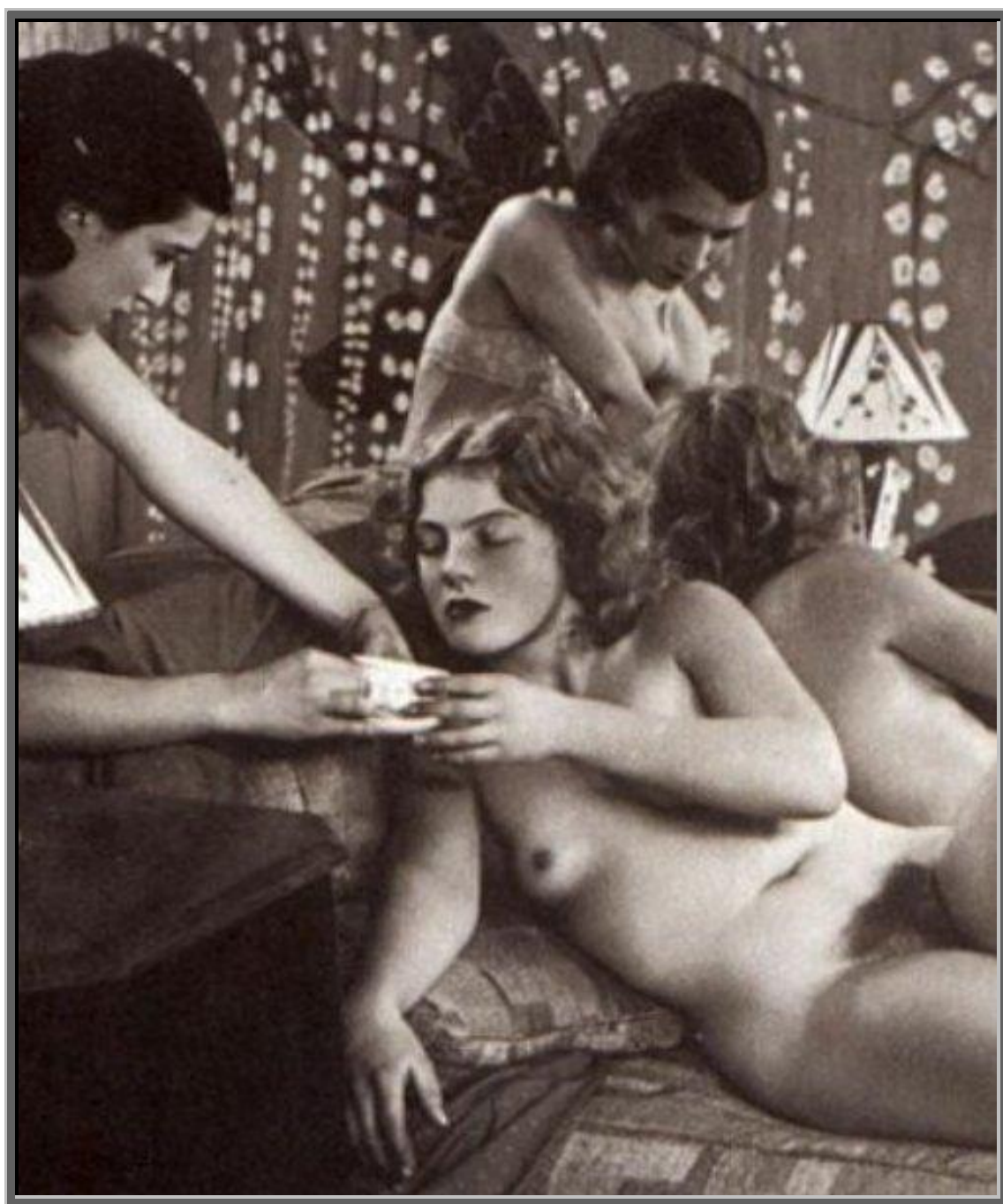


The Price of Prejudice

Bradley Stoke



Life was so different for Tanneka now since her parents had left her that tearful day, leaving her in the care of the Van Vliet family and their children. Not that she didn't appreciate her new guardians, and she knew that in the circumstances it was so much better this way. Perhaps one day in the future she would be reunited with her parents, but for now it seemed so much more prudent to live with Herr and Frau Van Vliet and their infant children in this nondescript small town far away from the cities and the risk of British aeroplanes and their bombs.

Still, her school wasn't a bad one, although the disruption caused by German occupation rather changed the atmosphere. The teachers were generally circumspect in their opinions and always avoided any questions about the war or the Germans or even the Nazi ideology they were obliged to impart on their pupils. Well, most of them were. Clearly, some teachers actually embraced the new way of thinking; quite happy to relate just how evil was the Jewish Conspiracy and how necessary the strict discipline and guidance imposed by the jackboots and tanks of Nazi Germany.

This rather disturbed Tanneka. The stories of how evil and vile the Jews were and how the world would be so different without them seemed somewhat fantastical and totally unlike anything in her experience. But anti-Semitism was just one new feature of her life she found difficult to get used to. The inexorable march of Nazi ideology, the curse of disability and sexual perversion, and the greater virtues of the Aryan race: all these new ways of thinking had to be understood and, at least outwardly, observed. It frightened her how several of her fellow pupils took to this new order with such enthusiasm. So many had enrolled in the Hitler youth and were proud to sport swastika armbands and military style uniforms. She would sit silently in

the classroom as day after day she was reminded of the tenets of the new masters' views. Frightened to ever express an opinion that might earn her the disapprobation of her peers and her teachers. Or even worse.

School, in addition, had for her all the trials of any school. Getting to know new friends, getting to find her way about unfamiliar streets and corridors, suffering the self-discovery and self-consciousness of growing up that anyone anywhere would have to go through. At least, many of the other girls were just as new to the school as she was. The upheaval of war had caused so much dislocation that it seemed natural to her that almost every week a new girl would be introduced to the school and welcomed as another casualty of the realities of armed occupation in the seemingly unstoppable growth of the German lebensraum. She would gaze at the newly reissued map on the wall that showed the extent of the Third Reich - so deep into the depths of what used to be the Soviet Union, taking in Scandinavia, Greece, France and the Balkans. And to the top of the map was the British foe, whose tyrannical leaders would drop their bombs on innocent civilians and seek to thwart the onward march of History. And to the corner of the map was the malevolent gaze of Stalin, whom Tanneka could remember was once uneasily viewed as an ally of the New Order in its struggle for world domination.

Erika was another girl quite new to the school, but one who was already very much as one with the new ideology. With her blonde hair, tied back in plaits like Tanneka's own thick dark brown hair, and her sparkingly limpid blue eyes so unlike Tanneka's dark brooding ones, she was clearly of the Aryan model. One so unlike any of the leaders of the Third Reich whose pictures she saw when she went to the cinema

with her guardians and their children. She was not as slim as Tanneka, but she was certainly not plump. Her round cheeks belied a healthy appetite. And her full young breasts pressed against the dark brown of her shirt, supported, as they had to be, by a bra that gave her an older appearance than the youth of her face might otherwise suggest.

Tanneka was fascinated by Erika. She was not the brightest girl in the class: that honour was Tanneka's own. But she was very popular, both with the other girls and with the teachers. But, in Tanneka's eyes, her worst fault, and why Tanneka did not feel very comfortable in Erika's presence, was her enthusiasm for National Socialism. She was fond of making cruel jokes about gypsies, Jews and the mentally ill. She even extended her jokes to Asians, Africans and Chinese; although solicitous to exclude Italians and Japanese from her scorn who, although not Aryan, were from similarly proud, superior races and showing their worth as Allies in the great war. She was proud to wear her swastika on her sleeve, and unsympathetic to those who showed more reluctance than her to embrace the opinions of the great Adolf Hitler.

Erika's biggest regret, as she confided to Tanneka, was that she couldn't understand German well enough to fully comprehend the broadcasts of the Führer on the radio. She rather envied Tanneka's rather better grasp of the natural language of the Third Reich, and befriended Tanneka in the hope that she might pass this facility onto her. Tanneka was rather less keen on Hitler's diatribes, or even those of his lieutenants like Göring or Himmler. Her knowledge of German, though far from fluent, was quite sufficient for her to understand exactly what was being said, and it was, to her, even more frightening than what she would hear at school. These were the

people who were running her country and ultimately her life. And they were so full of hatred and vitriol and disgust. It made her almost ill to think about it.

But, despite Erika's jibes about her lack of enthusiasm for National Socialism, Tanneka found herself becoming very fond of the girl. She was so very pretty. And she had such a sweet smile. And a twinkling laugh, which contrasted strangely with the coarseness of her observations. Her bright blue eyes. The smooth pale skin. That loose lock of blonde hair that detached itself from her plaits and fell onto her round cheeks. And, Tanneka was disturbed to realise, she loved the look of those firm breasts pressing against the buttons of her blouse, those slim ankles at the end of her shapely long legs, with such a fine fair down of hair that it would be almost a shame to shave it off. She became used to a curious shortness of breath whenever Erika came into the room, before she'd even greeted her. And she found her eyes would constantly wander towards Erika's, hypnotised by the pale blue gaze framed by such long and luscious eyelashes.

And, what was worse, she noticed that her strong feelings were shared by Erika. Despite her lack of zeal for the Nazi Party, her reluctance to join the Hitler Youth, or her refusal to join whole-heartedly in Erika's condemnation of non-Aryans, she could see that Erika was taking quite a strong interest in her. Indeed, she was sure of it. Erika's voice was always lower, more intimate, more polite, when with Tanneka than she was with her other friends. She smiled so readily, so beautifully, sparks of affection from her eyes illuminating her cheeks and her brilliantly white teeth. The very personification of the Aryan ideal. Tanneka was smitten. And she could see that Erika was also smitten by her. What did this mean? And what did this forebode?

The curfew that gripped all the territories of the Third Reich meant that the only way Tanneka and Erika could spend the evening assisting each other with their homework was to spend the night at one or the other girl's house. Frau Van Vliet was not at all happy with the idea of Erika staying overnight at their home. Her views of the traitors who invaded her country without even the courtesy of declaring war made it almost impossible for her to countenance the presence of someone who had taken the monstrous step too far of becoming a Hitler Youth. In fact, neither of her guardians were at all happy that she should have a friend who wore a swastika on her sleeve. Herr Van Vliet was no less pleased than his wife, but he took a practical attitude. He reasoned that young girls didn't really know the full meaning of what they were doing, and would hopefully grow out of the monstrous perversions of the Nazi fantasy. As he assured his wife grimly, there was no sense in making things worse and arousing suspicions of nonconformity by appearing uncooperative in such a small thing as letting young Tanneka spend the evening with her friend.

When Tanneka arrived with her satchel and books at Erika's home, she was first of all impressed by just how grand a property it was. Erika's father had done well out of his own sympathies for the Nazi cause. She was also quite grateful that she didn't have to spend any time with Erika's parents who were at a function in another town and wouldn't be expected back until the following day. Tanneka was led up the stairs to Erika's bedroom by her maidservant, Theresa, who as soon as the girls were together, scurried out of the house to get home before the curfew began.

Erika's bedroom was huge. There was a large double bed, a view out onto the dark unlit streets below and a desk where Erika sat in just a night-dress, her hair

unplaited and cascading freely onto her shoulders. She turned her head as Tanneka was ushered in, a pencil in one hand with its tip in her mouth. She withdrew the pencil as the maidservant shut the door behind her and smiled deeply and warmly.

“I’m so glad you could make it,” she announced. “I’m sorry that the room is such a mess, but tidiness isn’t amongst my virtues.”

Tanneka was hardly aware of any mess at all. Indeed, it would be quite difficult for any mess to be noticeable at all in such a large room. She was far more aware of Erika’s relative state of undress. Not that Erika’s dress was in any way immodest. It covered her arms, was tight to the waist and came down to her bare feet. And it was not of flimsy material, but Tanneka could see so clearly Erika’s breasts pressed against the fabric of the night-dress and unsupported by a bra. As Erika stood up to greet her, Tanneka could see the impression of Erika’s nipples through the cloth, and observe the breasts swing at a slightly more ponderous pace than the rest of her.

