

Somewhere in a parallel universe where history has been modified, the children's innocent faces reflected in the glowing embers of the fireplace. Their minds were engaged and their eyes twinkled as they listened intently to their grandfather's story. As Stefan tucked the little boy and girl into their blankets, knowing they would not make it through the end, he took a deep breath and began let go of his story he had been holding onto since 1945.

The flag completely consumed by the enormous swastika blew ferociously in the blustering November wind. Just north of Hamburg, the German POW camp sat quietly in the barren land being smothered by the snows from the North Sea. Sergeant Burgermeister's boots pount into the frozen ground as he stomped back and forth in front of the prisoner line and took roll. His eyes pierced straight ahead, not giving in to any distractions, as the wind hit his cheeks without causing even a blink. Just adjacent to the line of freezing allied prisoners, while Burgermeister continued to shout, Kommandant Keinherz urgently sat up in his desk when the phone was handed to him. Klaus, his budding new intern stood at attention beside him.

"It's for you, Kommandant. From Berlin," said Fraulein Frieda, his personal secretary. Silky blond hair fell from her angelic face as she handed the phone to Keinherz. Her bright Aryan blue eyes glanced at him for confirmation. As she walked out of the office, Keinherz could not help from being distracted by her tight, lengthy German figure. Shaking himself out of it, he prepared himself to speak with the authorities in Berlin.

"Ja, Hallo, General? How can I be of Service to you?"

"This is Kommandant Maximilien Keinherz? Are all of your doors and windows shut?"

"Why, yes. I'm alone, except for my intern, Klaus. He is one of us. Is this a matter of urgent importance?"

"I am calling you on top secret business - we are going to win the war."

"Really? How are we going to do that?" Keinherz asked with excitement.

"With your help. Scientists here in Berlin have been working for months on a project that will ensure the Third Reich's dominion over the world. We need intensively trained chemists such as yourself and Klaus to help. Now listen carefully..." The General continued on, explaining every detail of the plan to enlist the help of intelligent beings from Planet 791h0 approximately forty-six light years away. It would take a great deal of effort and communication

from all the major, scientifically trained officers in Germany. The Kommandant gulped, then proceeded to give his response.

“Count me in, General. I will fulfill the duties with these beings from Planet 791h0 to secure the power, I mean pride, of the Third Reich. Heil Hitler!”

“Heil Hitler!”

Flushed with a glorified energy he hadn't felt since the Battle of Britain, Keinherz called Klaus over. They immediately began to concoct their end of the master plan to ultimately defeat the allies. The chemistry, the physics, the strategy, the confidential files, the secrecy - it all needed to be worked out. Kommandant Keinherz decided they needed to get to work in the laboratory right away. Keinherz and Klaus came to the conclusion to enlist the help of Stefan, a bright, young intern that had just joined the camp.

Stefan was eighteen years old, fresh out of the Gymnasium. Born and raised in Dusseldorf, Stefan grew up with a very loving family, and he was taught compassion and perseverance. He had a passion for chemistry and philosophy, and was hoping to study them at the University after the war. Always nurtured with strong academics and care for other people, Stefan felt out of place when pulled against his will into the Nazis. However, he hoped to make the most of it and learn from his experiences. When called upon for this mission, the short young man was puzzled. His large brown eyes dilated, his thick brown hair stood on its ends. Not having any other option, he prepared to meet Klaus and the Kommandant in the secret lab the following morning, 6am sharp.

Once it was reaffirmed that all doors and windows were secure, Kommandant Keinherz ordered the two interns towards the file cabinet. The bottom file opened, releasing a latch for a trap door behind the fireplace. Descending down spiral staircase after spiral staircase, the three scientists finally reached the laboratory. It was extremely well lit; the fluorescent tubes illuminated the entire room, despite it being six levels underground. Stefan noted the high class equipment- from spectrometers to calorimeters to fume hoods- this unknown lab had it all. Like any other structure in 1945 Germany, the lab possessed a magnificently enormous red and black flag draped across the ceiling. Despite the luminous lighting one had to be careful keeping from blinding them, the laboratory seemed dark. It felt, at least to Stefan, no different than a rat colony in the sewers under the streets of Stalingrad. Of course to the evil minds of Klaus and

Maximilien, the laboratory was a bountiful meadow of joy and bright flowers. Dealing with the reality of being put to death without compliance to this project, Stefan reluctantly began scribbling all over his notebook and to put his training in chemistry to work.

