did reveal her maiden name to anyone, even Gustav. Such was the case in both her happy, remembrance-recalling moments and her 'normal', sane ones. During the latter, she kept her lips tight, her eyes tighter and her fists clenched when asked anything about her biological family. But the ship's register needed a name, as did the inspector at the dock in Hamburg. Dmitrosovitch seemed right, somehow. It was hard to say, harder to spell and fit her Christian name fairly well, musically speaking. As for Gustav, he took the name of 'Boris' as his own, claiming that he was bringing his aunt to Texas in order to look after and expand some inherited mining investments.

Gustav remained with Maria in their cabin until the ship reached the open sea. It was for 'the Baroness' health', if asked. Her isolation from the world which would discover and no doubt destroy her as well. However, it was Gustav whose stomach revolted most violently to being tossed and turned on the waves of the ocean than Maria's delicate intestinal tract. Feeling the need for some fresh air, and a fresh place to evacuate the contents of his belly, he put Maria to sleep with a mild sedative and climbed up on board.

In front of him lay the vast ocean, a body of water he had never seen. A limitless horizon in all directions. The bigness of it all excited and terrified him, but he knew he was going forward. The son of Beethoven, in body and/or spirit, stood on the top deck, the wind which blew over the hairless top of his head, rustling the bush growing over his lip, blowing against the collar of his very non-Beethovenian military-style Industrialist's coat. The masses of poorly clad third class passengers below, the former Leader of the now defunct 'Professor's Parliament' from Frankfort amongst them, along with a few of the other '48ers' who were present at the assembly. They all seemed penniless, and tired, and cold, but they all had something Gustav never had, but envied.

"Family", Gustav heard echoing from behind him from a man with a deep, baritone voice, in English. "Wives and children," Captain Ranselhoff continued, his pirate arms and legally-

cleansed hands held behind his back, held in place with a military stature nearly identical to that of Hesse himself.

“Da,” Gustav replied. “Give life definition,” he continued in as believably uncorrected Russianized English as he could. “Is good.” He looked at the children mostly, being nurtured by their parents, or was it the other way around?

“Mothers teaching their daughters about how to find the right boys,” Ranselhoff said. “And fathers teaching their sons to avoid manipulative women.”

Gustav answered with a warm smile. His thoughts wandered again to his own childhood with foster parents, then to the father who never claimed him as his own. Again he wondered why Beethoven, being such a great a composer, couldn't be a good or even average father. He recalled the one way conversations about it with Maria. How he asked her why Beethoven left her. “It was necessary, and it was a complicated situation,” she would say, again and again. How he begged, then demanded to know why she still loved him after leaving her destitute, and pregnant. Again, “It was necessary, and it was a complicated situation.” And as for inquiring about the rumors that Ludwig von Beethoven was responsible for the attempted suicide of his adopted nephew, Casper, silence, and guilt. And as for any remark Gustav would make against the Maestro's moral character, “You should not hate your father! I won't allow it!” her stern and heartfelt retort.

Yes, it all was very ‘complicated’ with regard to how Gustav got here. Clearly he was manipulated by many people. Hans, the Elsa, then Hesse, then...who else? Maybe Ranselhoff, the most legally-accepted pirate of the high seas in most every port in Europe, was manipulating him now too. But now that Gustav had uplifted his position from being revolutionary, handsome young man, to an Establishment-supporting, common-looking old one, at least in appearance, it was his turn to do the manipulating, most particularly because his Mission now was not only political, it was personal.

“Fredrick Hesse. Reason why he leave good position in Berlin to go to Texas?” Gustav asked Ranselhoff, daring to fish out the big fish with his best and most direct bait. “Is unlike him. Maybe he has bad family situation in Prussia?”

“A good opportunity in Texas,” Ranselhoff said, his lips tightening as to the rest of the explanation. He scanned Gustav with the corner of his eye from his wrinkleless, white-hair rimmed shaven head to his nervously tapping, then slowly turned and looked into his face. “You know Major Hesse?”

“Fredrich and me...in war together,” Gustav said with his best Prussian military bearing.

“Which war?” Ranselhoff inquired, gazing up and down Gustav from the top of his bald head to the tips of his spit-polished military boots.

“Poland” Gustav replied, falling into the character he had invented on the spot with frightening ease. “Or what the dumb revolutionary Poles still think is Poland. Very profitable. Fun experience,” he continued, smiling, inviting Ranselhoff to do the same.

“Polish women...good medicine for broken third leg,” Gustav continued, pointing to his crotch, carefully mimicking Ranselhoff’s mouth and hand gestures. “Can buy them cheap,” he continued, kindling Ranselhoff’s own memories of expeditions into the nation that ceased to be a country of its own only fifty years earlier. “Sell them cheap too,” Gustav whispered, giving Ranselhoff more ideas as to where to expand his trading endeavors. “Good deal for everyone,” he continued. “I give you names of friends in Warsaw. Very profitable. Fun experience. Women prisoners very grateful to be of service.”

“Service to society,” Ranselhoff said, chest out in official military manner, wanting in on the deal.

“Yes, of course,” Gustav said. “Law abiding citizens. Like you. Me. Your family. And our friend, Herr Hesse. Good businessman. Who know that all businesses the same. For law abiding citizens. Like us. God allow us to have money. Must use money. Spend it. Spend it on each other. Build great cities with it.”

“Fredrickton” Ranselhoff said.

“Excuse?” Gustav said.

“Fredrickton, Texas,” Ranselhoff smirked.

“This where my friend, our friend, Hesse is?” Gustav inquired.

Ranselhoff looked away, taking off his wedding ring, very probably knowing that he had betrayed one trust to Hesse in exchange for a more profitable one with someone further up the ranks of those made only more powerful by the failed Revolution which was supposed to have distributed power equally between all men, and perhaps women as well. “Black haired Polish women,” the trader of legal goods and illegal, government sanctioned, human cargo asserted. “I and others are sick to death of blonde, blue eyed beauties. Their ‘wholesome’ smiles are so, you know...”

“Boring.” Gustav whipped back, with a vicious insensitivity that felt natural from Count Boris, and wearable now upon himself, solidifying the . He found himself in the process of ‘becoming’ someone he never thought possible. Someone which he never felt would have been necessary. Someone who was nothing like Beethoven, at least as the world saw him.

As for being seen, Gustav helped himself to another look on the huddled masses of ‘48ers’ on the third class deck. Protecting their faces from the cold with the coats and other meager possessions they could carry. Hugging their children and telling them stories about how they tried to change the old world, and how they pledge they will build a new one. Writing poems, discourses and letters on whatever paper they could find. As for those carriers of wisdom, one

man, who seemed more of a writer than a scribe, used the back of a parchment which looked painfully familiar, and reminded Gustav of the necessity to still be 'Boris'.

"That son of a bitch 'Maestro Doctor' Gustav Schmitt," Ranselhoff snickered as Gustav gazed at the wanted poster which showed a quite handsome sketch of him as his former self, listing him as murderer of three people, one of them a Nurse and Healer along with charges of fraud.. "He passes himself as a doctor, Beethoven's son and a father of the New Revolution, which he betrayed to save his neck in prison."

"With 30 thousand gelder's reward on his hairy, arrogant head," Gustav added in Boris-eze.

"For us, or them," Ranselhoff pointed to each of the third class passengers, the lot of them given the poster. Some of them looked at the likeness of the miracle doctor-Maestro-political 'genius' with disappointment. Others with hatred. Others with gelder signs in their eyes, dreaming about how well their own children would eat with the reward money for turning in 'Herr Schmitt' in the flesh, on either side of the Great Waters.

In the upcoming wind, Ranselhoff coughed. A bit of blood, a lot of mucous, and the smell of death in the phlegm, at the early stages. Feeling the lingering whispers of his Hippocratic Oath, Gustav felt the temptation to prescribe a treatment, or devise one on the spot for him. Perhaps to cage it within an old recipe from Boris' Ukranian ancestors or a formulation he stole from a gypsy whore who, in past times, would have been burnt as a witch. But he dared not to do so, not yet anyway. Better to let Ranselhoff suffer a bit more, or perhaps a lot more, and to keep him alive only until his purpose was ended. 'Fredricton, Texas' seemed to be all he knew about Hesse's whereabouts, and, for now, that was all that Gustav, or Boris, needed to know.

## CHAPTER 22

One book had been read more than any other on the journey, most of the immigrants on the sometimes-good-ship Valkurie having read it before embarking on the trans-Atlantic exodus from the Old World to the New One. Carl Postl had written 'The Cabin' nearly a decade ago, but the novel romanticizing Texas to any reader who was even partially literate in German seemed as fresh as the multi-hued sunrise over the Eastern horizon, and as sustaining as a the

golden sunset in the west. From his partially closed and bloodshot ocular portholes, Gustav noticed, yet again, the wide open eyes of the readers on the third class deck fixed upon the copies of the book shared amongst them, as well as his fellow upper crust passengers on the first and second class compartments of the ship, some of which had been supplied by Ranselhoff himself. Gustav had read the book many times to Maria, in part to keep her quiet, and at least functionally sane, but mostly to forget the 'old stories' about 'the old country', no matter how Visionary or sentimental they had been in the past. As the weeks passed, he felt less inclined to write symphonies about the New World, focusing instead on what he would do there. How he could make a living, or steal one, in order to keep Maria alive while his soul went into a pragmatically-mandated slumber. Gone was his love of music, be they his, Maria's, his 'beloved' father Ludwig, or even the passages from 'The Flying Dutchman' which lingered in his head, though his ears had not ever heard them played by instruments in the 'real' world.

Every day he would walk along the decks, hatless, his head bowed, his arms held behind him like a nobleman, muttering the thirty or so Russian words he knew in various sequences, so as to convince his fellow passengers that he knew no German. Thankfully, he had learned enough English in Hamburg to speak with Captain Ranselhoff in that language to make himself understood. He knew that once the ship landed, his vocabulary and diction would have to be expanded, and adopted. Though 'The Cabin' painted a picture of the wild, treeless infinity known as Texas, he could not 'hear' that New World from a human perspective.

On this, the 5th week of the sojourn, he noticed a red-haired child with a stutter, attempting to repeat English words recited to him by a kind, slender woman who, appropriately, was his mother. The lad did his best to wrap his tongue around this different language which converted 'V's into an unnatural 'W', and 'r's that required the mouth to close rather than the back of the tongue to roll with the determination of Themostames of old gargling with pebbles along the Aegean Sea, but the harder the red-haired boy struggled, the more ridicule he elicited.

Gustav remembered his experiences with Atilla Feherighazi, a Hungarian student who knew more about medicine than any professor or student at the University of Hamburg, but whose expression and appreciation of was severely limited due to his lack of language skills in German. Atilla's examination grades were low enough to get him dismissed from University, his self-esteem score low enough to cause him to take his own life.

Gustav watched the boys and girls, then their parents, laugh at the stuttering lad's English and saw them all as the source of ridicule by Texans. Indeed, Gustav would probably be a source of such as well, particularly because his 'teacher' in the new tongue, Ranselhoff, spoke in the manner of an Englishman. 'The Cabin' spoke of Texans who spoke rapidly, with expressions they made up on the spot, intentionally breaking every rule of grammar invented in the Old Country. And one thing that Gustav had learned, all too well, was that to break a rule in such a way that you could make a new one, required that you knew the old rules. As the cold, North Atlantic watery horizon gave way to warm islands on the sojourn southward, Gustav stroked his overgrown beard, contemplating a need for yet another change. Though he did not seem to be recognized by any of his fellow passengers, and former mostly agnostic colleagues in the Holy Cause of Enlightenment, he did feel their eyes following him a bit more each day. Little did they know that Hesse was waiting for them on the other side of their escape from the tyranny he

instilled, and now was not the right time to tell them. Besides, they would not trust him as either “Doctor Gustav” or “Count Boris.”

All on board seemed excited about the landing in Indianola, the Texas port allocated for German arrivals, except for some very non-German passengers. Ranselhoff had picked up ten dark skinned ‘prisoners’ in Spanish Cuba, and five other Negroid ‘mental patients’ shuffling them quickly and quietly to a windowless hold on the bottom levels of the ship. When asked by the Freethinkers in third class as to who they were, he called some of them ‘servants’, the others ‘convicts’, but even the studdering red-haired boy knew they were slaves, transported illegally according to American, British, Spanish and especially Mexican law. They were destined, on papers Gustav had illicitly laid his eyes on, to be sent to a number-coded client in Fredrickton, for employment and ‘medical treatment’. It seemed ironic, or perhaps predestinated, that Fredrich Hesse would name his new town, and capital of his new slave-built empire, by using his Christian name. Gustav dared not think about what kind of medications would be used to control the citizens of Fredrickton, most particularly because they would no doubt be from his own book. Treatments and medical concepts designed to liberate mankind from suffering, perverted to inflict more of it under ‘Doctor Hesse’s’ command.

Gustav made it a point to visit the future patients in Hesse’s hospital, sneaking them food, water and a well meaning smile, but as for the latter, sorrow and hatred were returned. He pledged to himself, and to them, that once he got the money, he would buy their freedom, but the promise fell on disbelieving ears. Indeed, ‘freedom’ was as unobtainable to these ‘servant-convicts’ as it was scary to Gustav, and perhaps most of the other passengers on the ship.

## CHAPTER 23

Slave, goods and scam trader Ranselhoff proved to be an excellent teacher to Gustav both in terms of the English language and how to use it. By the time the Valkurie had set down her claws into port in Indianola, Gustav could curse man, praise God and cajole women with quite an impressive range of vocabularies. But there was one grammatical rule about Texan English that superseded all others---he who speaks the loudest always makes the rules.

