## FUCHS' HOLOCAUST

## By Cpl Ferro

*Who can I trust?*

*Think!*

*Think, you worthless piece of shit, this is real!*

*It didn’t “happen,” it’s right fucking now!*

*THINK!*

*He’s beautiful.*

He’d read Freud, he observed stuff.  He thought a lot.  And he’d never tell anyone about these things, of course.  He’d only started telling himself since they came here.  Every man was his own alone.  Every man had his own weird little secret sexual deformity going on that he’d never cop to.

*Mac is beautiful.  Is that something a queer would say?*

He remembers walking to Grade 3 one sunny day with his best friend, Alex.  Alex would come over for pancake breakfast on Sunday mornings because his mother was a semi-stable goy widow and had feared him running wild, maybe even getting into girl trouble, and that bespectacled, friendly Stanley Fuchs was right next door.  Stanley, ingenuously, reached out and took his friend’s hand while they walked.  What was more natural than holding your best friend’s hand on the way to school?

Alex shook it off.  Stanley didn’t even notice, subconsciously repeating the gesture.  Alex shook it off again.

“What are you, a fag?”

Stanley had never heard the word before, but his nascent Jewdar perked up and he dropped the matter.  After some circuitous questions and poking about, he later pieced a few things together and contemplated the idea that the word suggested.  He felt dissatisfied and vaguely nauseous.  *But what would be the point of doing that…?*  He thought.  He still didn’t understand why this had anything to do with a gesture of friendship, but subconsciously felt a taint in his thought processes, a tiny drop of brownish-black, oily dirtwater working its way toward his deeper mind.

“Have you ever seen a girl’s Virginia?” asked Alex.

“No.  Don’t you mean “vagina”?” said Stanley.

“It’s called a Virginia,” insisted Alex.  “It’s for sexual intercourse.”

“What’s that?”

Alex, ever ahead in these matters, enthusiastically explained his conception.  Stanley found this intriguing.  Later, he found his way into the medical books in his parent’s home library, hunched down by the bookshelf, hooking a thumb into a second book – Encyclopedia Oceania, vol. G-F – ready to quickly snap over to reading it should fateful black-shoed steps clack near the entrance.  Thank God for hardwood, at least!

And those footsteps came, and he froze, then flipped books as was his plan.  His mother appeared at the entrance, all in black for some reason, her face getting a bit craggy even then, but still beautiful to him, with that black hair and that determined lower face, those knowing brown eyes.

She stared at this scene he had made.  He stared back up from the floor, near the violated bookshelf.

“Okay,” she said in a tiny voice, and glanced her eyes shut in an oblique downward motion.  And then she walked away.

Gary, what an impotent old fuck!  Didn’t even shed a tear when his “best friend” died – got burned to death, for God’s sake!  And his only contribution to this mission was to kill the only man who knew what was going on!  Scandinavians all speak English as their second language, you dumb goy cunt!  Chr – I mean, these fucking gentile authoritarian assholes, they never quit, they’re just itching to do it all over again.

*Why the hell am I even HERE?!*

*Think!  Who can you trust?*

*I can’t trust Gary, he’s a fool even if he is human.*

*I can’t trust Nauls or Childs, they’re too…*

*Say it, you shit.*

…*They’re too off the wall.*

*Too black, you mean?*

*I can’t trust Windows, he’s a virgin, who knows how he’ll react to things?*

*I can’t trust Palmer, he’s too much not a virgin, in any sense.*

*I can’t trust Blair, he touched his mouth with that pen that he was poking at that corpse with.  Blair’s got a dirty mind.*

*I can’t trust Norris, I don’t know him.*

*I can’t trust Clark, he’s a simpleton.*

*Can I trust Copper?  He’s friendly, he’s odd for a doctor, though I suppose we’re all a bit odd down here, aren’t we?  He’s the only one who has any sense of what’s going on, the gravity of peril we’re in.  And yet…he’s drugged and bound to the couch.*

*That leaves Mac.*

*Mac’s careful, and he thinks.  He’s been in war before, he knows the stakes and nobody sneaks up on him.  And those sparkling eyes, almost a feminine visage – not that he’s gay, no, not him, not in a million years.  Not that I’m gay either!  But, he’s with it.  He’s what Gary dreams of being, or what Gary should dream of being.*

Mac, then.  But, be careful.  This thing is subtle, hard to spot.  It always leaves clues, though.