Weeks passed, and with each day, Stefan lost more and more hair. The bags under his eyes grew more prominent with every lost hour of sleep. His hygiene lost all hope after just ten days. On the eleventh day, he hit his tipping point. He realized that the work wasn't what was causing distress. It was the cause for the work. All he could think of was his beautiful family at home that still had hope for peace in the world - and that it was all being crushed. With his help. He simply could not help Hitler take over the world. When the thoughts came to him, he became ferociously angry. His eyes bulged, his face began to resemble a tomato, his fists clenched, and the glass beakers next to him began to shake, reverberating from the tension he felt. Stefan could feel the vibrations of the equipment resonate through his hands. Using the courage to change his current path, Stefan summed up the guts; he shaved, showered, and dressed. More pulled-together, Stefan began to work on a plan for the ulterior motive. It was dangerous from the first step - he needed the help of the American POWs.

As the clock struck midnight and the guards were changing shifts, Stefan stealthily slipped into Colonel Parker's allied barracks. They were expecting him; the lantern glowed near the corner of Colonel Parker's desk, near to all the blackened out windows. Speaking in low whispers, they discussed the means to radio wave Washington, D.C. Within that single night, plans were made for United States Army Generals Bud Earnings and Johnson Patron to fly into Hamburg and "discuss the situation" with Keinherz before advancing onto their greater enemies in Berlin. This reminded Stefan of a nightmare he once had as an eight year old boy. He dreamt that an atomic bomb was to be released and could only be stopped if leaders from every single country could decode the protocol. His heart raced faster as he realized the stakes of this meeting. The pounding in his chest felt like a brick was trying to find its way out of his ribcage. The future of the world rested on these General's abilities to work with the Germans.

Two days later, the Generals marched into Keinherz's office and Stefan took a deep breath as he watched the discussion begin.

"Why morning, Keen-hurts! How you doin? Man, I got some good 'ol 'murican dogs in

my pocket. Mind if I munch?” Johnson grunted, while stuffing the greasy piece of meat in Keinherz’s face.

“Mmm, no thank you. We prefer bratwurst here in Deutschland. And please, we are here on important business.”

“Well, duh Colonel, no one loves the red, white, and blue like I do. Gotta striked those fascists down. I mean, no offense, Kommandant - we are ready to communicate. But seriously, did you catch the game last night, Maxxy?” Bud interrupted as he slapped Keinherz on the back like a best friend. Stefan sulked in the corner, burying his face in his hands.

After the Americans had finally left, Stefan could not keep from jumping with joy. However, at the same time, the sinking in his heart worsened. His attempts to diminish the plan had only gone backwards. The afternoon had been rough. Following their conversation with Keinherz, Bud and Johnson proceeded to make their intentions and power as Americans clear. After incorrectly judging that the German’s tank hanger was not properly made at the camp, they went on to harass the indigenous people surrounding the barbed wire walls, speaking to them as inferior beings. Despite numerous orders from the Kommandant and other authorities, Bud and Johnson continued to do their best at making sure everyone they met understood how great the land of liberty was. Of course, they did this by denouncing all other forms of communities, governments, nations, and people. Little did they know the consequences of these incredibly bright German’s minds at work.

For the next few days, Stefan spent countless hours furiously scribbling in his notebook. Making sure only to work after hours out of sight of any guards, Stefan carefully produced a counter plan against the German’s scheme. Stefan had double-checked every confirmation note written by Keinherz’s competent secretary, Frieda, to keep him informed and safe. He smiled at the thought of having someone with such an utterly powerful position in the camp on his side. After infinite hours of analyzing, quantifying, and confirming, the day came. Beakers tingled, tongs twitched, and wires buzzed. Stefan’s hidden workbench would all be put into use within a few hours.

On December 4th, 1944, there were few, if any, gusts of wind. Unusual for a German winter, the Kommandant wondered where the expected bite of winter was. It was a rather still,

yet very frozen day. Feeling stressed out about the final preparations for communicating with the foreign creatures, Keinherz walked inside to relax and warm up for a moment. He went through all the details in his mind, checking off every cable that needed to be connected, every wire needing to be signaled in order to send electromagnetic messages to planet 791h0. Just as he was getting ready to call Berlin with final confirmations, he heard an intense noise coming from under his office. It sounded similar to sizzling bacon. First he smelled the smoke. Then he saw the thick black clouds. It seeped up from the entrances to his beloved lab-the lab containing all of his research and information essential to the 791h0 plan. As debris began scattering throughout the premises, Maximilien's heart began beating faster and faster, until a thick bead of sweat formed on his forehead. He looked to the ground and noticed a seared container. Barely making out the label, he read "elemental potassium." It said, "highly reactive alkali metal. Keep stored and do not put in contact with water." It was then that he noticed the hose outside his building running. As dreadfully expected, it connected into the lab, where dozens more containers worth of pure potassium set fire to the entire unit.