It seemed to fit, as he listened to the banter on the docs between the English speaking Texans, and the orders barked out to the darker skinned Americans who looked more Indian than White, but were Hispanic upon closer examination with the attentive ear and open eye. They held their heads down while offloading Ranselhoff’s backbreaking boxloads of goods, but at the same time held their eyes high. These Mexicans seemed to take pride in their work, and their land, which had recently been acquired by the Anglo American adventurers in 1836, and the American Government just two years earlier. Upon first glance, smell, and feel, Gustav knew that Texan

spice, flavor and grit was at its Core, Mexican, no matter how many Palefaced Whites entered into it, be they from the American states of Alabama, Virginia or Massachussets, or the German ones of Badan, Prussia and Bavaria.

“Poles,” Gustav muttered in German to Maria, the only person on the trip he could really trust regarding their role here. “A culture without a country, which maybe is so alive because it doesn’t have a country of its own now, except in the hearts of...” He stopped, noticing that Maria was not really listening, or even pretending to listen. The introverted ‘lady’ he had cloistered from her fellow passengers with medications, spell binding stories, musical discourses and, when necessary, fabricated horror tales about her fellow passengers was buzy with the German immigrants, giving each of them farewell hugs, kisses and gifts. The children smiled when she bid them a good life, but it was their fathers who appreciated ‘Grandma Maria’s’ send off most. Thankfully, their minds were too preoccupied with other matters to ask her about her gruff, arrogant, always-well-clothed prematurely white haired and bald nephew ‘Boris’. Thankfully, MOST of Gustav’s fellow former Revolutionaries had stopped grumbling about obtaining the reward money for finding the murderous Herr Doctor Meastro Gustav Schmitt, content to merely damn his traitorous and fraudulent soul to hell. And thankfully ‘Boris’ knew enough to pack in two locked trunks, the recreated and preserved manuscripts, along with jewelery and gold obtained from sales of the ‘love letters’ between Beethoven and his Immortal Beloved to rich and unsuspecting clients who understood nothing about Beethoven, or love.

As for who would carry the trunks off the ship and to the final destination, this created problems for Gustav. As soon as he turned around, all of the tools he would need in this New World to correct the mistakes and right the wrongs of the Old One were on the backs of men with deep, black, and angry eyes.

“They’re yours,” Ranselhoff said of the black-skinned Goliaths with godlike Herclean bodies and very human eyes. “A down-payment for a twenty percent share in those mines you have in Siberia and...” Ranselhoff moved his finger North, South, and West, scanning the Horizon for the general location of the real reason for Boris’ ‘holiday trip’ from his Native Russia.

It was an offer Gustav could not refuse, particularly given the fact that the rest of Doctor Hesse’s ‘contracted workers’ and ‘mental patients’ were being taken to a horse drawn paddy wagon, shackled to their seats by very White skinned Texan sheriffs wearing large boots, spurs, shiny badges and sporting mustaches as large as any worn by the Army Officers in Prussia or Policemen in Hamburg. Meanwhile, the fellow Germans who had stood shoulder to shoulder with Gustav at the baracades for freedom, sneared at him. Even the stuttering red-haired boy looked at the slaveholding Russian and wished him nothing but agony in his new destination in stutterless German. The Mexicans accepted Gustav’s status as yet another White slave-owning immigrant with a ‘render unto Ceasar that which is Ceasar’s’ wisdom, trying to hold onto a ‘render unto God that which is God’s’ mandate as hard as they could.

Staying in character, with the hope of finding Hesse and his cronies, Gustav accepted reached down to the windblown deck and grabbed hold of a loose piece of paper, the opposite side of it, ironically, being a wanted poster for him, in German and English. He drew a map of Texas,



intuited where Fredricton was, and placed an X as far away from it as he could regarding the location of his own mines in America. He handed it back to his fellow businessman.

Ranselhoff's lips quivered when he looked at the map.

"Something wrong, partner?" Gustav asked in his most authentic 'Boris' Texas English.

"Apaches, and Commanches," Ranselhoff said of the area marked, his terror mounting. "They own those mountains."

"But this land belong to America now, yes?"

"Yes, but..."

"And America, has good cavalry. Strong cavalry that beat ass of Mexicans."

"Yes, but..."

"And America take half of what was Mexico. Manifesto Destiny," 'Boris' snickered.

"Yes, but..."

"So me, you and anyone else with balls take what we want. Is our Manifesto Destiny," Gustav continued with a large smile, taking off his hat and stroking the glistening hairless top of his razor 'scalped' head. "Maybe no hair on head, but gold in pocket, yes?"

"Yes," Ranselhoff said, stroking his own hair, trying to maintain a brave composure.

"Good then. Happy trails, partner," Gustav said, recalling what the real difference between Manifest Destiny and Manifesto meant, or could mean. He extended his now firm hand out to Ranselhoff's cold and clammy one, shaking it firmly.

With that, 'Boris' commanded his aunt 'Lady Maria' down the plank in Russian which was no doubt both grammatically incorrect, and certainly mispronounced. But rules of diction and action now had to improvised, and improved. Whatever Hesse was doing and or had done had to be stopped, on a time table which felt like it was escalating faster than he dared imagine.

## CHAPTER 24

One aspect of Carl Postl's German novel about Texas which he under-represented was its color, or lack of it. Particularly for those who were used to seeing green grasses, green bushes, and green trees. Or for that matter, any trees. The early Spring wind beckoned the oncoming of another magnificently hot, dry summer blew through the wagons heading inland from any direction it chose. But, to be fair, the dry air did cool down at night, or at least made the sweat-soaked travelers heading inland feel less hot, less desperate, and less afraid of what kind of freedom awaited them on their trek inland to the rumored-to-be German settlements of New Braunfels, Sisterdale, and Fredrickton, which cleverly bore a striking resemblance in name to the Free-Thinker German community of Fredricksburg. But whatever their destination, or conceived of destination, the reasons for their immigration from the Black Forests of the Old World to the open deserts of the new one were as varied as the themes Beethoven used in his string quartets. The declared motivations included escape from prosecution by the new Prussian Kaiser and the mini-tyrants who now occupied seats of power in most of the other 'independent' German states. Re-building a real political Paradise theorized at the Professor's Parliament seemed a real possibility for these smart, and now by necessity, brave souls.

But there were other motivations as well, many of them economic. Low wages at home and large families to feed with them. Laws prohibiting one from practicing one's profession based on language spoken or theology believed. Enforced widespread 'guidelines' on inheritances which mandated that the first born in every family is the only one entitled to receive goods passed down from deceased parents. Of course, there is never only one reason why a man, or woman, allows the winds of change to push them off a cliff, or perhaps into independent flight. Texas offered a second chance for those who had screwed up a marriage, business, or life

someplace else, the famed Alamo hero and Alabama wash-out Colonel Travis being one of them. As Gustav looked over the faces of his fellow passengers on the Wagon Train west, he noticed many young faces trying to prove themselves to old faces, most of which were in Germany. He wondered, behind his still overgrown beard and under his thrice-a-day shaven bald head, if this is why he was here. Was it to prove something to the long-absent Professor Guttenburg? His even longer-asentee father Ludwig von B? Hans? Maria Five? Or perhaps Elsa?

Gustav's present mission to find Hesse, gain the confidence of his closet Cronies, and put a stop to his demonic activities required the young German revolutionary-musician-doctor to remain an old Russian status-quo-capitalist. He sat atop his comfortable seat on the most pretentious wagon he could con from the Texan slave traders in Indianola, the two servants he had been given by Ranselhoff having been well fed, freed of their shackles, and promised their freedom papers, as long as they waited long enough for him to reach a discrete destination. Next to him, Maria 5, who still hummed Beethoven's music with more humanity and joy than Gustav ever envisioned possible from Ludwig's performing them himself. He felt sorry for Maria, having been rejected by a man whose legacy she valued more than her own life, and whose music she loved more than the chronically-angst-driven composer could ever love her. When asked about the real stories behind the undeclared marriage between Ludwig and his Immortal Beloved, Maria blamed all the failures on herself, in half truths which seemed inconsistent. Then again, she was half mad, and half happy. As for Gustav, he and most of the others on the Wagon Trail, particularly the non-Germans, were never happy. There were some exceptions, however.

Gustav allowed himself to gaze at a young woman a bit taller than those with her, with blue eyes and long, blonde hair walking, nay strolling, along the prairie with a freshness of gait which made her seem like a dancer skipping across a cloud. His mind noted that she was the same body type as the many conquests and desires from his effortless yet under-enjoyed youth. Hilda, Lisel, Eva, and now Elsa, who though dead in body was still very much alive in his broken, guilt-ridden and troubled heart. He stared at her till she felt his presence, then turned around and smiled at him. It felt kind, warm, and fulfilling. Emerging into one of those moments which lasts an eternity, a moment of connection which always was, always is, and always will be. An eternity which he felt came perhaps from Elsa herself, delivering his tired heart a new start on life.

Gustav felt renewed, hopeful, Alive, happy, then punched with a painful blow to the head. "Concentrate on your driving," Maria sternly commanded her son. "Your real destiny for this life is over there," she continued, pointing to the Western Horizon. "And when you decide to get back to completing the opera you started, up there," she smiled, pointing to the Heavens.

Gustav defiantly looked away from her and lost sight of his own New World Immortal Beloved. She was gone, her branch of the Wagon Train moving to the right fork in the ill-defined 'road', Gustav's Fredrichton-bound detachment staying on the left.

Gustav cursed the gods, while Maria sang to the angels. Meanwhile, the horses plodded on, Gustav feeling damned to a Higher University where earth-shattering magnificence was the only passing grade.

## CHAPTER 25

The more Gustav penetrated the interior of Texas, the bigger it got. Days become hotter, nights colder, and with less human company to experience it with. The once forty-strong convoy of wagons was now reduced to ten, merged with as many cattle drovers heading West to bring another herd of quasi-legally Texas-owned Mexican cattle to slaughter. “It ain’t as many men as we got, but how many guns they’s packin, an’ how fast we can empty ‘em,” cattle boss and new ‘wagon master’ two-hundred and fifty-pound ‘Slim’ McClean kept repeating to the new pioneers, all but five being from a more civilized, or economically desperate, part of the United States. All of them impressed, admiring and fearful of his hard-bitten, sunbaked 60 year old face, depending on how he decided to use it at the time.

McClean had been a Texas Ranger prior to becoming a cowpuncher, and spoke proudly of the golden days of rounding up Mexican bandits, scalping Commanche renegades and bringing to justice ANY man wanted by the law. “It weren’t that I had nothin’ against the outlaws I done hunted down or hung on the spot. I was a lawman. It weren’t never personal.” Not a single sentence McClean uttered or grunted obeyed the rules of grammer but as for obeying the laws of Texas, he was a stickler. And as for criminals from anywhere else with criminal pasts, he had even less mercy. “My Papa done died at the Alamo, and I’ll be damned to hell if’n any criminal decides to steal Texan freedom without payin’ his debt to where he done come from first,” Gustav heard him say on more than one occasion. Never mind that McClean and his fellow Texan patriates walzed into what had been Mexico in 1835, stealing a quarter of it in the War of Independence, then taking another quarter on the tails of the American Army when it declared War against the Republic of Mexico in 1846.

McClean was barely literate, but he knew Texas and its inhabitants better than anyone else, most particularly German writers like Carl Postl who never left the Old Country. If anyone would be able to find Hesse, and know his vulnerabilities, it would be ‘Slim’ McClean, a legend who was too real to be in any history books or dime novels. Gustav reasoned that getting close to McClean would get him closer to Hesse, but such would be very risky. Though McClean spoke

very plainly, he seemed smarter than any secret policeman in the Old Country, and somehow the warrant for Gustav's arrest in that Old Country had made it to the Texas criminal blotters. It would take more than an overgrown beard, a fake Russian accent, and an artificially-produced male pattern baldness head to convince McClean that Gustav really was a shifty aristocratic miner from the Wild, Wild East of Russia on the way to make deals with crafty capitalists in the Wild Wild West in the United States. No, something else had to be devised to keep McClean off his back, yet still remain connected to the Wagon train. Thankfully, McClean's lack of cultural training and Maria's excess of it came in handy.

There was nothing McClean hated more than opera, something he likened to 'gutting a cat while it's still got its teeth nawin' at yer family jewels'. It hurt his ears and he claimed it made horses crazy, cows even stupider than they were. It gave Maria pleasure to sing, most particularly when Gustav wrote the notes, and accompanied her on the violin, Gustav's two very unshaken 'servants' driving the wagon. She was in heaven, at home with her son and, according to her anyway, beloved Ludwig von B. McClean was in hell every time he rode past Gustav's wagon. A compromise was reached. For a fifty percent share in the money collected from Maria and her nephew 'Boris' giving the other wagoners music lessons, and the promise that the pair of 'gypsy goat singers' would keep their distance from his livestock, McClean would allow them to continue with the train, as long as they lingered behind by at least 100 yards on a clear day, 50 if the dust was kicking up.

The flatland gave way to hills, some of which appeared like mountains, a few of which actually had some grass on it that was green. They made Gustav for the Bavarian Alps, or even the hills around Hamburg. He smelled something foul amongst the mountain greenery. A strange sort of beast that was neither oxen, nor cow, nor sheep. They appeared slowly, moving ahead onto the land as if they owned it. Five feet tall with horns the size of Viking gods. Gustav stared at them with awe, as did most everyone else who wasn't Texan.

"Them there is buffalo," McClean announced to the 'greenhorns'. "Stupid pieces of shit. Ten dollars a hide. Good eatin too. Feed our bellies, starve out the Commanchies, who ain't got no good intentions fer anyone 'cept themselves." he continued.

McClean led his men to the herd of peacefully grazing Goliaths, who were followed by the men from the wagon train, then some of the women, then all of the women, then all of the children with them. Two of Gustav's servants, who had African names he still could not pronounce, volunteered to go, taking sticks they had fashioned into spears, but Maria insisted that they remain. As did Gustav, in part because Maria, again, was channelling some kind of wisdom from Beyond which only the insane could do for the sane.

The gunfire from above was deafening. Gustav could hear the agony of the beasts being massacred. Maria could feel it, tears falling down her face as she sang a requiem for them. The Africans bowed their heads and said prayers in their native tongues.

Gustav felt sorrow for the beasts, then anger for the men, and women, who were killing them. He found himself cursing them. Hating them. Wishing they would suffer the same torment they were inflicting on the bison. Tragically enough, Gustav got his wish.

A hoop and hollar roused itself from the hills from all directions, wild screams of anger from painted, red-skinned riders who overran the white hunters more swiftly than they had surrounded the buffalo herd. Arrows flung from the savage's bows, bullets from their guns. Men fell dead like fragile autumn twigs in a brisk winter wind. Women ran away, trying to save their fleeing children from the angered buffalo still alive, both trampled to death by the large-humped horned 'cows' that behaved more like lions than sheep. Death was everywhere in the hills, and soon descended down into the valley.

Gustav grabbed whatever weapons which were left in camp and gathered Maria behind him. He threw an armful each to the Africans, keeping the rest for himself. He ordered them to defend Maria behind a barricade of overturned wagons and mounted one of the horses, riding out to meet the armada of redskinned savages out for blood. Determined that his own blood would be shed before anyone else's, he let the horse go, taking a stand behind a rock. From a protected prone position, he aimed at the head rider, aiming his bullets at the ground in front of the horse. The steed spooked, throwing the rider. The next set of riders moved ahead at full speed. Gustav knelt, exposing his chest and head, took aim with two pistols held at the hip and separated rider from horse, grazing one of the warriors. In answer to another wave of riders, he stood up, exposing himself, running up to them with a saber in one hand and a revolver in the other. Letting the bullets go where they would. "Hollaring them in" to where they had to go like a madman, using thunderbolts of insane rage and assertive Fire from the Belly to defend the woman who perhaps was his mother, but who had become more. And two blackskinned slaves who had become his closest comrades. This, and perhaps the manuscripts in the wagon, were now his family. His purpose. His destiny.

But like all destinies of the Spirit, the rules of Nature prevail. He ran out of bullets, then air in his lungs, then had his sabre shot out of his hand. He stood in front of the band of Commanchies naked with regard to weaponry. Armed only with his courage. And the willingness to offer his life for those behind him.

Silence overcame the valley and the hills. The Africans were running out of ammunition, then the stupidity to keep using it against a superior force. They held their hands up, surrendering their bodies to the Commanchies, and their souls to a God who was far more human and compassionate than any in the European world. Gustav yelled out to them, in his most accurately authentically grammatically-incorrect Texan English. "Ain't me or us that killed yer buffalo. Was them bastards. Kill me if ya got to. But spare the lady, and my friends."

A head brave rode up through the ranks, raising his gun, prepared to take Gustav up on his request. He closed his eyes, said a silent prayer, then heard a song composed by and for the Heavens. "Allas menchen verden bruder," he heard from a high pitched voice, which was Maria's to his human ear, joined in by the Africans. With each stanza sung in German, another brave lowered his weapon. Gustav joined in the song, doing his best to insure that Beethoven's spirit came though his voice, as well as his own courage.

Some of the Indians hummed along. Others muttered a few words to each other in their Native language. Their leader silenced the group with the raising of his hand.

“Habst du eine cigar, bitte?” the heavily-painted red-skinned savage leader with the determined, yet truth seeking eyes asked Gustav, brandishing his lance with one hand, holding back his painted horse’s restless head with the other.

It was all so surreal, but still very real, this German speaking Indian asking if Gustav had a cigar. For the moment, Gustav was grateful that he, Maria and his two blackskinned companions had been spared. He also felt proud that he earned that right by stumbling onto a rash of courage which came from a source he could not identify. But now was the time to be smart, not brave. He recalled the contents of the cigar, and the reverence Indians had for tobacco, at least in Postl’s ‘The Cabin’. He also remembered that to lie to an Indian is not only bad form for a hero in any novel, but a sure fire way to be scalped, for real, on the way to a torture far more gruesome than any that could be put into print.

“Habst du eine Cigar, bitte?” the brave asked, yet again, impatient for an answer.

“Nein,” Gustav said, apologetically.

“Habst du eine Pipe?” the brave inquired curiously.

“Nein.” Gustav answered. “I don’t smoke,” he replied, in German, English and broken Russian. “I have no pipe or tobacco,” he repeated again with words, then the universal language of hand signals, then a demonstration of what he did have, opening the wagon’s covering to allow the brave, and the other well armed Indians gathering around him, a look at its contents from their vantage point atop the hill. Then Gustav remembered that sharing a peace pipe was part of the protocol of saving your scalp, skin and the lives of those you are responsible for and care about.

The brave shook his head, disappointed with the answer. But not angry with it. He rode up the wagon and gazed at its contents. He seemed disinterested in the jewels. Or the gold coins. Or even the guns. He smiled when he saw something Gustav never thought an Indian would understand, or value.

“Du hast Papier,” he said of the reems of empty paper. “Und ink. Und der Bleistick.” He continued, noticing the ink wells, pens and abundant supply of pencils, holding them in his hand as if they were gold. His eyes then turned to the musical manuscripts, which he tried to read as words. Maria ‘read’ the notes to him in song. He smiled, then laughed, then cried with joy. Then joined in.

Gustav looked on with amazement. It seemed miraculous. He felt blessed, and touched. And connected, perhaps to the spirit of Beethoven, maybe to Elsa, and possibly to God. The connection became deeper, more real, and even more shockingly intense.

“Your hair,” he heard from a frighteningly familiar voice behind him. “It fell down from your head onto your face?” the ghost continued.

Gustav felt his cold, hairless crown, then his sweat-soaked beard, and dared to turn around. In front of him stood a Vision bearing a familiar set of eyes, deeply seeded in the body and attire of a Commanche shaman.

“Yes, it’s me, Professor Guttenburg,” the old man with the hairless face, long brown mane and younger than ever eyes smiled to Gustav. “But I’m called ‘He Who Knew Too Much Now’, he continued, then laughed.

“What happened?” Gustav asked.

“I guess I got younger and you got---“

“---Balder?” Gustav confessed with a sheepish grin.

“Older,” the former Professor Guttenburg said, sadly and assertively. “But I think we may be able to treat that condition,” he smiled.

The War Party seemed to be out for something other than European blood, and they took no scalps. Whatever cutting they did was on the buffalo slain by the paleskinned intruders, removing the hides, horns and visceral organs with more skill than any butcher or coroner Gustav ever saw. Behind them came their women and children, all on unshod horses, pulling a village-full of portable teepees with them. Everything Gustav knew, or thought he knew, about the Redman was changing, beginning with the color of their skin as they chose to show it to each other, the Great Spirit and their paleskinned visitors. The Commanche men sported earrings made from shells, their waist-length hair tied in braids, their arms, chests and legs covered with multi-colored designs which were similar to each other only in the fact that they seemed to be three dimensional, fitting the eyes of their bearer. The women’s hair was considerably shorter, their tired but life-infused eyes surrounded by red and yellow rings. The young boys were naked and the young girls in breechclouts, making mischief everywhere, being gently reminded to infuse some responsibility into their playtime but never scolded for not doing so. The old men, and old women, wore faces that reeked of experience, wisdom and confession, tinged with a laughter they expressed inwardly.

But there were some who did not appear so magnificent, despite the painting atop the skin. “Small Pox.” Gustav gasped with horror, and shame, focusing on a young woman whose distorted smile came from a face infested by wrinkled craters that seemed to be glued to the bone, a turbon-like cloth covering what looked like a hairless head underneath.

“I did what I could to stop it, and maybe I did. With vaccinations. Some drugs of my own. Some of theirs. And some that you suggested might work, Doctor Gustav,” Guttenburg related to his former student, who smiled with a sense of accomplishment of his own, until Guttenburg continued. “Or maybe the Great Spirit was going to halt the spread of the pox anyway, and I



happened to come along at the right time for them to THINK I actually know what I am doing,” Guttenburg resumed his prescribed and self-assigned duties, examining a settler’s still-unconscious four year old child who miraculously had survived the buffalo stampede her father had started. He removed two carefully calibrated pinches of brackish powder from his medicine bag along with a labeled bottle of medicinals and poured it into the now-orphaned girl’s mouth, awakening her to her surroundings which included a full view of her dead family members. A middle-aged woman with an Elder’s eyes, and deminear, moved in quickly, shielding the child from the sight, huddling her into her breast with the love a mother would have for her own. Guttenburg discussed the matter of what to do with the child with the woman in a tongue that part Commanche and part German, arousing the attention of the two Africans, who seemed more concerned for what would happen to the child than what would happen to them. The middle-aged Elder instructed two lower ranked braves to remove the bodies of the dead settlers and instructed them to say a prayer over the lifeless Caucasian bodies, with the exception of that of Slim McClean. The turbon-bearing young maiden whom small pox had turned into an old hag was allowed to look at the body. She spit on it, and was given a knife, upon which she cut off the invisible Texas Ranger’s ears and scalped him as bald as melon.

She turned around and stared at Gustav, who showed the hairless top of his own head to her. He smiled coyly, as if to share a joke, but she wasn’t laughing. He tried to see the beauty inside her and ignore the disfigurement caused by the white man’s disease and sabre which had taken away her fair skin and her most probably-once luxurious mane, but he couldn’t. As for the rest of this tribe which was going about its business of survival with a joy and lightness which seemed so surreal, he felt confused, and confounded.

“So, Professor,” Gustav asked of the man who had become a ghost, then a legend, then a quandry, feeling angry stares coming from some of the younger and more vicously-painted braves. Why didn’t they kill me? And Maria? And my African ‘cargo’? It couldn’t be because they like music that much. Or maybe it WAS the music I, we, were singing,” Gustav continued, feeling ‘special’, promoted in social stature somehow.

“It was the fucking language you were singing it in!” Guttenburg blasted back. “And the language we’re speaking right now!”

“One of the braves asked me about my pipe,” Gustav flashed on. “Why?”

“You really don’t know, do you, Herr Meastro Doctor Dumpkoff?”

“No, I don’t!” Gustav asserted, as Guttenburg turned his head, shaking it with disgust and disappointment at the student who he thought would turn out to excel his life, and expectations. “I just got to this fucking country, Herr Professor Guttenburg! From a fucked up country that YOU abandoned. ‘He Who Knew Too Much’ or more accurately, ‘He who did too little’. You got us fired up about Revolution, then left because you wanted to fucking play Indian. They blame me for murders of my Comrades, and for betraying the rest of the conspirators in the Revolution. Yes, I was framed, and yes, I should have been more careful, and courageous. But YOU LEFT US! And I came here! To set things right! For the world back home and, if you

don't stand in my way, the world here! It's because of YOU running away Herr Doctor Major Fredrick Hesse did what he did at home, and is here, doing---“

“---Hesse!” Guttenburg interjected, survivor's guilt in heart converted into anger fuming through his wide open eyes. “This explains things. This explains a lot! This explains EVERYTHING!” He looked to the sky and opened his hands in prayer, giving thanks to the Great Spirit for delivering Gustav to the New World.

For Gustav, it was one of the moments of feeling 'connected' to a purpose beyond his own design. A situation which sustained former Professor 'He Who Knew Too Much', but which scared the crap out of the emerging whatever Gustav was supposed to be.

The rest of the tribe resurrected their mobile city with miraculous speed and effortless ease along the banks of a stream which they seemed to value as a river. Maria Five found herself amongst children, teaching them German songs and helping them write various expressions of their minds and souls in her Native tongue with the paper and ink acquired during the thankfully-halted raid on McClean's drovers. The middle aged Elder woman took the orphaned white girl into her quickly-raised teepee, and invited her two new African 'uncles' to join them. The horses drank from the creek, feeling at one with the grasslands under their feet. Gustav and his old mentor discoursed under the shade of the Texan 'tree', which by German standards would hardly be worth calling a bush.

“The pipe.” Gustav said, seeing that Guttenburg would not give any real answers without him being asked the right questions, holding onto a corn cob pipe the gone-Native Professor had given to him to keep, and smoke whenever he was in sight of a Commanche. “Why did that War Chief ask me where my pipe was, like I was supposed to have it in my mouth?”

“Part of the arrangement we made with them two years ago,” Guttenburg replied, his eyes fixed on something on the Western horizon which Gustav couldn't see, but could certainly feel, particularly from the Beethovenian portion of his soul. “The Commanches know we are us, and leave us alone if we have pipes in our mouths. A treaty we made with them back in 18..yes, 47 I believe it was, as some of us still measure it.”

“And 'we' is German speaking palefaces?” Gustav hazarded as a guess.

Guttenburg smiled. Apparently Gustav was on the right track. He forged ahead.

“So, the German immigrants here made peace with the Commanches...”

Again, Guttenburg replied 'yes' with a grin rather than a nod.

“Which was because we paid them something the Texan speaking palefaces didn't?...Like maybe money? Sausage? Tobacco we gave them from our empty pipes?”

“And respect,” Guttenburg finally answered, in words, Gustav’s sense of humor having lightened his heavy heart. “And,” he turned around to Gustav. “Because we value freedom and thinking more than English speaking palefaces, I suppose,” he continued.

“Which makes us superior to the English speaking palefaces?” Gustav suggested.

“Only when we treat all other men as equals,” Guttenburg asserted.

“And women?” Gustav asked, inviting the old now-young Professor to read his mind, and heart, as he allowed himself to look at the small-pox-infected maiden, seeing the beauty in her mind and somehow ignoring the ugliness of her body.

“Women...Bless and curse their gentle, manipulative and loving souls, yes,” Guttenburg smiled.

“And you, and women?” Gustav pressed, sensing that there was something the old professor was harboring in his reborn soul that he had to tell someone.

Guttenburg’s eyes moved from one face in the village to another, fixing on Maria 5’s for a moment longer than Gustav expected, then latching on to a female soul who was even more independent, and crazy. She looked back at him, shook her head, and approached, slowly and deliberately, passing by the Old Professor and nestling her neck under Gustav’s chin.

“She likes you,” Guttenburg smiled as the mare nuzzled her teeth into Gustav’s pockets, licking the lips under his beard. “She’s claiming you as hers. But...”

“Ahhh!” Gustav exclaimed, pulling back from the mare, desperately finding ways to avoid being cornered by her loving embrace. Still hiding a secret that no one in Europe or America ever found out about him.

“You’re afraid of horses.” Guttenburg surmised. “But back in the Old Country you seemed so--”

“---Dashing. Like a fucking cavalry officer...I fucking know,” Gustav said, unable to hold back the wave of fear that put his Herclean body into trembling shakes every time he looked at the mare. “Yeah...I’m a fucking dashing cavalry officer as long as I keep my feet on the ground!”

“We can fix that,”

“By making me an Indian?” Gustav asked.

“Such is one way to give you legs.”

“I got legs! That I’ll use for walking. And sitting on a wagon! Or standing on one of those mobile horseless, engine driven carts I designed.”

“Which I saw in---“ Guttenburg flashed on.

“Fredricton?” Gustav found himself saying. The words terrifying him.

“Taking this country down into the same black hole that our homeland is in again now,” Guttenburg said. “Unless...”

“Unless what?” Gustav asked, terrified of and desperate for the answer that would be channeled through the old Sage’s quivering mouth. “What do you need me to do?”

“Reach an agreement with Him, Her or It, for the long term” He Who Knew Too Much said while pointing to the sky with reverence. “And her in the short term,” he smiled, pointing to the mare.

## CHAPTER 26

Cursed relationships with women was certainly one of the things Ludwig von B had passed on to his son Gustav. The latter's relationship with Guttenburg's favorite mare was certainly no exception to that. She was pure mustang, descended from runaway horses the Spaniards lost upon their arrival in the new world, her independent mind and strong, thick legs the result of selective breeding between the fiercest of studs and the mares they had selected to be their love mates. Of course, said studs abandoned the mares long before their colts or fillies were born, something Gustav was very familiar with himself. He found himself once again admiring Beethoven's tenacity and intellect, but still angry at him for what he had done for, and perhaps to, Maria five. How dare the dashing and famous Ludwig von B abandon her, and him! Then again, studs are studs and crazy mares are crazy, and making sound agreements with crazy people had turned out to be the most sane way for Gustav to make his way through the 'labyrinth leading up the mountain' that had become his life and, according to his lunatic Comrades, destiny.

It was the third day of 'negotiation', Gustav's ass having had more experience hitting the ground than feeling the back of the mare whose name he could not pronounce. But every time Gustav fell, or slipped, off, 'Leonora', as Guttenburg chose to rename her, pushed her head against his chest, not relenting until he got up on his feet.

"This game isn't fun!" Gustav grunted back to Leonora. He turned to Guttenburg, whose gentle laughter came from a newly found sense of humor, but nonetheless, was still not appreciated. "And I'm a Beethoven! We write music for people who ride horses. We don't ride them!"

"You don't ride horses out here, you die," the Old Master smirked, referring his pupil to the big, wide open spaces around him in every direction.

"And when I get thrown again, and bust my head open!" Gustav shot back, shunning the reins Leonora was trying to push back into his hand.

"Then maybe some smarts may its way into that brilliant mind of yours."

"The only smart thing to do is to find Hesse now, and to---"

"---Kill him?" Guttenburg said, somberly.

"Yes!"

"So another Hesse can worm his way up from the depths of hell?"

"He framed me for murder, fraud and betraying the revolution. And he killed my Else! What's between him and me is personal."

"It's personal with me too," Guttenburg asserted somberly, hiding his eyes, and a long set of stories behind it which Gustav knew he would not be told, including which way it was to

Fredrickricton, after having doctored his student's compass and burnt his maps. No, Professor Guttenburg's topics of most relevance would not be revealed to Gustav today. Or at least not until the now fired up and angrily rebellious student grabbed hold of Leonora's reins and made another attempt to 'partner up' with her in preparation for a Mission which would require mobility, and the cooperation of the Comanches who, rightly or wrongly, had accepted him as a provisional ally, after having taken in the still-secretive Guttenburg as a trusted friend.

Leonora taunted Gustav with all of her tricks. The alluring shaking of her snake-like neck. The licking of his neck. And the coy turning of her head, exposing the stirrup on her alluringly-curved flank to his black and blue leg. In the sunlight her brown coat seemed to glisten with a golden hue, the spots on her back merging into a kaliedoscope of harmonically connected dots which could fit into any image the human eye wanted to imagine. But she was growing increasingly impatient with Gustav, as was Guttenburg.

"She's your only way out of here," the Old Professor asserted with a voice that rang of finality. "And if you can't get out of here---"

"---I'll turn into YOU!" Gustav blasted back, not going into the details regarding the Professor's colorful and eccentric neglect of his responsibilities to his students, the German people, and the world. At least the world that knew about the wheel. The compass. Metalurgy. And rapidly-advancing technologies designed to serve humanity which were now enslaving it.

Gustav looked back at Guttenburg, expecting him to shoot back another proverb, hypothesis or literary-based Wild West fable in defense of his clandestine departure from Europe, and his isolation from White Immigrants here. But the old professor seemed...old. His head was bowed, his eyes fixed in the most painful and incurable trio of demons afflicting the old, and young, at the time of dying---regret, guilt and shame. Perhaps Gustav could relieve some of that for the old coot who had been the only Elder he ever knew, respected or perhaps loved. Leonora seemed to agree, bowing her head down again, offering the reins to Gustav. He looked up to the sky and asked his other teachers, and tormentors. He could feel Hans laughing at him in his pathologically Polish German. He could hear Beethoven ranting at him in frenetic fortissimo and engaging piannissimo music. He could feel Elsa's warm hands rising up from her angelic body, merging with a warm Southern wind. All said 'yes' to the attempt to befriend Leonora, or at least to make an alliance with her.

Gustav grabbed hold of the reins with his hands, Leonora's flanks with his legs, and his courage with his gritted teeth. She stood still, waiting his command. "Forward on the ground this time, not Upward into the air!" he asserted, reviewing in his mind all the theoreticals with regard to riding horses that he had heard from others back home, avoided having to put into practice. "Please," he requested, trying to connect to the mare's 'Indian-ness'. Taking a leap of faith he loosened hold of her mouth and prodded her gently with his shaking feet.

"Good...walking is good," he said as she moved forward, his hands moving along for the ride, trying to stay ahead of her.

“Trotting is better,” Guttenburg smirked, arousing Gustav’s attention, then anger. Causing the young equestrian to loosen his hold on the reins, and wiggle his feet in a gesture which Leonora interpreted to be a kick. Clarified by Guttenberg’s muttering a gentle command that moved the beauty forward at a brisker pace than her rider anticipated.

Leonora’s trot was bumpy, leading her down a molehill which according to prairie Texan standards was a mountain. But Gustav found himself holding on, feeling in control of the situation, her and perhaps the world around him. All went well, and magnificently, in an instant. Gustav could feel Beethoven’s fifth symphony in the two-beat rhythm of her feet, the smoothness of their motion moving him to add his own melody and harmony to it. He found his mouth not breathing in desert dust but emitting music which he could feel down to the bottom of his wooden-souled boots. Then, the tempo changed to a three-beat upswing which fit into Ludwig von Beethoven’s 7<sup>th</sup> symphony, then Gustav Schmitt’s first, then a whole other composer whose voice whose command seemed to be making the mare’s feet move faster and faster, until she abandoned all convention of notes and meter, flying like the wind at full speed.

“Stay with her!” Guttenburg shouted with glee, and hope. “Move with her! Become a verb!” he continued. More rantings and praises came out of the Professor’s parched mouth and fiery eyes, but Gustav heard none of them. Leonora was well on her way into the grasslands, obeying Gustav with regard to direction to be taken but certainly not with regard to speed.

“She’s still doing a three-gaited run,” Gustav said to himself, knowing that flat out gallop was a four gaited proposition. “She’s still listening to me, and I’m still talking to her.”

Gustav did not recognize where he was, except that ‘forward’ was the direction to take. “There is so much ‘open’ here,” he told himself. “It has to end somewhere,” he calculated. But it didn’t. A mile, maybe two, or perhaps three passed under Leonora’s flying feet and his aching ass and then something happened to him that defied all the laws of physics and, as he knew them anyway, metaphysics. The desert swallow him, the horizon pulled him into it. He merged with infinity, and found rest within the motion. “Within inaction there is action and within action there is inaction” was finally known, and felt, by him. By his mind, and soul. Perhaps his heart as well.

It was the latter, perhaps, that defined the direction of ‘forward’. Just over the hills, women were gathering buffalo dung for their fires. Away from the others stood, proudly and painfully, the Indian scalped maiden whose face had been ravaged by small pox. Leonora cried out to her. She looked up, pulling her buffalo-haired ‘hat’ back, to see who it was, a smile coming over her face, made wider by the sunlight pushing its way through the clouds to illuminate it.

She had said nothing to him for days with her mouth, but everything with her eyes. Perhaps he could find a way for her fair haired skin to grow over that which had been deformed. And it would be an easy trick to find one of McClean’s ‘Injun hair hunters’, or perhaps Hesse himself, and transplant their hair-growing scalps onto her scalped head. But first miracles first.

Gustav waved to the still-unmarried maiden with pride with his right hand as he trusted his left to guide Leonora into a smooth left turn and a trot which would bring the mare directly in front of

her. He would approach her with bravado, bow to her with respect and touch her with warmth. Elsa would understand. Perhaps Elsa was driving him to this Indian maiden. Maybe because Elsa's spirit had found a way to live again within hers.

Yes, the miraculous had merged with the possible, as Gustav maneuvered Leonara exactly where he wanted her. The maiden put down her basket and invited him to sit down. Gustav waved his hand, inviting her to grab it for a ride across the continent, up to the stars. But Leonora had other ideas. Right became left and up became down, Gustav landing smack on the ground, his fall broken by a large pile of buffalo dung which had been turned from dry pellets into odorous mud by a stream. Leonora laughed. The other women in the dung-gathering party chuckled. The maiden smiled. Gustav grunted. He cursed himself in German with phrases none of the other women seemed to know. Maria, who seemed to have been promoted to the position of a trusted Elder, or perhaps a valuable itinerant Teacher, filled them in on the meaning of the words, pointing to anatomical parts on her body and excrement on the ground as to what they meant.

But the maiden kept smiling, walking up to Gustav and giving him a gentle hand up. She opened her eyes, seeming to prepare to say something from her mouth. Gustav dreamed for days about what would be her first words to him. They would be something philosophical, no doubt, as she carried her eyes as if there was an active and tortured brain behind it. Something 'connecting', he predicted, as she seemed to be a loner, an orphan whose family roots, if they existed at all, were not within the tribe presently around her. Perhaps something creatively humorous, as she smiled at jokes around her rather than participating in the laughter.

"Tosannbitu arupu", she said, pointing to her chin, the only area of her face unaffected by the pox. It bore a whiter tone a bit lighter than her fellow tribes-women.

"Gustav Schmitt," he said, pointing to himself. "Herr Doctor Gustav---"

"von Beethoven!" Maria asserted sternly, having arrived unexpectedly, placing herself between the maiden and Gustav. Protecting him from her, shooing her off with the mannerisms of a Comanche Elder and German words she knew the fraus and fraileins of the tribe could understand.

"White Chin", as Gustav now knew her as, asked him what to do regarding the crazy golden-haired white visiting "Sagess" who at once was at death's door and at another moment had the ferocity and joy of young woman.

"Sie ist mien mutter," he explained, shrugging his shoulders in that 'let her do what she wants to do, because she's going to do it anyway' which had become habit since the day he was re-united with her in resurrected form, presumably as a result of his miracle medicinals written down in the book that Hesse had stolen from him.

White Chin didn't bother to look at the other Elders in the village, as it was the kind and honorable thing to let Maria have her way, or think she was having it anyway. As White Chin and the other women in the village saw it, Gustav had been denied permission to court her, a rule



that was to be respected. But Maria saw love in White Chin's eyes, as well as Gustav's. And as long as there was fire in her belly and breath in her lungs, 'mother' wouldn't tolerate the romance. This time, Gustav told her that he was going to do what he WANTED to do, as was White Chin. He, and perhaps Leonora, knew that another range war was brewing, but such would have to wait. The battle with Hesse was close at hand, if Gustav had anything to do with it anyway. His honor, Maria's life, and the welfare of these 'primitive people' who seemed so advanced in Spirit demanded that it be undertaken, and won.

