

# NAKED AMONG WOLVES

by Bruno Apitz

## Chapter 13

Outside, a prisoner messenger ran across the mustering ground into the camp. He was looking for Kramer, could not find him at once and was asking people: "Where is he?"

He had to run to the Little Camp. Stumbling over the muddy pathways with their broken stones, before he finally caught up with Kramer.

"Walter!"

Kramer sensed bad news. He took the messenger aside. "What's up?" The young man panted.

"A telegram! I happened to hear it." Fear glittered in his eyes. "Evacuation!"

Kramer flinched. "Is that true?" For a moment the sudden fright blocked everything in Kramer. His mind a blank, he stared into the terrified face of the young man.

The many dangers which had arisen from the presence of the child were now winding up into one big danger. The end was nearing.

"What now?" asked the messenger.

Kramer's face twisted nervously. "Wait and see," he answered, because he had no other answer, and he realized that he did not know what to do about it.

To wait and see was the last thing they could afford to do now. Kramer felt a mad urge to grab the signal whistle and rush through the rows of blocks shrilly whistling the whole camp into a state of rebelliousness: "Evacuation, evacuation!"

To subdue his turmoil, he asked: "Do you have any exact details?"

The young man shook his head.

"I just wanted to tell you fast, they're talking about it up there already."

Kramer snorted and stuck his hands in his coat pockets. So now it was coming true, what they had anticipated. Only in its frightening immediacy it seemed so unreal that Kramer's cool matter-of-factness whirled away in a vortex. Scarcely a

week ago he had said to Schupp: "In a fortnight we'll be free or dead..."

What an empty phrase that still was then! But now he was confronted with the reality!

A cold shudder ran through Kramer. And what would become of Hofel? Of Kropinski? Of the ten men from the effects room? Pippig! The child! What would become of all of them?

## WEIMAR GESTAPO

The arrested men were locked in the prison which the Weimar Gestapo had fitted up like a mews for purposes of its own.

Rochus Gay, the man from the Gestapo, had taken Kluttig into his room on the first floor of the front building. The room was disconsolately bare, its haphazard furnishings consisting of a few chairs, a table, a typewriter at the windows, and ugly roll closet. A forgotten potted plant was dragging out a miserable existence on the window sill. Lighter squares on the wall paper, which was browned with age, showed the former cheerful flower pattern.

Gay showed his teeth, between which he held the chewed cigar.

"I wish I had your worries..."

Kluttig tried to make the circumstances clear to Gay. The dangerous situation at the front forbade any delay whatever in exposing the secret Communist organisation...

Gay impatiently jerked his elbows, keeping his hands in his pockets. "At five minutes before midnight you come crapping around here with that."

Kluttig defended himself. "We've been searching a long time..."

"You Heinies..." Gay spat contemptuously - "All these years you been warming your asses and living off the fat of the land. Putting on the dog..."

Kluttig wanted to object, but Gay turned on him sharply: "Stuff it! You're the same kind of a jerk as the others!" He rolled the cigar around with his tongue. "It was a nice little game, huh? Caps off, caps on" At-te-e-en-shun! The more those hypocrites fell all over themselves in front of you, the more you thought: Nobody can touch us!"

Kluttig sat like a flogged schoolboy.

"If you'd just been stupid all this time, I wouldn't say anything," the Gestapo man continued, "But you guzzled, you

boozed, you whored...you got delusions of grandeur! And now that you've got to pack your bags you suddenly notice that the Commies..." He broke off and angrily glared at the dead cigar butt.

Kluttig, who felt the reproaches bitterly unfair, tried to justify himself.

"On my word of honour, I've done everything..."

"Give me the story on the scum you brought me!"

Kluttig gave a detailed report. Gay meanwhile walked about the room with his head bent forward, not looking greatly interested; but he was listening attentively and quickly putting two and two together.

A connection really did seem to exist between the child and the Commies; Kluttig also seemed to be right in his estimate of Pippig and Rose. As these two were described to him, one of them seemed to be a plucky fellow and the other a coward. The fever of the chase was roused in Gay. He let Kluttig talk, and considered tactics.

Rose and Pippig!

They were the ones to apply the jimmy to.