Stefan barely noticed the success of his plan, as the fire was only the first part. He was scrambling to connect the last few wires needed to intercept each and every line from Berlin. At last, the green "ready" button illuminated. Feeling the hopes of the world lie in his finger, he pressed "on." As gamma radiation propelled throughout the system, all the lights went out. All communication devices in Germany ceased to turn on. It was working - the remaining communication lines in Berlin flickered a last attempt at life, then fizzled out. The strength of Stefan's gamma rays had intercepted one hundred percent of any communication established between Earth and planet 791h0.

The generator remained functioning for the headquarter lab in Berlin. The head of the operation, General Adolfster, watched as each and every device lost all function from its inability to transmit information with any other branches. He watched as the entire program shut down. He watched as the entire device receiving information from Keinherz's lab in Hamburg went empty. The more he witnessed, the more steam shot out of his ears. His thick face turned vermilion red. Standing alone in his building, during the darkest hours of the night, Adolfster had witnessed the complete demolition of their nation's World War II strategically progress.

The line to planet 791h0 was dead. His hopes for complete domination of the world, or at least the superpowers of it, had crumbled in a matter of minutes.

“The French,” he muttered under his breath.

“It was the French,” he restated without any uncertainty in his voice. He may no longer be able to take over the world, but there was always revenge. A light went off in the General’s head, and he went from being completely struck down to an angry, passionate, and powerful being determined to hold those responsible. He immediately called every commander in Germany, planning an attack on Paris.

Tanks lined up, airplanes circled. 200,000 troops surrounded the city. Soldiers from many different nations marched closer and closer to the edge of the city. The roaring of engines could be heard from miles away. Truckloads of ammunition and supplies were unloaded and staged. Threatening bomb material was showcased from the aircrafts hovering the city.

Berlin was surrounded. The Germans had no choice but to surrender. It was May 7, 1945, and the allied nations of Great Britain, France, Russia, and the United States had taken over Berlin without a drop of blood shed. Germany had lost.

While seventy-five percent of axis power troops were ordered to do the same thing to Paris, the British from the POW camp had communicated for a surprise attack on Berlin. The entire ranks of the Third Reich was positive that France had caused the damage to their plan, and dropped everything for revenge. While the Germans and Italians finalized their plans for an attack on Paris, the British successfully stopped them in their tracks by forcing an unconditional surrender after threatening Berlin.

The freed American POWs had helped to evacuate Stefan out of Germany. He had to look ahead to a new and secure life. High members of the Nazi plot were charged with several war crimes; Germany was punished enough by having to rebuild from their loss. Looking out the window from an industry truck leaving the camp for Amsterdam, Stefan let out a sigh of relief. He had known the fatal consequences of his actions had his plan not worked. Through all possible toils and tears, it had been a success. Stefan was safe because of the efforts of the

British to demolish the Germans. Stefan was thankful the Germans had blamed the French; he was thankful for his life. No one besides Colonel Parker would ever know who had blown up Keinherz's lab or intercepted the electromagnetic waves. It had not crossed anyone's mind that an inner Nazi had caused the destruction of his own nation. The POW camp outside of Hamburg, along with multiple others, was abandoned and left in solitude in the barren land. The former axis powers had no way of seeking out who had ultimately saved the fate of the free world. The Americans, on the other hand, were not so uncertain of who was responsible for the deed.

"Way to go, Generals. Your work is highly appreciated. The United States of America is proud to have been the cause for this end to the war, and we thank you for your direct impact on taking out the Germans," remarked the President. Bud and Johnson gulped up the praise they were receiving, boasting to the entire world about their accomplishments and saving the world.

"But Grandpa, you were the one that saved us," stated the girl, who had surprisingly stayed awake. Stefan remained quiet for a moment; he had said this to himself a countless number of times over the years. He had thought about coming out multiple times, seeking to find affirmation. He kept coming back to the fact that he had a warm, joyous life in Austria. He lived with his family, had wonderful grandchildren, and didn't want any of that to change.

"Yes, I did. The Americans can think what they think; Lord knows they need all the help they can get. I just wanted you to know, so I can get this off my shoulders. More importantly, I want you to know that one person can make a difference. It's not always about being redeemed for that effort, but about simply doing it in the name of humankind. Imagine what the alternative could have been if the Germans had gotten what they wanted. Sometimes you just have to do the right thing, and you can choose to keep that to yourself if wanted."