The Africans didn't seem surprised when they saw what Gustav was doing with his face in preparation for the scouting party into Fredrichton. They approached him at a creek where he was undergoing yet another transformation, a knife clenched in his hand. The taller one asked him with his hands, his still preferred mode of communication, what he was doing.

"Yes," Gustav said to them, having shaven off his long beard, grabbing hold of what remained of his mustache with a bloody hand made so by blade not encountering unshaven face for 8 months. "White Chin likes her men with naked faces. So she can feel the skin underneath."

The smaller Africans pointed to Gustav's head, follicles having grown out to an quarter inch of hair in patches which did not include the majority of the top of his head.

Gustav smiled. "I guess no hair does grow on busy streets," he said, lamenting the loss of his Beethovenian topknot as a result of perhaps over-thinking things, or perhaps merely scraping the skin atop it too often or too deeply in his attempt to 'rent' the look of 'old Boris'. "But...Nature never gives you a problem without a solution," he concluded, at which time he aggressively shaved the remaining portions his head, grabbed the fistfull of his 5 inch long beard hair, tied it in a braid, and slapped it atop his head. "There!" he exclaimed in glee, gazing at himself in a mirror. "I am Cossack now, yes?"

The larger African shook his head in the negative. Gustav looked to his smaller framed companion, who begrudgingly confirmed it, pointing to his half-shaven lip.

"You're right," he Gustav concluded, grabbing hold of some glue-like mud, securing the beard hair on his head in a Mohawk manner, covering his face with red-like mud, appended by strokes of white chalk and circles of yellow clay, emerging from the water giving a whooping hollar.

"Injun!" he said by way of explanation. "From tribe across distant mountain. Scare shit out of Hesse and other Paleskins. Yes?"

The smaller and larger African both shrugged to each other in a 'Gustav's gonna do what he's going to do what he's going to do anyway,' gesture and subsequently left to join the men as they were preparing for a hunt. One of them, the brave who Gustav's encountered on his 'accident' of bravery when defending Maria, gave a provisional approval to the young German doctor's New World persona. But it was provisional, as he led the very heavily armed 'hunting party'

away, heading South towards Mexico. Guttenburg remained, mounting his horse, Leonora in tow.

“When you are finished, we go to Fredrichton,” he said with resolution, motioning the direction of the journey to the North. Upon closer examination he seemed pleased, then invigorated, then terrified.

Leonora seemed more cooperative than usual on the way to Fredrichton. Perhaps it was because of the crazy White man riding her. Or perhaps the wise one mounted on a slightly smaller mount next to her. Guttenburg spoke to Leonora in Commanche, and conversed with Gustav with silence, and occasionally clandestine smiles. ‘He Who Knew Too Much’ did know a lot about this New World and he fit right in, from the top of his long-haired, hatless head to the soles of his feet which let the sky speak to him directly, clad in leather mocassins rather than hard wooden soles so that he could feel the earth talk to him through his feet. He looked nothing like the European Professor and Scholar he had been 18 months ago. Such was important, as Hesse, a failed medical student and scientist prior to his joining the Army, had a reputation for remembering the face of every person he ever met, hung, or put into a ‘mental hospital’.

Gustav had many plans as to about what to do when he would get to Fredricton to encounter the man who had toppled the German Democratic Revolts with the industrial revolution. How did Hesse do it? Why did he do it? And what was a man so comfortable with his new position in Europe doing here? And how to stop him from colonizing the Germans in America, and then the Americans in America? But there was one question which Gustav had to get the answer to in order to assess these other issues.

“Do you think Hesse will recognize me?” Gustav asked Guttenburg, shaking the ‘warlock’ glued onto his otherwise hairless head, feeling the cold wind against his shaved and painted body.

Guttenburg looked over his ‘visiting ambassador from another tribe’ “No White Man would be crazy enough to scalp his own head and paint his body, Pisunii tutsihtsuka,” he said.

“Pusunii tutsi...” Gustav mispronounced, proudly, regarding his new name. “What does that mean in Commanche?”

“Skunk head”, Guttenburg smiled, pointing to the mane of straggly white and brown beard Gustav had glued onto the crown of his hairless head. “Something that just happened, I’m afraid.”

“Any chance I can get another name?” Gustav asked, disappointed but not dejected. “Like ‘he who sings off key’. ‘He who is afraid of horses’. ‘He who, oh yes, invented the iron horse that doesn’t need tracks that’s better than the steam-powered turtle that Nicholas Gugnot invented in

France and ran into a wall zooming along at two miles an hour.’ No, we’ll have to abbreviate that one.”

“He who heals, or tries to,” Guttenburg proclaimed after a pensive pause.

“Which in Commanche is...?” Gustav inquired, receiving no answer from his fellow human companion, but a thunderbolt from a valley just over the hills ahead. It seemed to split the sky open, then shot out a cloud of black lava, a cloud of grey smoke following. Leonora’s nostrils seemed to smell the devil himself in the whiff of stagnant air which blew over to her. She shook her head, struggling in vain to shake it out of her. She tried to rear up and run away, but Gustav held his ground. “It’s okay,” he assured her in German, Commanche and Texan English, but he knew it wasn’t. Neither did Guttenburg as he dismounted, leading his horse on foot to the valley ahead, covering the steed’s eyes with a blanket. Opening his eyes in the foul smelling air which began to stink his pupils the closer he got to the submerged volcano’s source.

Gustav followed, his still-urban European-conditioned nostrils sensing that it smelled just like the agrarian villages which had become converted into factory-infested towns, with the exception of one extra ingredient.

“Crude Oil.” Guttenburg remarked as he saw the source of a trio of volcanoes, tall metal demonic looking towers equipped with spears under their bellies which pounded their way into the earth below, making it bleed black. The river running into the valley of death was clear, blue and flowing, the waters leaving it being brackish, stagnant and putrid.

Gustav remarked as he noted a set of over-sized moonshine stills, with a distinctive and familiar product more intoxicating to industrialists than whiskey is to a common laborer. “And kerosine,” he said, remembering the odor of the lamp oil he needed to read most anything by after the sun went down.

Gustav looked around the city which now replaced the valley and noted, as expected, numerous lamps lit by kerosine. Some heating fires and forges made hot by that byproduct from the earth. And then something else he would doubt he would ever see in his lifetime. All mounted on wheels, all mobile. None of them dependent on anything except open ground ahead of them for movement in any direction, said movement being as fast as any horse, even Leonora.

“Your internal combustion wheelchairs and carriages, Gustav,” Guttenburg said proudly. “Kerosine fueled.”

“Carrying guns on their hoods,” Gustav lamented when gazing on the mechanized marvels which he swore, if he had anything to do with it, would be used to transport medicines and food to save human lives and never bullets to end them. People were being transported on this marvel which Gustav swore would revolutionize humanity by allowing self-propelled travel, without having to access the dreaded and overburdened horse. Those driving the horse-less charriots were clearly in charge of where they were going, well fed, confident, and proud of their positions. Those being driven were anything but, all of them in shackles, defeated in spirit, ashamed and horrified at what they had become, or been made into. Some were White, most were Black or Red. All

had ghostlike looks on their faces, driven to put their emaciated bodies by the whip, electric cattle prod or penetrating stare of Guards who channelled as much evil as any of Hesse's Cavalry did in Berlin. There were women in this labor camp too, but they only served to entertain the men who were in charge, and to humiliate those who weren't. Wagon loads of money came in, wagon loads of goods ranging from gold dust to silver-plated spittoons went out. The only children present were those whose hands were held tightly by the rich and powerful. And diverted into playing games with other children or making fun of the laborers, scolded if they decided to direct their attention elsewhere. Many of the laborers coughed, their backsides covered with splattered manure that seemed bloody.

From his vantage point atop of the hill, Gustav looked around for Hesse, the man who no doubt stole the designs for the car. And who, no doubt from stealing from and discrediting another Renaissance inventor, had 'discovered' that kerosine could be harnessed as a fuel for such horseless carriages. As to how Hesse had found a wealth of kerosine in Texas, Gustav's speculations extended to anyone he knew who had any knowledge of geology beyond the borders of his own country or city-state. He looked at Guttenburg with that hard earned question in mind, and was punished with an answer he hardly expected.

"We were students together, Fredrich Hesse and I." 'He Who Knew Too Much' confessed, tears of guilt pouring down his eyes. "I was interested in discovering what was under Mother Earth in America, and very good at it. He was obsessed with raping her, and is, well, better at what he does than what I did, or tried to do."

Guttenburg turned his head away, rocking back and forth like a Hassidic Jew in intense prayer at Yom Kippor. His incantations seemed to be Hebrew, a language Gustav didn't understand perhaps because it was naturally distasteful to his ear or perhaps because he was more Aryan than he realized. But whatever Guttenburg was saying, it was private. Between him and his Creator. The matter at hand now was to not lament at being tricked or caught by the devil, but to find, neutralize and destroy him. As for the most available and powerful incantation of that evil human incarnation, Hesse made his appearance, having emerged from a shack converted into a Mansion, accompanied by several very well dressed American gentlemen, a German-Texan belle hanging gracefully on the arms of each of them.

"The governors of three pro-Slavery states. And two members of Congress, with investments in Southern Plantations and Northern Factories," Guttenburg said, having cried out all of his tears. Most of them anyway.

"Polish German impish Hans' who belong to the other side, or sold out to it, no doubt," Gustav said.

To Gustav's surprise, Guttenburg didn't understand Gustav's reference. Perhaps Guttenburg really was far away from the political arm of the Revolution, knowing theoreticians Carl Marx, INSERT NAME Engels and Henry David Thoreau far more closely than he could ever know front line enforcers of that Movement such as Hans. Perhaps Guttenburg's place really was in the library rather than in the front lines. Or maybe his 'front line' was here in America. Texan America. Perhaps more specifically German Texan America. Such would explain his reason for

teaching the Comanches German, and the success he and other Germans had at making peace with a tribe that extracted vengeance on palefaces from every country in the world except 'Germany'. The sound of the word 'Germany' as a single unified Paradise still rang in Gustav's head as something to be sought, and built. But perhaps its first foothold would be on American soil.

Gustav assessed the number of guns and soldiers manning them in this multi-industrialized Capitalist Paradise. "There are too many of them," Guttenburg said. "We, shouldn't have waited so long."

"And 'we' is maybe YOU?" Gustav felt like saying, but didn't. Instead he counted the number of weapons and potential wielders of such. Then tried to calculate how many Comanches, Freethinker Germans and liberated Africans would be required to get the job done. The rules of mathematics seemed crueler with each assessment, but Gustav felt that he could manipulate the numbers in his favor given a few more inventions, innovations and inspirations. Perhaps a new kind of gun, or an anthem more powerful than Beethoven's Ninth. All of which would be useless unless, of course, he could get the Comanches to take him seriously. The Freethinker Germans who still thought that he had betrayed their Revolution. And the free Africans, which in Texas at least, numbered two.

Leonora nudged Gustav, who gently touched Guttenburg's shaking shoulders.

"Listen to your teacher!" Guttenburg grunted back, looking at the river heading south from the valley, the tributaries leading to the lands looked after by the Comanche and ethically and legally purchased by Germans immigrants.

Gustav saw it from Guttenburg's eye, and felt it. In the afternoon sun, the pristine waters they followed in the morning seemed to become impregnated with the stench of black, putrid water .

"It's all over. For all of us, except Lord Hesse! Get yourself out of here while you can, you idiot!" Guttenburg screamed at the impudent, self-scalped lad.

"Nature never gives you a problem without a solution, right Professor?" Gustav offered, calmly.

"What moron told you that!" the old coot whose age had finally caught up with him blasted back.

"You did," Gustav smiled, then laughed back at the old fart. With that, Gustav mounted his horse and gave Guttenburg the reins to his steed. Together they rode downstream to Guttenburg's adopted people and to whatever was left of Gustav's family, trying to out race the river. Miraculously, they did. In all ways except one.

## CHAPTER 27

The Commanche camp smelled fouler than usual, more like sick cows than healthy buffalo. More like the rural villages around Hamburg and Berlin in 1847 than Texas in 1849. Gustav noticed that the odor came from those whose teepees were closest to the river, the dogs drinking from it having brown asses darker and larger than any of the others in camp. A woman carried a large sac made of buffalo hide, dipping it into the river. She turned around, Gustav knocking it out of her hand, shooing her away from the river. She turned around, angry and curious.

“Cholera!” Gustav said to White Chin, instantly remembering what had happened in Europe, his nose smelling something in the water, his third eye seeing a microbe making its way from the off-colored river to the camp.

“But I’m thirsty,” White Chin said in German, Commanche and Texan English. “So are the children I’m looking after.

“This water is...infected!” Gustav said. He turned to Guttenburg, who like everyone else, saw nor smelled nothing unusual in the water. The Old Doctor put a mask over his face, instructing the rest of the tribe to do the same.

“NO!” Gustav insisted. “Those masks will do nothing! Cholera is spread through this!” he insisted, putting his hand through the water. No one believed him, even Maria. He ran into every teepee in camp, emptying out the water from every pot, canteen and sac, arousing the curiosity of most of the women, the rage of most of the men. Maria, Guttenburg and White Chin held them off with ‘he’s crazy and he’s going to do what he’s going to do anyway’ shruggs regarding ‘Skunk on Head’s actions.

The War Chief and Peace Chief talked amongst themselves, about to toss Gustav into exile or a teepee where he would be rigidly ‘contained’, but Gustav didn’t care. He screamed out at Guttenburg, still holding his mouth closed with a leather mask, as was everyone except the beloved and half-tolerated madman Gustav had instantly become. “We have to move camp.

NOW!” he pointed to the dogs who were dying by the river, the ones closest to the source of the microbe that Gustav could feel but no one else could see. Again and again he made his claim that there was something small in the river that was about to cause a big time problem in the tribe.

It was the Africans who put down their masks first. Perhaps it was their enlarged nostrils that smelled something that Gustav picked up with his puny nose. Or his humanized and Christianized tale of small demons in the water who the Evil One set out in fresh smelling rivers to tempt those seeking pleasure over sustenance that did it.

The story was interesting, and believed, but still not trusted. An idea which thus far had no other evidence as being fact than one man willing commit his life to it. But soon there were two souls who put their lives on the line. White Chin lowered her mask, walked up to Gustav and kissed him on the lips, emptying her canteens back into the river, packing her travail with her belongings, tying it to her horse.

The rest of the tribe followed, one by one, moved by something in Gustav’s eyes rather than his mouth. Guttenburg remained, keeping his mouth covered. “You are sure about this?” he asked.

“We boil water that we have, and move overland to the next tributary. The one not fed by the great river that runs North,” Gustav commanded.

“And as for the source of this great river that is now infested by demons?” Guttenburg asked.

“We turn the devil’s fire against him, and free the angels from his spell, without spilling one drop of our own blood!” he declared. Guttenburg felt the urge to do so, and translated it into Commanche for those who couldn’t keep up with it in German. White Chin corrected his Commanche grammar. Maria looked at the newly appointed spotted-faced, scalped ‘queen’ of the tribe with disdain as she smiled at Gustav, but accepted her commands, and requests.

Fredrichton had turned into an even larger and more powerful node of evil than when Gustav had first laid tired and bloodshot eyes on it, this time perusing the hole cut into the earth with not only Guttenburg behind him, but twenty Commanches braves as well. Everywhere he looked, earth was being ripped open to turn into metal, and metal turned into instruments serving those who served no one but themselves. The emaciated labor class served the ruling class with even more fear and a deadly silence of civility. Every trade and industry imaginable was present in this new town, goods and slaves being transported by Gustav’s trackless, horseless charriot. But there was one ancient trade which remained, the artful display of such on Lord Hesse’s house for all to see. The new boss from the Old World unfurled it for his new visitors, fresh laborers with still healthy bodies and defiant eyes. It was all Guttenburg could do to keep the contents of his stomach inside his belly and the tears behind his grief-stricken eyes inside the sockets as Hesse displayed the mural to his new employees.

“The heads, ears and matching hands of someone you know?” Gustav asked the old professor, trying to nudge him out of shock and into effective action.

As to the heads, Guttenburg named several of his students and colleagues who had become Freethinkers, emigrating to Texas prior to the emergence of the Revolutions back home. One was the former owner of the land, a kind hearted but ardon Abolishist schoolteacher to whom the Commanches had leased the land three years ago. Then there were the other human parts on the wall, all to easily recognizable by the Commanche War Chief and the rest of the braves.

“Yes, they are scalps,” Guttenburg said of the wall of long fur that covered all of the spaces not nailed to amputated flesh and bone, keeping his conversation and place it was coming from between himself and Gustav. “Taken from men, women and children. Mostly Commanche. Some White. They make great wigs. Turn a profit, you know. God helps those who help themselves, you know. And if God wills men like Hesse to get rich, maybe it’s Herr Hesse’s right and spiritual duty to do so. And as for us, well, perhaps God and the Great Spirit really doesn’t want us to succeed...Because, well, we haven’t, and aren’t.”

“Nature never gives us a problem without a solution,” Gustav grunted under a hushed breath as he noticed the Commanches’ conferring about what to do, their eyes fuming with rage, a surprising number of them with brains connecting to those firey portholes.

“There is nothing natural about what is down there!” Guttenburg blasted back. “And the only natural thing to do is to...well...Surrender!” With that, the old man got up on his feet, grabbing hold of his long hair, preparing to peel it off at the roots.

The new War Chief, Guttenburg’s best friend, who had been the brave Gustav had made his insane stand against upon his arrival to his land, grabbed hold of Guttenburg and held him down. Another brave grabbed his knife as the old coot cursed at him in German and Commanche. Another gently put a gag into his mouth. Meanwhile, Gustav resumed his initial plan, letting his nose become his eyes, and compass.

The various excavations had created many ponds a few streams that were spread through Fredrickton in a frightening pattern that resembled streets, alleys and parks. But it was not the water which interested Gustav, but the kind of mud it produced, and the kind of manure laid down next to each puddle, station, or outhouse. He retrieved a piece of paper from his saddlebag and madly wrote down the locations of the spots where the mud was loosest and bloodiest. A closer look would tell where it smelled foulest. “I go down there, when the sun goes down,” Gustav said in as many languages as he could, including ‘hand’, gathering a collection of patches and shovels. “You stay up here.”

“Nien!” the War Chief with the name Gustav couldn’t pronounce insisted, rallying his braves to get their weapons to mount an attack. “Wir kommen mit du, mein freund. Schnell!”

“No...You don’t come with me!” Gustav insisted, gazing with pity at his now insane and helpless Mentor. The rock of fluid wisdom had become mud, losing contact with the God, the earth, and himself. Perhaps it was something that Hesse had slipped to Guttenburg in one of the



visits they had while he was becoming a Commanche. Or perhaps it was something Hesse infused into Guttenburg's blood, somehow, many years earlier. Gustav smelled something on Guttenburg's breath, and flesh, which seemed very familiar--the same odor he himself could smell on and in himself upon his imprisonment as a mental patient prior to going mad in Hesse's clandestine nuthouse. 'Doctor Hesse' was a master of how one could manipulate earth, metal and flesh for his own devises. In part because he had stolen those secrets from Promethian mortals who struggled find such ways to produce miracles which would work in the real world, for real people. Perhaps whatever elixer Hesse had put into Guttenburg's now painful and shriveling body was derived from a formulary that Gustav himself had devised.

Gustav felt alone, for the first time in his life. Not even Beethoven seemed to be around to help. No, there were no magic chords to play on the piano nor notes to sing with the voice to bring the walls of Fredrichton down. It was very much of a down-to-earth affair, which miraculously became infused into Gustav's mind as he felt the earth talk to him through his now-mocassin clad feet, the wind whispering something in the breeze to his nostrils. And, yes, a hint of music in the ears. He looked down upon Fredrichton as the sun set on the horizon, and saw the opera unfold with his ears, seeing it with the his ears. Or was it the other way around?

The War Chief saw the Symphony inside Gustav's rapidly moving brain, improvizing on the theme which he was now sure would bring it to a final and satisfying conclusion. But the War Chief couldn't hear all the notes, perhaps because they were in the process of being written. Gustav tied his collection of spoon-like spades onto his back, threw the string of bufallo hide bags over his shoulders, and place his hopefully-still-leak-proof mittons under his belt.

"I go there down there," Gustav repeated to the War Chief, whose German was better than any of his companions. "All of you stay here. Till I get back. If you can. If you want to." The words were translated, and the meaning understood. As was the feeling, conveyed back to when the War Chief extended his hand out in bondship, then inserting an eagle feather into the 'warlock' which "Skunk Head" had irreversibly glued onto the crown of his baby-skinned head. It was appended by the pronouncement of another name, which sounded better than "Skunk Head", the exact meaning of which Gustav would find out after completing his Mission, be it in this life, or the next.

## CHAPTER 28

The sunset was hardly a magnificent one. Clouds from Nature and industrial smoke produced by its rudest creature converting the greyish blue sky into a black muck within minutes after the sun retired on the Western side of the mountains. The kerosine lamps around Fredrickton illuminated enough about the town so it could be seen by Gustav, but so that he couldn't be seen by it, or anyone in it. He donned the rags of a deceased laborer whose life was ended with a bullet rather than dysantery, and carried his bags of weapons around as if they were cargo in the service of his master. He washed himself with mud, then springled himself with desert sand, conferring a ghostly grey tone to his skin. He looked, and felt, 'Colored', indistinguishable from the Mexicans, Indians, Negroes and enslaved Whites in camp. He dared not speak to them, but felt their pain. How he yearned to free them. Or even heal them.

'Doc Gustav' felt like he was on a medical mission, but this time it was strictly about populations, not people. The hippocratic oath said that 'above all do no harm', but in order to do good by the Commanches, the Freethinker Germans and the world, he HAD to do harm. And Gustav was now a military scientist, on a mission that required military precision and the soundest science his now-non-linear mind could come up with. The theory said that this strain of cholera was deadly, and that Mother Earth had provided such pockets of infected water in various parts of the Fredrickton. Thus far, these puddles of death were in the areas populated by slaves, and not around the Masters' housing. Perhaps this was by Hesse's design, or perhaps Mother Nature really was a sadistic bitch. In either case, Gustav's Mission was to find the puddles of death and transport the water to people who would be making decisions about the future of Fredrickton, Texas, America and, eventually, Germany.

The stage was set, Hesse playing his part in this new Gustav Beethovenian opera very well. It was a large party in the Big House, Herr Hesse toasting his new city of wealth and prosperity, promising that those with 'breeding, balls and bucks' would live long and prosperous lives here, and in cities he would build once the Mexicans and Indians further Westward were 'properly educated'. He seemed particularly fond of, the children of his new business associates, all of whom addressed him as 'Uncle Fredrich'. Indeed, it seemed as if Christmas had come to Fredrickton, its inception and creation for the sake of the children.

Conflicting loyalties plagued Gustav as he saw the children dance with Uncle Fredrich through the windows. The once-young physician knew that when they drank the infected water carried on his mudsoaked back, they would die as ugly and painfully as did the expendable laborers who were always kept at a safe distance from the 'city center', and dogs in the Commanche camp who drank from waters the infected streams had flowed into, and the towns along the way filled with other white folks, perhaps Germans or perhaps not, perhaps Texans or perhaps immigrants, who had children of their own. No, Gustav asserted to himself. If a few rich folks kids had to contract cholera to rid the world of Hesse, such was required. The mathematics of it all dictated it. Perhaps, Gustav speculated, he could ride in with his Commanche comrades and swoop up

the children from their dysentery fecal soaked beds, bring them to the open range, raise them as Comanches and let them be Ambassadors to a New World which was at the core of the Professor's Parliament platform in Frankfort. Or failing that, Gustav could wait till the children were sent home with their governesses and maids while he infused infected water into the clean, metallic troughs and mechanized pumps feeding their rich and equally greedy parents inside.

Gustav hid in the brush outside the big house as long as he could, awaiting the children's departure. Most of them had left, so he thought. The clouds above offered him cover to approach Uncle Fredrich's personal water tower and he climbed up, waiting for the right moment. The moon, however, had other ideas, deciding to come out big, full and bright. Down below, laborers were called out of their shabby tents and their manure-soaked blankets to continue working. Gustav threw whatever infected water he could into the main tower in the well-guarded 'respectable' area of Fredrichton, leaving behind chemicals which to his reckoning would neutralize the cholera-causing microbes in the infected ponds in the perimeter of the city inhabited by 'the expendables'. Before he was captured and put to work with that unfortunate caste of people, he sneaked away under the wire fences at crawl like a coyote. Lurked amidst the low-lying bush outside it like a mouse. Then run over the open ground as fast as a deer he could up to where his Comanche Comrades had camped. He felt himself become all of these animals, and more.

They all waited for him up top, including Leonora herself, who greeted Gustav with a snort. Guttenburg was sleeping, his mind and soul someplace else, thankfully. Gustav helped himself to another look down below, observing several servants bringing water in to the Uncle Fredrich's party, its ranks now swelled by more carriages bringing in more well-dressed and happy guests. Many of them, including Hesse himself, decided it was time for a holiday swim before dinner, jumping into a large metallic-walled pond now filled with cholera infected water.

Gustav chucked at this Romanesche orgy, recalling how the Roman Empire had fallen. "Lead in the aquaducts which infected only the rich slave owning assholes who could afford water delivered in aquaducts," he explained to the War Chiefs with delight as to how the Elements had worked together to bring down the gods and goddesses of Industry, perhaps in retribution for their sibling elements having been raped from the earth. But as for the War Chief, he was interested in one thing and one thing only now. "Wir gehen nach unser Kinder, ya?" he asked, and begged.

"Yes, we go home to our children," Gustav said, reminded again of the special bond these people held for their offspring, who greeted them with warmth and enthusiasm after each arrival back home. "Our families," Gustav smiled, picturing the homecoming he would get from White Chin, his two African associates, Maria 5 and perhaps even a re-embodied Ludwig von Beethoven, assuming he had the balls to return to see his Immortal Beloved face to face after having left her.

## CHAPTER 29

The Texas moon afforded and demanded those riding under it to succumb to the temptations to dream, most particularly to a White man whose mind had turned 'Injun' faster than his soul

could keep up with the transformation. By Gustav's calculations it would take 36 hours for the cholera infected waters to exact their toll on the mogels and human maggots who saw fit to keep it confined to the expendable laborers in Fredricton. Within the next four days, news about the cholera epidemic in the boom town would reach the other centers of emerging commerce in the Lone Star State, blackballing trading with it. Ten days later it would be headline news in the Carolinas. A fortnight beyond that word about Hesse's infected experiment in Free Market Capitalism would reach England, then the German states still trying to find an effective way to becoming united. Word about the dreaded incurable disease that drains the guts out of its victims with unstoppable outpourings from the anal cavity would spread to the rest of the Commanche bands, as well as the 'godless' Apache, mystically-Christian Yaqui and smartly-assimilated Cherokee. Hesse would be blamed for the infection of the new American Royal Class and be exported, perhaps to Africa where he would have to explain what happened to so many of the free villagers who he recruited to work in America, from which they could send money to their families. All of which assumed that Hesse would still be alive, of course. Most likely the history books he was commissioning to be written would be burnt as firewood, along with his reputation and legacy.

But there were other things Gustav envisioned and played in his head again and again as he and his Commanche companions rode back to their new camp, heading East into a new dawn on a new riverbank with waters that were, according to everything anyone knew, still fresh and life-promoting. Thoughts about Elsa were forgotten, replaced with yearnings to be with White Chin, the still-unmarried half-breed Commanche whose cratered face and scalped head became as meaningless to Gustav as a spec of dust on the Mona Lisa canvas or Cistine Chapel walls. In the shadows of the moonlit cottonwood trees, he saw the two of them eating buffalo meat and apple strudel, reading Homer's poetry to each other in Greek, Commanche and the golden language of blissful silence. As an after dinner treat, she would play her flute, he violin which would double as a fiddle when appropriate. The duet would end with sharing each other's bodies, minds and souls atop a buffalo hide, nothing above them except the stars above and disembodied angels, who would be envious of the bliss they had forfeited in exchange for their paradise. Under the sun rising in the Eastern sky they would have two, or perhaps three children, who would learn how to do nothing else save to live to their full potential and honor the Great Spirit's Highest command, and wish---for be Alive. The children would grow up, while Gustav and White Chin would grow old, and perhaps grow some hair on their heads as well. They would celebrate the birth of their grandchildren, telling them tall tales and secrets they were not able to share with their parents, as was the way since the coming of the buffalo. They would raise horses, and some of them would be level headed enough for even Gustav to trust them. They would disagree with each other on much, but never hate each other and never go to bed angry, or disappointed with the choices they made as a life mate. They would eventually die, but live forever in that they had loved each other while they were granted the opportunity to be Alive.

"Gut traumen?" the War Chief asked Gustav as he rode up beside him, grabbing Leonora's reins just as the mare was about to be spooked by an armadillo under her feet. "Good dream?" he asked again, in English, Gustav still chosing to stay in the world beyond that sunrise and sunset than under the sky in between.

Gustav looked his way. “What is your name?” he asked in his best Commanche. “The one that only your best friends call you?”

“Warum sagen Sie?” he inquired, sternly, using the formal tense of ‘you’ to inquire as to why the request was being made.

“Why, well, because I want to name my children after you. One of them anyway.”

The War Chief smiled, moved away from his compadres, and a slowly-recovering Guttenburg and whispered into Gustav’s ear. “Ebibutu Kahuu.”

Gustav tried to repeat it, but was silenced by the War Chief, who sternly stared down those who chuckled at hearing it.

“Blau mouse,” the warrior whose reputation in battle was unsurpassed but whose history with dealing with strong women in camp was questionable answered. Gustav smiled, respecting the humor but not laughing at the joke. ‘Blue Mouse’ would explain it to him someday. But for this night that was ending, and the day which was beginning, it was about a victory celebration for Gustav and his new wife. Or course, she didn’t know yet he had made the commitment to become her husband, but such would be a surprise he would spring on her when he saw her. The hills in the horizon gave way to the sight of distant teepees. He could feel her as he walked Leonora back ‘home’. Impatiently, he trotted the mare forward, then ran, ahead of the War Party. A vision seemed to pop up from the middle of Mother Earth, bearing her smiling face. Her arms were extended, her eyes wide open and her body----lifeless, and horribly violated.

White Chin’s throat had been sliced open, her wrists and ankles bolted into to metal stakes. Her arms covered with cylindrical stab marks, most of them exposing enlarged veins. Her forehead opened and sutured closed with a pattern of meticulous precision. Her mouth sterilized with acid. Her burnt chest reeking of kerosine. The remaining hair on her head, the lock containing a ribbon of blue beads, had been ripped off, a wide hole hammered into her head below it.

“We not know she out here,” the tall African explained to Gustav. “We told her not go looking for you.”

“How did Hesse’s men find her? And why did you let them!” Gustav demanded of the shorter African, grabbing for his throat like a madman.

Blue Mouse held Gustav back. The Commanches in charge of White Chin’s safety sincerely said that she skillfully wandered off on her own, not wanting to be found by anyone. Maria emerged from the group of mourning women and laid flowers on White Chin’s scalped head, trying to resurrect her cold corpse with Mozart’s Requiem. Guttenberg snapped out of the spell he had been put under by his inner demons.

“I saw something behind my eyes, brighter and sharper than I ever did when they were open,” Professor He Who Knew Too Much proclaimed. He let his feet take him to a gently rising slope of scrub-brush and let his exhausted body fall into the arms of a miquite bush. He looked Eastward, seeing something beyond that no one else could and called his horse over to him. “There was a horse made of flesh from the West and a horse made of iron from the East. A man in the clouds who had surrendered his body to the winds said it was time to see who could run strongest, fastest and longest. He told this to the flesh horse and the iron horse in languages they each understood. He set the direction for the race as being from here, where we stand now, to North, to where we just came from. He said that the future of all horses and men will depend on what each of the horses do now.” Guttenburg continued the tale, engaging the very young with his imagery, the very old with the bilingual poetry of it that sounded more like a song than a sermon.

But as for the Comanches in the middle, Blue Mouse said it all. “Ain’t gonna work this time, partner,” he said out of the side of his mouth into Gustav’s ear. “We are too few. They, and you, are too many.”

Gustav asked with his eyes for a show of spears, guns and hearts as to who would be with him to extract revenge for White Chin, his third and final Elsa, who had been taken away from him. But each of the braves shook their head in the negative. “This is a chance to regain your land! All of it!” Gustav blasted out. “And your honor.”

Guttenburg continued to rant on about a missed opportunity in the past, when a great warrior took a trip on a large canoe he spent a year building to the lands to the East, thinking he would discover great villages filled with smart people who were also very powerful. But he and saw smoke-filled villages where people were busy killing each other and themselves, possessed by demons. The warrior offered his services to slay the demons, who he knew did not exist, but he was chased back to the beach by a mob of crazy people who preferred their misery to the joy the warrior could have brought them. The warrior decided it was best to paddle back home, reporting to his people that there are no lands to the East worth discovering. He gave up building large canoes and used those he built for firewood, thinking that no one in the Eastern lands would ever even think about paddling West. It was a cute, cautionary and perhaps true tale, but it was a useless one now.

From where Gustav saw and felt it, anything that could get the Comanches to go on the Warpath against Hesse was worth trying. He was infused with rage, blinded by anger, shaken into considering other options by a small, angelic hand that touched him lightly upon his shattering shoulders. “You have to let her go,” Maria said to him. “For your sake, and everyone else’s. We AND YOU, have other destinies to which you are indentured.”

She was right. White Chin’s death was another accident of war, and there were many wars in which the Comanches were engaged. Against the Mexicans. The Texans. The Apache. The short-haired, shoe-wearing, slave-owning Cherokee, who manipulated White law against their fellow redskins. And the enemies they couldn’t see, including small pox which nearly decimated their tribe and cholera which, for now, had not. Both of these unseeable attackers came with the arrival of the Whites, and as for White Chin, she was part-white herself.

White Chin was given a proper and honorable funeral, though the Elders did special ceremonies on themselves to protect themselves from the white demons they still felt were lingering in her disfigured body. The adopted half-breed with genetic background no one was really sure of was sent off by another one of Maria's songs, played on her small piano and sung with a voice that seemed to say that 'what happened was necessary and for the right reasons.' Maria's sense of optimism was infectious to the hopeless, comforting the hurting, touching to the cynical.

White Chin's pox-created face was painted red, her once-wondrously wide blue eyes sealed with clay. She was wrapped in a buffalo blanket and tied in a sitting position on her favorite horse by a heavily gloved Blue Mouse. He gave the reins of the horse to Guttenburg for the journey outside camp. Gustav and the Africans placed her body amidst the rock crevices near a stream which perhaps would take her spirit to a place where her inner beauty could be felt by herself and seen by everyone else.

Blue Mouse gave the orders and the camp of Comanches became mobile once again, heading South towards the Rio Grande. In their wake, he left behind three months worth of dried buffalo meat which would most certainly be eaten. Two teepees which he hoped would be used at safe locations. Five seasoned horses whom he begged to take care of Gustav, Maria, his lost-to-this-world comrade He Who Knew Too Much, and the two still-horse-weary Africans. Seven quality rifles and two hundred, hopefully still good, rounds of ammunition stolen from the US Cavalry. And his most sincere prayers for their well being.

"In Sommer. Ich sehen du, hier?" Blue Mouse asked, and pledged, his hand extended with a warm smile Gustav had never seen the self-appointed and elected chief give to anyone.

Gustav, Blue Mouse and even the gone-from-this-world Guttenburg knew that a meeting again in summer at that Sacred Spot would never happen, but the gesture and desire had to be honored by something that was at least partially true. "We will see each other again, my friend." Gustav pledged. Ironically, such were the same words Guttenburg had said to him in Europe prior to his un-announced and perhaps premature departure.

## CHAPTER 30

Gustav rode in alone, insisting that the Africans take care of Maria, and that the now somewhat saner channeler of ex-lover Beethoven's spirit take care of Guttenburg. Atop a now very obedient Leonora, under the cover of fog and the guise of a dirt poor White prospector, he carried three rifles, two pistols and a razor sharp buffalo knife, prepared to use them if anyone got in his way. To his delight, and horror, nobody did.

The post-mortem in Fredrichton confirmed the efficiency of this new kind of biological warfare Gustav had embraced. Entry points to the once-booming town were cluttered with warning signs regarding entry in Spanish, English, German and Cherokee. And as for the body count, it was numerous, particularly around the Big House, and the big houses around it. Corpses dressed in the finest clothing buyeable on either side of the Atlantic lined the 'streets', their mouths dried up, their faces dehydrated, their asses stained brown and red with liquid excrement which glued cloth to flesh. Most of the bodies were those of rich men, some of bitchy women, a few, to Gustav's lamentation, bratty, spoiled children. All of their pockets had been emptied, not one of them retaining so much as an earring's worth of jewelery. Though their teeth did still contain



some gold fillings, they were missing goods atop their head. Never before had Gustav seen so many hairless heads.

He rode along the cholera containing streams he had sterilized with chlorine and lime and saw broken shackles lying on the ground, some with a finger or two stuck in between the metal clamps, but none around live human. The machinery which had been run by the unfortunate souls who had worn those shackles had all stopped now. All that could be heard now was the wind, and the animals. Coyotes on the ground helping themselves on the legs of humans who less than a week ago would have shot them on sight. Eagles above, dining on flesh of the two legged vultures whose toxic fumes had killed their siblings and whose explosions flung their weanlings out of their branches onto the poisonous black muck below. Crows that hung around the oil wells that stood tall and motionless against a sky that was thinking about how to clear itself. And everywhere, horseless carriages, built according to Gustav's designs, their movement made possible by kerosine and oil so abundant in these desert hills.

Perhaps if properly cleaned up, Fredricton could be become a Paradise. The thought entered into Gustav's troubled mind as he kicked over all the bodies, looking for the one face amongst the dead that would justify the young doctors' first and horrifically successful experiment in germ warfare.

"Where are you, 'Uncle Fredrich!" Gustav yelled out as he kicked over every corpse in town searching for the one face that had belonged to Hesse. He searched everywhere, but he was nowhere. Exhausted by rage, Gustav had no choice left but to use what was left of his mind. After searching everywhere Hesse could have lived and worked here, he considered where the manipulative demon would play. Certainly not the brothel, but someplace more in keeping with the intelligence of the man who used his brain for evil, despite the fact that a truly wise one would only use it for good.

The door to the building was still locked, the morally justified looters having chosen to ransack every other structure in the town. Its content, books. The lock was built according to the finest German designs, in the manner of master apprentice locksmith Ernst Zimmas. In memory of the lad who intruded him to the Revolution's ideals, and the man who had died defending Gustav and the Revolution a few days later, Gustav emptied five rounds into the locks, declaring 'For a Free and United Germany!', not caring who heard him.

The binding on the books lining the shelves seemed familiar. Painfully familiar, many in the style of Berlin publisher Ulmann. The titles even more familiar. The genres political, technical, medical and musical. Including 'the unpublished works and letters of Ludwig von Beethoven', next to 'Gustav's Utopia'. There were other works there as well, all from Revolutionary innovators who had joined the failed Revolution. All of which had fled their homeland, or had gone missing, or declared dead. As for the author of most interest, one sparked Gustav's eyes and mind the hardest. "L. J. Guttenburg", he read, finding himself wondering what the initials stood for, an ongoing mystery for Gustav and his fellow students regarding the Professor who told them everything about his life except his Christian, or perhaps Pagan, or perhaps Jewish, first name.

But such was for later. Gustav reached up and grabbed hold of Guttenburg's books, bringing them up to his chest and opening them like a man brought to the brink of death by thirst then given access to a riverful of clear, clean water. Here was the knowledge and wisdom of the smartest, and wisest, and perhaps most compassionate man he ever knew. In the flesh anyway. He felt like Plato discovering the secret writings of his Mentor Socrates. Or Jesus being given access to His Father's real purpose and plan long before His entry into Jerusalem. Gustav's opened his eyes wide open, prepared for the Light to penetrate into them and transform his brain forever into a mind that could Never Know Too Much. The contents of the book popped up out of the cover, covering his eager face, literally.

"Dust!" Gustav said, seeing nothing but sunlit particles of liberated silt in his eyes. A closer look and feel indicated that underneath the silt there was just more cover. All the pages, except those indicating the real author and the dedication he intended to be read, and felt, were gone.