“Am I really a Jew, Mom?

His parents’ faces freeze in mid-bite, mouths open, teeth showing a little like in those Primal Man exhibits at the museum.  Their eyes swivel like well-oiled ball-bearings toward each other.  His mother blinks and glances back at him.

“Stanley, you’re so Jewish, you’re like Super Jew.  You could become a Nazi like Hitler and you’d be better at it than they were.  That’s how Jewish you are.  Now, eat your fish.”

He paused, assimilating this, then puckered up and dug in.

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Jew Fish.

He snickered to himself, with a mouthful of the savourful stuff.  He knew he’d just tread on dangerous ground – thin ice above the fishies – because there was some heavy shit that went on, the Worst Shit Ever, in fact, and that’s why he didn’t have any grandparents except Grandpa Louis in Pennsylvania who didn’t like kids and whom they never saw anyway.  But, still, sometimes he’d look in the mirror and wonder if he could pass, if They came for him.  He could take off his glasses, maybe tighten his mouth a bit.

That night, there was a book on his bed.  A hardcover, red binding, with black, and a single, small insignia – a stylised Eagle – emblazoned in gold leaf on the cover.

He sat on his bed, head hung as if in shame, and thumbed through the glossy pages.  He noticed marks and small creases on this book, betraying its earlier perusal.  But, mostly he noticed the pornography of war it spread out before him.  People’s lives devoured by a Machine, surrounded and herded like…

Like goy…

…like cattle by Teutonic men who had, without warning, suddenly transformed into Werewolves, and their prey’s corpses themselves declared unclean, to be reduced to ash, and scattered to the wind or dumped into the river, like Vampires.

It was the smoke he remembered most, because when he smelled it later, at the Research Station, he’d already smelled it before.

You’re the only Science left, so why can’t you think?

You got it up to have a kid, so why can’t you get it up to think of a test?

THINK THINK THINK!

But he couldn’t think.  All he could think of was when he was nine.

When he was nine.

When he was nine he chained his dog, Buddy into the doghouse that he himself had built, out near the back of the yard, clear of trees or any obstructions.  Kind of like a little Mars Outpost by itself on a slight rise, near to the fence but not touching it, on the way to the garden shed where the lawnmower, garden tools, chemicals, and other shit got stored.  Stanley didn’t have the time to train his dog well – a big black and brown German Shepherd with soulful, smeary brown eyes and the hugest ears he’d ever seen, and a luscious pink tongue always slavering down in some kind of doggy joy whenever he saw his little bespectacled master ambling toward him with arms outstretched.

That dog was big, and warm, and, out of the slush, smelt deliciously of a home he’d never been to.  Here was a friend who didn’t mind a little bodily contact, who didn’t obsess over stuff a kid shouldn’t even worry about until he starts getting hair on himself.  Walking with Buddy through the neighbourhood, through the wintry park with its starved, frozen trees and its hateful little squirrels, Stanley felt, not big or macho or tough, or even gentile, but that he was in control of reality.  When he passed by the big, grim-looking kids loafing around the park benches, it wasn’t little Stanley Fuchs passing - who always got a funny little vibe from the white people around him, no matter how nicely they smiled or how many friends at school he had or how many PTA meetings his parents attended - it was Stan ‘n’ Buddy, and they left six footprints behind them with each rhythmic two-step.  He existed, and things were in their place, and life was nothing but virgin snow to be written into.  The future was open and blue.

He always chained Buddy up into his house.  With his uncle’s help he’d even built an insulated door hung on gleaming silver side-hinges, in case it got really cold, and a small louvered air vent up top like a stove-pipe.  Sometimes his uncle joked that Stanley should move in with Buddy when he was older and Stanley smiled that smile he had been practising for a while to use on slightly batty adults.

He’d just come in the door from the breezy, sharp snowy evening when his mother called out to him,

“Stanley, go see your Father!”

He trudged through the house, hopping from carpet to carpet to save the precious hardwood from being dripped on.  The erupting consequences of enough urinary incidents courtesy of “that dog of yours” had trained Stanley more than it had Buddy.  He popped out the front door to find his father finishing up with the SnoHound and refilling it from a bright red plastic jerrycan that had a bright white label reading in black “DANGER GASOLINE”.  He held out the can to him by its handle.

“Stan, take this back to the shed.  Here’s the key.  Lock it up, I’m taking this over to Mister Killman.”