“Guten abend meine freund,” greeted Erika in her not especially good German accent. “Shall we study some ‘Deutsch’ together?”

“Yes, why not?” said Tanneka, trying to wrest her gaze away from the impression of Erika’s breasts and onto much more wholesome matters. She knew she was unlikely to improve Erika’s German, nor indeed her Mathematics, Geography or History, but she was looking forward to them spending time so close together.

They sat on two hard-backed chairs by Erika’s neat wooden desk, heads bent close to each other, the brush of night-dress against Tanneka’s bare arms in her short-sleeved blouse and against the knees of her dark navy-blue skirt. Occasionally, Tanneka caught sight of the two girls’ reflection in the tall mirror that stood against

the wall. There was Erika, her hair falling onto her face, occasionally brushing it off with a pale dimpled hand, her long white night-dress sparkling in the electric light like her equally white teeth and the white of her penetrating blue eyes. And there was Tanneka, with her unmanageable thick dark hair, tied unsatisfactorily back into plaits, her white blouse and the skirt that came down to her knees at almost the same point as her white socks reached up to them. Her slightly olive skin and lightly chiselled features were in such contrast to the soft, pale, round contours of Erika's face. She could also see that both of them had lively animated faces, as they laughed and giggled and chortled over aspects of German grammar that had never seemed quite so funny before. And Tanneka was even able to appreciate the explosion of Erika's coarse humour when, as was inevitable in an approved text book, there were derogatory comments in German about those from races inferior to the Aryan master race.

She looked at Erika with a strong affection as her friend struggled to write German sentences with that voluptuous looping handwriting of hers, which struggled to hold its place between the lines above and below, and came out with so much labour and effort, while Erika mouthed to herself each vowel and consonant she was writing. Her blonde hair fell over her shoulder and brushed against her elbow as she bent over to put as much weight and effort as she could in this struggle for self-expression in the language of her German masters.

“So many words are the same but sound different!” Erika exclaimed at one point. “And other words that look the same as in our language but mean something different as well.”

“You mean, *faux amis*?” queried Tanneka.

“I’m sure you’re right,” said Erika, opening her German dictionary with a puzzled expression. “I’ve not heard that word before. How do you spell that?”

“It’s French.”

“Oh! Well, I can’t be bothered with French words. The French can’t even fight a good war. Why should I be bothered with their stupid language? They’re just a bunch of stupid, garlic-eating, fat asses! And they smell, too!”

Tanneka didn’t dare ask on what concrete evidence Erika based her comments. As far as she could see, Erika had hardly met anyone who was of any other nationality than her own, and, naturally, the Germans’. But Tanneka also knew these opinions were not at all unusual, and were certain to be magnified in the retelling. She also reflected that although gypsies, Jews, Slavs, Arabs, and others were often compared to dogs, pigs and asses, in actual fact these nonhuman species were treated rather better than those considered to be of the same species but of an inferior race. Where was the justice in that?

“Do you want some wine?” asked Erika, perhaps sensing her friend’s discomfort. “My father won’t notice. He’s got absolutely loads of the stuff.”

“Well, I...” began Tanneka who’d never had any alcohol before, but too late before Erika was off and out of the room, returning with two bottles of white wine and two glasses.

“It’s best French wine,” smiled Erika, as she unscrewed a cork with a bottle opener. “One thing we know the French *are* good at!”

“Indeed,” agreed Tanneka, happy to see a softening, however slight, in her

friend's generally derogatory opinion of other races. But she wasn't sure she really enjoyed the sharp taste of the sweet liquid as she sipped at it. Almost immediately, it made her feel ever so slightly peculiar. It was very much like the feeling she associated with getting giddy after spinning around. But it was a taste that she gradually came to enjoy more with each sip, although she'd have been more than happy with a cup of tea or strong coffee.