The same was true for all of the rest of Guttenburg's books. And all of the other scholars, innovators and geniuses. And of the books Gustav had written, or channeled, as well. "God has to be a sadist" Gustav considered, then concluded. But one real world conclusion prior to dealing with that one burned itself into Gustav's mind. "Hesse is still alive. Someplace."

A wind blew in through a hole in the window, enlarging its size and blowing glass all over the table at which Gustav was restlessly sitting. Birds flew in, ignoring Gustav's presence. A map blew off the wall, falling into Gustav's lap. On it, a route with a single destination, a red X written in red ink that smelled and felt like blood clearing indicated.

Did Gustav find Hesse, or was Hesse finding him? Maybe it was a bit of both. In any case, such a seemed irrelevant now. As did any softness in Gustav's now hardened and determined heart.

## CHAPTER 31

It had turned dark by the time Gustav weaved his way back to the hidden meadow where he had left Maria and his two Negro colleagues. A fog rolled in, blurring his vision to everything except the teepee which had been set up between the cottonwood trees and the wagon, its white sheet now made grey. Inside lay all the weapons, food and books he had acquired on this long trek from 'safe' to 'elsewhere', along with kerosine lamps which Gustav still found indispensable for seeing anything in the dark, particularly when the moon decided to take the night off. There was much that was off besides the moon hiding behind mountains and clouds, which Gustav's stumbling feet discovered before his eyes did.

The Africans lay dead upon the ground, their throats cut, their mouths burnt out with acid, their chests toasted to a putrid crisp with the lingering aroma of kerosine, their foreheads cut open with a blunt ax and sewn back together with string. Guttenburg sat atop a stump he was riding like a flying horse, penetrating up past the clouds while winning a debate with Saint Peter. Maria was...gone. Gustav was aghast, having just arrived to see more of Hesse's handiwork in front of his even more terrified eyes. Perhaps 'Uncle Fredrick' really was the devil incarnate. He seemed to know exactly where Gustav had left what was left of his Revolutionary Army. As to the explanation of this, there were many whose frames of reference were in the world of man rather the realm of gods. Hesse's survival of the cholera plague was equally explainable. Gustav had written down some putative cures for the deadly disease thought to be both unstoppable and untreatable by even Guttenburg. It was a horrifying irony to be discovered by a creature such as Hesse. The other conclusion was even more frightening---that Hesse somehow had found a prevention for cholera which he was testing by allowing the disease to flourish amongst his

laborers while he protected his associates from the disease. But as for this situation, Gustav had outwitted the tyrannical wizard. The destruction of Fredrichton and the death of all of its corrupt citizens save one could not have been in Hesse's grand plan. Or was it? A face to face with the protector of non-democratic order and ill-gotten property was the only way to find out.

Leonora seemed to agree, hobbling back to the camp which had been converted into a killing ground with all but one of her feet covered with blood. Still, she stood firm and determined, begging her new master, and friend to hop on her back. It was just her and Gustav now, and Quixotic cowboy 'Long Hair Guttenburg', who rode the invisible steed under his legs with both skill and pinache, brandishing a willow twig like a sword at demons only he could see. He seemed, thus far, to be winning the battle in his realm. Perhaps he could be useful to Gustav in his.

The red mark looked more like a cross than an x, no matter how Gustav held the map 'Uncle Fredrich' had left behind. The path to it was clearly laid out on paper, clearly displayed on the canvas of the Texas desert in tracks laid down by wheels, with no horse pulling it. It led straight West, then turned South, then North, the East then West again on hard jagged rocks where the trail disappeared, along with the sunlight which Gustav had used as a substitute for the compass Guttenburg had demagnetized and neutralized in the service of his favorite student's most important education.

Now it was student who was leading the mentor, but to where? Each path upward seemed to go down, and each downhill slope seemed to be a steep climb up a mountain. Guttenburg's direction of choice was always Upward, a position he was best poised for by being on top of Leonora's back. Gustav's fear of her, and the big, forest-less mountains to which she was accustomed, returned. He tried to listen to the earth with his feet, then with his hands, then with his ears, listening for some kind of underground rumbling which felt like it violated the earth. Finally, Gustav decided to use the most reliable human compass available.

"In its time," Guttenburg proclaimed regarding how much longer it would take for them to get to the designated location each time Gustav asked. But the Promethian hopeful was running out of steam, perspective and time. He decided to listen to the plants, intuiting that the designated spot was in a low lying region of the Texas plains, in between three rivers which all met just South of its location. He began to listen to the birds above, taking note of where they were flying. To the rhythm of the field ground bound rodents with strange names and even stranger bodies. And to the notes of some very human music which was, amazingly enough very real. It came from the other side of a defoliated hill which stood a bit taller than the others, and smelled a bit fouler. However, the music was anything but foul.

The sight was as bizarre as the person playing the notes. Maria played a Beethoven Moonlight Sonata atop a wooden platform built of polished oak, displaying more heart and technique than anyone Gustav ever heard, or imagined possible. She was decked out in a brilliantly green low cut lace dress, adorned with a bright diamond necklace as big as her eyes and nearly as beautiful. Long blonde hair flowed over her shoulders, cascading over gold earrings that sparkled in the sunlight that had somehow decided to come out, in part perhaps due to a cannon like 'weather machine' on the desert floor below her, and the man operating it.

“She plays brilliantly, don’t you think Maestro Gustav!” Hesse declared from his seat in the audience below her. He whipped the tail of his formal attire concert coat, inviting Gustav and his Quixotic Comrade to join him in two chairs of honor next to him. As for the rest of the audience, they were speechless and breathless, quite literally. Armed to the teeth, Gustav advanced forward to join them, insisting that Guttenburg remain behind to look after Leonora’s stone bruised left front foot and her broken left hind wing. Gustav assessed what he could of Guttenburg’s condition, giving him the last of his newest and most probably last home-grown soul resurrection formulation.

Hesse chuckled with discrete condescension at Gustav, keeping the volume of the insult down so as to not disturb the primadonna on stage. “You come to her concert in rags, and with so many aggressive intentions. They did too,” the heavily mustached self-made Industrial Monarch said, referring to the other members of the audience, corpses dressed up as much as the remaining flesh and bone allowed to look like the people they once were, or could be. “You have come so far, and done so very very well,” he said. “Sit!”

Gustav complied with the request, but took another chair. The empty portion of the blood stained bench next to Maria, who kept playing. Her breath reeked of medication, her eyes glazed over with a blissful sense of numb.

“Happiness, my dear Gustav,” Hesse said. “You should try it sometime. It beats the hell out of thinking. Or caring.”

Gustav had seen Maria in these ‘before time’ states before. The moments of non-lucidity when she seemed to be a young woman in love with a tortured man, her Immortal Beloved Ludwig. She above all people could channel his warmth into the notes he wrote. Just as Gustav, perhaps above all people, could channel the Maestro’s Fire into music, medicine, science and politics.

“Relax! Enjoy! You are amongst friends now, you know,” Hesse proclaimed. “In a city which I will call Gustavston,” he continued.

Gustav looked around him at stakes hammered into the ground, each with a photograph or picture painted on it. There was a medical clinic, a research lab, an opera house, a Café, and several factories. In the middle was a library, a rebuilt barn containing books which had real pages in them, by the looks of it.

Maria completed the piece by her deceased lover, then went on to play a composition composed by her son. Gustav seemed shocked that she not only remembered the notes he wrote down, but that she played them so well, appended by passages he had incubated in his mind but had not yet put on paper. Yes, perhaps she and he were thinking and feeling with the same brain, being conducted, in part, by old Ludwig himself. But as Gustav observed Maria with his real world eyes, it seemed that she had channeled something from a different musical director entirely.

On her hands was the odor of kerosine. Under her nails, fresh blood. The tips of her fingers indentation marked made by surgical needles, blood-tinged surgical thread under the belt of her

dress. Hidden in her lace boots, strands of hair connected to a blue beaded ribbon, a tag of flesh holding it together.

Gustav could hear Maria seeing his thoughts, but he tried to hide them behind his terrified eyes. She stopped playing and looked at him, stroking his cheek with the fondest affection. She seemed to be two people, one of whom he never suspected could ever exist. At least not in a soul as artistic and caring as hers.

“Why did you kill her?” Gustav asked. “And the two Africans?”

The demon inserted into Maria smiled, more playfully than sadistically. Hesse clapped, yelling out an enthusiastic ‘Bravo!’ to Gustav, appending it with ‘Encore! Encore!’ as the truth he had worked so hard to decipher began to devour every part of him that was still young, trusting and idealistic. “You killed Hans, Ulmann, and the other Revolutionary ‘mental patients’ in the ward I liberated you from in Berlin too, right?” Gustav said, remembering the hallmarks on the bodies rendered into corpses so many months and dimensions of experience ago. “And...” he shuttered to think but had to give voice to. “Elsa too.”

Maria smiled sheepishly and finally spoke. “I am your mother after all, my darling Maestro Gustav.”

“Why!” Gustav tearfully asked Maria.

She answered with music. Firey ‘grab fate by the throat’ works from Ludwig’s published repertoire, some from his unpublished works, and some from Gustav’s pen.

“Why!” Gustav asked, requested, then demanded of the madwoman to whom he had given his life, for which he forfeited his sanity. Maria didn’t answer, referring Gustav with her eyes to his ‘Uncle Fredrich’ for a reply.

“It has something to do with the music,” Hesse said. “Listen and you’ll see what I mean.”

Worldly agendas told Gustav to neutralize Hesse, but an Inner Voice demanded that he first find Maria, or whoever she really was. She had to be a good person inside. There had to be a reason why she killed everyone Gustav got close to, most particularly the women he loved. As she continued to talk with her fingers on the keyboard, Gustav ranted on with his progressively hoarse voice, made more so by the dry Texas air and the a wave of hot, dusty wind chocking his throat. “Beethoven was a bastard to you!” he yelled into Maria’s face, untying a knot around her demented heart which she dared not untie herself. “He left you with nothing! He left you in rags! He left you with me! We were both alone.”

Maria’s smile sunk into a grimace.

“An arrogant, son of a bitch brat who you couldn’t even take care of! And for what! So he could go off and compose these notes that people forget two seconds after they hear them?”

Maria's grimace turned into a frown, her face welling up. Her fingers lost control of the notes, then lost hold of the keyboard, then control of themselves as she shook like a leaf trying to hold back a hurricane force wind.

"And that son of a bitch Ludwig left you! He used you! He could have married you but he didn't...and you know why?"

"Because I left HIM!" Maria blasted back, tears of anger and love running down her cheeks. But here words were clear, direct and reeked of an accuracy that brought all of the mathematics of Gustav's journey into a simple indisputable formula. "I would have destroyed my Immortal Beloved Ludwig, and his music, and would have kept him from his true Destiny. Just like Elsa and White Chin would have destroyed your music, and kept you from your true Destiny."

"Which is with me," Hesse suggested as he got up from his seat and strolled around the stage. "Us," he continued, placing his hands upon Maria's shoulders, causing them to shake with terror. "Right my dear?" he asked his favorite mental patient. "Remember how happy you can be if you make me happy? And how sad you feel when you do things that, well you know, make me angry"

Maria seemed to be sane now, a condition which terrified her much as she nodded an affirmative 'yes' to Hesse. Terror put Maria back into her inner world, but this time a dillusion which was more hellish than heavenly. "Good," Hesse said in a doctorly manner as she assessed her neurological condition. "If you can't respect me, fear will do very nicely. Very nicely indeed."

Hesse raised his head, only to find Gustav's pistol aiming straight at it.

"Your miracle drugs kept your mother alive, my dear Doctor Gustav, but mine kept her happy," he smirked.

"I'm not interested in being happy," Gustav growled. "And neither is she."

"Neither am I!" a voice rang out from behind Gustav, from man mounted on an invisible horse, with a real fist attached to his shaking hand.

Without warning, Guttenburg lashed out at Hesse, despite the fact that his former friend and fellow student pulled out three pistols from under his coat, emptying each of them into Guttenburg's body. One in the chest. One in the neck. And one in the ground. Gustav tried to intercede, but was pulled back by something not of this world. He watched as Guttenburg lashed out in anger with the last breath in his death-rattled lungs at Hesse. Observed the miraculously-revitalized Professor Guttenburg become a young lion again. Agonized as He Who Knew Too Much fell to the ground dead, with a smile on his face. Atop Hesse, who had fallen dead next to him, terror frozen into his lifeless eyes.

Maria played out the opera with a composition that was her own. It was a rhapsody of love, and forgiveness. Wherever she was now, she and Ludwig had resolved the differences between each other. It was the happiest moment of her long, tortured and convoluted life. She collapsed in

Gustav's arms after completing it. His smile widened as her white face became pale, and her gentle breath rattled in the trumpets of death. "It's for real now, my dear Gustav," she said. "It's all yours now," she smiled, after which her soul finally danced away from her body, being sure to kiss Gustav a grateful farewell.

Gustav thought he could hear old Ludwig come down from the clouds to bring her up to his abode. It was a good thought, even if it was not a real one. And, besides, what was reality but good thoughts put into action with intensity, intelligence and that most illusive of human phenomena, love.

The books of wisdom, knowledge and experience stolen by Hesse belonged to Gustav now, but they really belonged to everyone. He would find a way to see they were read, and that the messages within them were understood. As for application of such, this was after all up to a Higher Wisdom, to which Gustav felt a new bondship. Yes, as Blue Mouse would say on his way to battle, it is was good day to die. And, to live too.