They were to be 'mixed'. Rose and Pippig, he ordered, should be put together in the vacated cell. "But not obviously, understand? It must look like an accident! They mustn't notice that they were placed together on purpose.

In this way Rose and Pippig came to be in cell number 16 together, and neither suspected that this created the pre-condition for the coming tactics of the interrogation.

Rose had gone completely to pieces. The upper part of his body slack, he sat on the only stool in the cell, kept his hands, which were rubbing against one another nervously, between his knees, and stared straight ahead. His face was chalk white, and the excitement lay on his stomach like lead.

Pippig took a look round the bare cell and then cuffed Rose encouragingly in the shoulder.

"Pull yourself together, amn!"

Rose breathed heavily and spat out between trembling lips: "You dog..."

Pippig looked in surprise at Rose, who began swaying the trunk in inner agony.

"You dog...if I end up now just when everything was nearly over, it's you who's to blame!"

Pippig saw the man's torment. "But August..."

Unexpectedly Rose leaped up and seized Pippig by the throat. Pippig tore loose from the throttling hands, but

Rose would not give up, he jumped at his adversary and they grappled with one another. Pippig overpowered the frantic man. The stool fell over with a clatter, the cell was unlocked, and the jailer came in.

"Here here here, what are you doing?"

He broke the clinch. "You want to kill each other now? It's enough that you're here. Try and hit it off together and be glad you've got a cell to yourselves. In some of them there are fifteen together."

The old jailer recognized immediately which of the two had lost his nerve, so he forced Rose down on the stool. "Now take it easy."

He turned to Pippig, who was buttoning his jacket; it was torn from the scuffle. "You're just making it worse for yourselves this way."

Pippig detected the human sympathy in his words and nodded gratefully to the old man, who left them alone again and locked the cell.

Rose remained sitting just as he had been placed by the jailer. Helplessly and in panic fear, he whimpered to himself: "I've got nothing to do with this. It's none of my business. I did my work and that's all. I want to go home. I don't want to get killed just at the end."

Pippig sympathized. "It's true, you have nothing to do with the child, August."

Rose cried out, his hands fluttering: "I don't know anything about the child! I know nothing, nothing at all!"

"Well, so much the better," replied Pippig dryly, in sudden irritation with Rose's mortal funk. He leaned against the wall and looked at the man's bent back and sunken head. His bald pate stood out like a tonsure from the perfect circle of shorn hair around it.

At the same time, however, Pippig shoot off the suspicion that had come with this realization: Rose was not a bad guy, basically. He only was afraid. Sure - he was afraid, that was all.

Pippig pushed himself away from the wall and went over to Rose. "You 're not a wrong guy, August, you're not."

Rose did not answer. He kept brooding. Pippig hesitated for a moment, then he sat down with determination on the floor beside the stool.

"Listen, August! About the kid - don't be scared. You simply don't know about it."

Rose barked out: "But I do!"

"No!" Pippig told him sharply. "You know nothing! *Nothing whatever!* And if you don't know anything, you can't tell anything either!" Rose felt the pressure on him, and remained obstinately silent. Pippig poked him in the knee. "Do you hear? I don't know anything either, and no one knows anything about the others. And if *none of us* knows anything... well, August..." Rose did not reply. Passionately Pippig importuned the silent man.

"August! Would you go and be the only one...? Look, you're our pal! Don't think of the kid now! Think of all of us! Maybe Zweiling got us brought here. Maybe it was that stool pigeon, Wurach? Listen, August! You're no stool!"

Rose gasped with torment. His sealed face opened abruptly in pain, his Adam's apple trembled.

"I don't want to die just at the end... I don't want to die..."

Pippig jumped to his feet and cursed: "Goddam it!" He shot Rose violently by the shoulder.

"August, man alive! Think for a minute! Do you believe they'd wipe us out five minutes before closing time? They're not that stupid. They wouldn't dream of it! This is our big chance! We've only got to stick together!"

Rose jeered. "Stick together! They'll break every bone in our bodies."

Pippig let go of him. He put his hands in his pockets and walked with firm steps about the cell.

"We have to figure on taking a couple of cracks in the jaw..."

The cell was unlocked. The jailer held the door open. "Pippig for interrogation!"

Pippig whirled about in dismay and looked at the old official who, resigned to his unpleasant duty, was waiting at the door.