As she sipped the sharp bright liquid, she regarded Erika who was drinking her glass rather faster than hers and was all too soon onto a second glass that she poured slightly carelessly with a foolish grin on her face.

"I know some French," giggled Erika proudly. "*Je t'aime. Je t'aime.*"

"Yes. That's French," agreed Tanneka diplomatically, but feeling a sudden spurt of emotion in the pit of her stomach.

"And in German that's *Ich liebe dich. Ich liebe dich.* That's right, isn't it?"

"It is," agreed Tanneka.

"You say it. *Ich liebe dich.*"

Tanneka breathed in deeply, not sure whether it was the wine or the intent of the words that made her feel so horribly peculiar. "*Ich liebe dich.*"

"And I love you too!" said Erika emphatically, quite suddenly grasping Tanneka around the back of her head with the hand that wasn't clasping a wine-glass, and drawing her lips against her own. Tanneka was startled, but she was totally unable to resist the pleasure and desire that erupted from deep within her and vomited itself into her consciousness.

This kiss was so liquid, so passionate, so strong. And so wonderful. Both girls

abandoned their glasses and pressed their mouths and faces and lips together. Muscular tongue fought against tongue, teeth clashed clumsily against teeth, jarring the nerves at the very roots. It was so very slurpy and moist and Tanneka wanted more and more. Her mouth grappled, her jaw ached, as she and Erika pulled themselves together, somehow knowing exactly where to put their hands. And it seemed so natural as Erika guided Tanneka back onto her large bed, the soft sprung mattress enveloping the two girls in its capacious warmth as they fell on to it. And then, how it happened Tanneka wasn't sure, she found her hands on Erika's bare flesh, the night-dress thrown off. And Erika without clothes was even more beautiful than Erika dressed.

Those breasts, the object of so much unspoken silent desire, were as beautiful, and round, and firm as she'd imagined. Now freed from restraint, they seemed so natural swelling out from her chests, overhanging her ribs, with nipples firm and hard with a darker pinkish aureate ring. Her bare skin so pale and fleshy, but not too plump. Welcoming and inviting and so soft and warm. Her hands gripped Erika from behind, feeling the curve of her spine and almost not daring to, but having to, feel the larger curve of her buttocks, even softer and warmer and more welcoming than the folds of her breasts.

And soon, with Erika's assistance, Tanneka herself was divested of her clothes, giggling and sighing as skirt, blouse, slip, shoes, socks and finally, after a moment of theatrical pause, her knickers were also off. And there she was as naked as Erika herself. All the while, as Erika busied herself on the buttons and straps that had secured Tanneka's modesty a beaming, smiling Erika displayed herself as a feast to

Tanneka's eyes. Not just the breasts: so firm and welcoming. Not just the curve and line and firmness of flesh so much like the Aryan ideal. Not just that face and mouth and teeth and blue eyes that had already earned Tanneka's affection. But now, between the legs, a blonde triangle of hair, curling in amongst itself, and obscuring, but not hiding, a set of complex lips that hid the soul and virtue of a woman. Something that Tanneka had never expected to see except in a mirror, and now arched above her as Erika spreadeagled her waist and tossed her knickers to one side.

Tanneka, herself, was slim and dark: her breasts mere bumps in comparison to Erika's but with long, firm nipples on a much darker aureole than those others. Thighs and arms, slim, almost bony. But like Erika, a secret revealed, folded and boldly naked, hidden more successfully under the heavy bush of dark hair in her crotch. She smiled up at Erika, trembling with excitement at the moment, at the pleasure of being with such a beautiful lover, at the passion of saliva and kisses. And then a sudden gasp as Erika's body collapsed on her, naked bosom against naked bosom, mouth once again on mouth, and a new feeling as she felt Erika's fingers stroke the dark thick hair of her crotch: the mere sensation tingling the core of her being and causing an aching empty feeling to open inside her and forcing open her legs.

It was inevitable that after kissing and cuddling and stroking and even licking each other, that Erika's fingers should probe around the folds and features of Tanneka's vagina. And then, ooh! And again, ooh! Ooh! One of Erika's fingers slid so easily into the moist opening of it, while Erika's other hand guided one of Tanneka's hands and fingers towards her own crotch.

And what a surprise that was too! It was so moist and sticky. Even though the

hair around it was dry and straw-like in its composition. And so warm! Where did that warmth come from? Was it like the warmth and moistness that she felt sure she was emitting below, that ached so hard, that pressed even harder against her stomach? She let a finger probe inside the lips. Such a surprising warmth. And with surprising contours and shapes. What was this hard knob to the top of the vagina? Was it like the growth in her own that she'd sometimes thought to be a kind of warty infection? But she knew her own crotch from her few clumsy fumbings (often with unfocussed thoughts of Erika uppermost in her mind) that this was the same. A complicated growth hidden like a secret in special secret folds she'd thought were only her own, and was never sure were like that of other people. She was pleased to realise that she was not the only one whose crotch was not as smooth and undifferentiated as the classical nude sculptures so beloved of the Third Reich aesthetic.

And then a fumbling, and an awkward rearrangement of roles, as Erika lowered herself down the line of Tanneka's body, while she gazed up at the cream plastered ceiling, surrendering herself to the sensation of Tanneka's hands and tongue on her breasts, her ribs, her stomach, and then, and then. It was a new sensation again. Even more liquid and potent than with mouth to mouth. Erika's tongue was lapping and lapping and licking at Tanneka's crotch, inside and outside the folds, nibbling her clitoris, now hard and exposed, rubbing and tweaking the raw sensuous inner lips. And then, from deep inside her, with no thought, no intention, and as shocking to herself as it was to Erika, she gave vent to a long low sigh and then a gasp. And then another gasp. Louder. Longer. More guttural. More animal. More passionate. And then longer again.

The passion gripped her with urgency. In the next few heated moments, she was conscious of little other than heat and trails of sweat from her stomach and streaming down her forehead, salting her eyes and sweet on her tongue. The two girls grappled and fought together, bare flesh on bare flesh. Tanneka's mouth on Erika's crotch, licking and tasting and enjoying the strong smells intoxicating her, driving her mad with passion and ecstasy. And all the while, she would hear herself moaning and yelling, as distant from her consciousness as those yells and moans that Erika was also releasing. And all the while it seemed natural. So natural. So obviously the right thing. To wrestle and grapple and lick. To have strands of pubic hair caught between the teeth. To have sticky sweaty slippery skin sliding against each other. To have cascades of juice from inside burst with flavour and viscosity into the mouth. To be reduced to animal grunts and gasps and the occasional full throaty cry.

And then to collapse. Two girls together. Head on shoulder. Arm around each other. Panting and gasping. Sweat and vaginal fluids caking in the dusty gloom of the electric light. And to sip again from the glasses of sweet white wine that Erika had poured out. Their faces shone with the gleam of passion and satisfaction. Heat radiating from each other, so hot that it almost burned. And to exchange sips of wine with kisses to the lips with nibbles around the ears. And all the while hands clasped so tightly together, as if ensuring that this perfect moment should never end. To hope that it *could* never end. It was so perfect. So right. So natural. How *could* it ever end?

Tanneka recollected the last occasion she had any intimacy with someone else, though necessarily of a much more innocent kind, was when she last saw her mother. She recalled her mother's abject sadness, aware more than Tanneka was dimly able,

that this could be their last ever hug and their last ever kiss. Tanneka squeezed Erika closer to her and rested her head on her shoulder.

Erika felt the tears drip over Tanneka's cheeks and onto the bare flesh of her upper arm. "What's wrong, my dear?" she asked tenderly.

"I was just thinking of my mother."

"Frau Van Vliet? She seems fine. What's wrong with her?"

"No, not her. My real mother. I was thinking of the last time we met. When she and my father had to leave the country. Because of the Germans."

"Why did they have to leave?"

"Because they're Jews," replied Tanneka before she could guard her tongue.

Erika squeezed Tanneka's hand tight and looked close into her eyes. She ran a free hand up and down the long contours of her naked body. "So that means you're Jewish?"

Tanneka frowned. Bizarrely enough, this quite obvious connection hadn't really occurred to her before. "I suppose it does."

Erika was quite silent, but she gripped Tanneka's hand even more tightly than before. She took a sip from her wine, while Tanneka lay slumped on her, head against shoulder and arm sprawled over her stomach. She took a longer sip while admiring the portrait of Adolf Hitler framed in a high position just above her desk. His stern, unamused face glared accusingly down on her.

"I suppose you may never see your parents again?" mused Erika.

"Oh! Don't say that! I hope I do. I hope I can see them again."

Erika sighed. "There's another game we can play," she said swallowing the

whole of her glass of wine in one gulp. “It’s different from the ones we’ve played already, but I’m told it can be fun.”

She detached herself from Tanneka and walked over to her desk, where she poured herself another glass of wine and drank almost all of it in one long gulp, her throat jogging as it sank down.

“What game is that?” asked Tanneka, who had rather enjoyed the last one.

“Come into the bathroom with me,” Erika commanded.

This game, Tanneka found, was really not as pleasant as their earlier lovemaking. Erika bade her lie down in the hard enamelled bath. It was a particularly large bath, supported on four cast-iron legs and quite big enough for the two of them. Tanneka half-expected Erika to turn on the taps so that the two girls could bathe together. After all, both of them were smelling quite strongly of the odour of sex. She watched as Erika got into the bath and stood right above her, one leg on either side of her, the feet between Tanneka’s arms and her sides. Tanneka looked up to gaze at the gash of Erika’s vagina, where so recently she had been licking and fingering with such pleasure.

And then. Oooh! Tanneka didn’t expect that! Erika let loose a stream of urine facilitated by the alcohol and it spurted straight into Tanneka’s face and her hair. Uugh! That was not nice at all! And it didn’t stop with one stream. Tanneka looked up in alarm as Erika emitted a longer, fuller, more ferocious stream of urine that went straight into her eyes, into her nose and some of it into her mouth. It tasted very strange. Very sour. Quite unpleasant. She coughed and splattered while Erika continued to let loose more and more of the liquid, getting gradually less urgent as her

bladder emptied. This was one game that Tanneka hoped she wouldn't have to play again!

After this ordeal, the two girls had baths. But not together. Tanneka had hers in the bath immediately after Erika deemed herself satisfied. Erika waited until Tanneka was thoroughly clean and the polluted water had wholly disappeared down the plug hole before running a bath for herself. She sipped wine in the bath while Tanneka scrubbed her back from above. All the while, Erika was relatively quiet. Somehow, she was happier to express herself by touch and kiss rather than verbally. Although Tanneka was sure this was not how it should be. She herself was bursting with things to say, but Erika just did not seem so receptive now.

The two girls slept together, naked flesh against naked flesh. Occasionally, they would exchange kisses and hugs, but the passion of earlier in the evening just didn't happen again. Tanneka reflected that perhaps this was because of the enormity of the discovery of their love for each other. After all, it certainly gave her a great deal to think about.

However, as Tanneka was to find out the following evening, it wasn't Erika's love for Tanneka that had silenced her. The curfew had long since begun and Tanneka was ready to go to bed in her night-dress while Frau and Herr Van Vliet were settling down in front of the radio to tune into the BBC. She had been feeling disorientated all day and was looking forward to an early night in which she could adjust her thoughts and reflect on her new status as someone who had made love to her schoolfriend. Not that she'd ever tell anyone, of course.

It was then, as she prepared herself for bed, that the German soldiers arrived,

bashing on the door and shouting “*Juden! Juden!*” Within minutes, her life and those of the Van Vliet family were to be forever changed. She was singled out for especial attention as the German soldiers punched and kicked her until she vomited blood out of her mouth. The rest of the Van Vliet family were also slapped about, but with rather less hatred than that reserved for the *Judenfrau*.

The last glimpse she had of the Van Vliet family was through a veil of blood and tears, before she was bundled on the train to a concentration camp in the Eastern occupied territories. She now knew Erika’s priorities when faced with conflict between love and ideology. This was the price Tanneka had to pay for Erika’s prejudice.