“Sure thing, Dad.”

Stanley had a hot date with The Deputy that night – he always smiled, as if it were high serendipity, that his black Deputy hat fit cleanly over his yarmulke, in case he needed to dust some varmints down at the temple – and, so, he chanced hurrying through the house again.

His mother caught him at the corner of her eye, and called out,

“It’s cold outside tonight, Stanley.  Buddy might be cold if his door’s not shut tight.”

“Okay, Mom!”

He rushed through the accumulating snow and set the jerrycan down to the right of the door.  Buddy burst out and kissed him, tail thumping audibly on the warm, dry straw matting his master had laid down for him.

“Settle down, Buddyboy.  I’ve gotta close the door.  Otherwise you’ll freeze and be a Budsicle.  You don’t wanna be a Budsicle, do ya?  Then you’ll have slobbercicles.”

Buddy was having none of this and rose up, bowling him over.  They rolled together in a wash of powdered dihydrogen oxide until Buddy’s head suddenly jerked off of him.  Separated, Stanley sat up and they stared at each other, Buddy wheezing with excitement, his chain taut.  Stanley got up and ran through the snow, and they chased each other in circles with giggles and playful charp!’s.

The light was flickering, then, over from the house.  His mother was waiting with dinner ready.

Mouth open in the vacancy of childhood, he remembered what he’d come out there for, and bid Buddy inside his little house, then unhooked the fat, insulated door from its open-position latching, swung it closed, hearing it crinkle with friction, and latched it tight against the wind, oblivious to the copper lightning rod attached to the doghouse.

The howling blizzard came, and that night the Fuchs family closed their shutters.

Oh my God –

Mac’s shirt!

Mac’s one of them!

Fuchs stared blankly, as a numb horror bubbled up inside his gut, flowing up smoothly turning his insides to some kind of awful, nauseating plaster-like muck that was indistinguishable from his ordinary self, except that it was something he’d felt before, but, this time it was both less acute and more awful – less like your boss chastising you harshly than like the beginnings of schizophrenia whispering inside your mind.

The next day they found the dog house a burnt out and blackened shell of wood cracked into interesting scales of charcoal.  The jerrycan had cracked and melted, and there was nothing visible left inside except a deformity of bones.  The conflagration had incinerated the rest.

He walked into the blast area, and sifted out the chain, flakes of ash flittering from it.  He pulled it up but stopped before it tugged on anything.  His family was making noises behind him but they were just mimes.  He bent over and picked up the dog tags that had come loose from the incinerated collar, beside the cracked, alien skull, and he looked at them on his fingers, black particles filling in spaces in the letters.  A hand pushed into his pocket, and felt the shed key, still there, waiting for him.

That night he locked himself in the bathroom and shoved the dog tags up his ass, and made it hurt.

If Mac’s infected, I can’t trust him.  I can’t trust anyone, ever again.

Oh my God.  Oh my God.

There is no way to tell.

All I can do is help Mac.  If he’s one of them, it won’t matter, but if he’s human, I can help him.

Fuchs trudged up towards Mac’s shack, hurrying, clutching the ragged undershirt with MACREADY stencilled onto it.  Mounting the stairs, he hastened inside, and once there glanced around.  He settled on the oil furnace, someplace Mac might notice something being amiss near, but the casual visiting observer wouldn’t.  He rolled it up and shoved it in.  He gave a long blink and swallowed.

Why does life have to be so real?

He hurried out.

When he was thirteen, Stanley was brought to the Ringling Brothers Circus with his parents.  This was still the classic circus ring act, with animals and flame and the fire-eaters and acrobats, and he remembers the elephants poked with the stick in the genitals to make them stand up on their hind legs, and he remembers the tigers jumping through the hoops of flame.  He didn’t react much, just watched.

In the repair shop, Fuchs doffed the parka, and took up a can of gasoline.  He opened it, stood on the rails of the grease pit and poured a stream of it all over his clothing, soaking it through to his underwear.  Tidily, he put the can back precisely where he got it, and pulled on his parka.

Outside, in the dark and breezy cold once more, Fuchs knelt down.  He produced a flare.

He popped the top off the flare in a fluid, twisting motion.  It burst out pink-white, fizzling and hissing.  His glasses gleamed with rainbow-fuchsia drops of accelerant.

Ever the cautious one, Fuchs only stuck out the tip of his tongue, just to test.

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