Pippig shrugged his shoulders indifferently and went. At the door he turned around to Rose again and laughed: "Well, August, who's pipping here, you or me? I'm pipping!"

Rose stood motionless with terror at the door which had closed behind Pippig.

## HOLD HIM

Pippig had been gone for more than an hour already, and Rose was still sitting on the stool. How long before it was his turn? A wild fear came over him. Rose already saw himself facing the Gestapo man,

The rattle of the key in the cell door startled him. The jailer shouldered his way in, dragging a bundle with him - the bundle was Pippig!

"Hold him," growled the jailer at Rose, who stood in the cell as if he wanted to flee into its farthest corner. But Rose obeyed. He held Pippig from the back, under the arms, while the jailer let down the folding bed. They laid the bundle on it. The jailer left the cell with an empty water crock, brought it back filled and threw Rose a scrap of cloth. "You see for yourself what to do." He left the two alone.

Pippig lay with his eyes closed. One of them was swollen. From the left ear a brown dried line of blood ran down to his neck. His nose and his gaping mouth were encrusted with blood. Jacket and shirt were torn open, the shirt in tatters.

Rose's hand, holding the cloth rag, twitched. He bent over Pippig with the curiosity of dread. Pippig's eyelids trembled. The distorted face twisted into a grimace that was meant to be a smile. Rose saw it with horror. Unexpectedly Pippig began to talk, softly, but in a terrifyingly clear voice: "Wipe off my mug..." Rose's hands shook as he wet the cloth and wiped off the face.

Pippig moved his arms with difficulty and carefully raised the shirt from his skin. Only now did Rose see the large round spots of burned flesh on the chest. Holes burnt into it! Through his eyelids Pippig felt Rose's fixed stare at his chest.

"With a cigar," he said, and after a few paralyzed seconds: "Put the rag on it, good and wet." Pippig moaned as he felt the cooling. He took a deep breath and ejaculated with vehemence: "Something to drink, quick."

Rose looked about the cell and discovered an aluminium cup in the wall cabinet, which he filled. He supported Pippig with an arm under his head, and Pippig greedily emptied the cup. At last he seemed to have got past the worst of it. With a groan of relief, he laid back his head, and his face relaxed. Pippig could only half open the uninjured eye.

After a while he said quite clearly: "Don't you worry, he won't do this to you. I know what's up now."

Pippig forced himself to smile. "I'm not getting excited..." He fell silent and felt the coolness soothing his wounds. "That feels good," he sighed. He had to lie down again on his back. He lay that way for a while and said nothing.

Rose hesitantly put a question. "Why - why won't he - do

that - to me? Did he say so?"

Pippig made no reply. Pitiful question! But at last he said: "You dunce..."

Rose was ashamed and sat with lowered eyes.

"Then what should I do?" Rose pleaded.

"Keep your trap shut, that's all."

Rose swallowed.

"You simply don't know anything, and you have to stick to that, even if he gives you a few in the jaw. Goddam it, you can stand that much!"

The pains were becoming intolerable. Pippig groaned and tossed his head restlessly from side to side. He was so horribly horribly alone in his distress.

"Give me some more to drink," he groaned, raised himself on his elbows as Rose tremulously held the cup to his lips, and sank back again exhausted.

Rose saw in the tortured man's face the exertion it cost him to get the better of his pains. Suddenly he was overpowered by shame. He said softly, and more to himself: "All right, Rudi, all right, I don't know anything..."

Pippig revived.

"You see, you see," he exulted. "And that's what you have to stick to. Don't blab, August, you hear? If the cop notices that you know anything he'll make mincemeat out of you, understand? But if you stick to your guns - you understand...? I already got the idea across to him that you know nothing about the business."

"Did you take the whole blame?"

"Say, are you nuts?" said Pippig suddenly as if he were perfectly well. "I told him that if none of us knows anything, then you certainly don't because you're a.... dunce..." Pippig's strength was used up. He stretched out, and it was as if his muscles were softened from pain. Disconcerted, Rose gazed straight ahead. So that was the opinion about him. Pippig had not importuned him, had not charged him to be brave and valiant. "...because you're a dunce..."

Rose hid from himself with a hanging head, he felt so ashamed.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE