

(Dis)Connected

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Jeroen D. Rook



SCHRIJVER VAN FORMAAT

4

'Logic takes you from A to B, the imagination takes you everywhere.'

Albert Einstein

Intro

"I would prefer to sit on a bench by a bay and look out over a deep blue sea without necessary thoughts, with a hint of wind and pleasant sun, and then keep watching the waves hit the rocks, smelling the smell of pine tree and sea, but as long as Aristotle, Plato and Stephen Hawking have not yet brought the world this far, that I can shamelessly stay in this state, I will feel like a bird in a cage, a fish between the oil barrels and a conscientious objector in an army tank. In that painful restless struggle, I will try to keep breathing in the hope of feeling something of that bay adorned with sun and wind, even if only for a moment.'

DeoVolente

Warning

Don't consider this story to be true. It could harm your mental health. Think of it as the infinite power of the imagination.

In the hope and expectation that freedom of imagination will not be called to order anywhere in the world, by any form of dogma, I reside,

Sincerely,

Jeroen D. Rook

P.S. We'll start with episode two for a change!

Episode two

Floris also referred to as the ideal son-in-law by his grandmother, studied Computer Science at the TU in Delft. Although this study did not contain the weight of what Floris should do with his life, this study was inextricably the necessary foundation for the palace that he wanted to build. Studying science was not something you should avoid as an innovator. Although "science" was by no means a panacea; it was a thousand degrees further developed than the teachings of chieftains, cave dwellers, and fanatical dogma speakers and thus indisputably the indispensable foundation for what Floris wanted to achieve as a new direction within humanity.

Floris lived on the "Old Delft," on a corner where three other students lived next to him. And although Floris was blessed with the genius desired by every honorable family to absorb matter like a 'boss', process it, and reproduce it like a monkey on exams, Floris had other things on his mind.

At the beginning of this year, he had become a member of the fraternity, in the mouth of the 'knorren', also known as "corps ball." There had to be parties, conquering girls, drinking beer, and throwing gnawed chickens at competing year clubs. Galas interspersed with other decadents; money-guzzling activities of the alleged aristocrat sons were on the list of activities.

In order to maintain the appearance of sportsmanship for the common people, rowing was done, and at best at a high level, but

the main purpose of his stay in Delft at that time seemed to be alcohol and revelry, which many bodyguards cannot match.

His activities in the corps, I don't want to discuss that further, since that is forbidden in the sacred domain of the Phoenix, but what happened at that time in the student house where Floris lived is essential for the further development of his life... and ours.

It was the fourth Tuesday in September, exactly a week after Wim Kok presented his Annual Budget. Following in the footsteps of Willem Drees, this statesman had explained his plans in the House, adjusted somewhat by a liberal display of power, and had passed it with flying colors. That was not so much the merit of our statesman, but more of the ignorant bastards in our country, who were more aware of nothing than his holiday in France, his weekend trip, Disney World, and his annual winter sports, something the middle-class could afford at the turn of the century, not harassed, and fined in the wallet with climate nonsense, seldom engulfed in the struggle between religions and not yet exposed to the decline of the authority of news agencies. It was the time when fake news still didn't win over Reuters and the ANP: it was the time when war was something that had only happened coldly in recent decades and disappeared with the fall of the Berlin Wall. In short, it was a carefree time. The worker did not complain. The Internet had just arrived. The youth played some games on the first generation of computers and Floris had to grow up.

Since he was rejected for military service, because of back problems, he had to become a real man but this must be happening in Delft. He couldn't stay that eternal genius, good kid. There had to be whiskey in that kid. His pursuit of the perfect courtly love in all his adoration of the feminine, in his eyes innocent beauty, had to be cut through. Otherwise, he could never achieve what the angels had already written in the sky before his birth.

So it was the fourth Tuesday in September and Floris would have a house drink that evening. You know it: in the midst of the rickety, beer-filled furniture, feasting on whisky, and cigars (yes, that was still possible in those days) and then gossip for as long as possible,

until you fall asleep from drunkenness in the hope, you didn't put a puke placard in the hallway between chair and bed, that you also had to clean up in all your suffering.

The liquor store around the corner had been closed and none of the residents had been able to get booze. Fortunately, Floris' neighbor had an alternative to this planned activity at home. He had bought weed and baked a space cake from this cheerful plant, something completely unusual in those circles. But since there was no better alternative, due to the lack of alcohol, it was decided to eat that cake together.

Besides Floris, who hosted the all-important event, the room contained the following four people:

Julius Centaurion. A blond, narrow-faced boy, as if he'd never had enough to eat at home, tall as an overgrown, high school lanky boy, with lots of mischievous tricks and a taste for stories like Lord of the Rings. The just-grown man (or was he still a boy?) smoked like a heretic, and that happened in a house where smoking was not allowed by their elderly self-glorifying landlord. Julius had many faces, from downright amicable and friendly to extremely cunning, who expressed himself on such a day, by bullying Floris. Julius was a clever little man and thus unofficially one of the figurative leaders in the house. He did not shy away from bullying behavior. Once, just after the first introductory drink, he had persuaded the other housemates to deposit a bag of garbage in Floris' loft bed, an action that had made Floris very sad, but which he had never wanted to show. Floris would sometimes show who was really in charge, but that was more a feeling than that Floris knew how. Floris had to give him one thing: he dropped all those atomic bombs that Julius unleashed on his chosen prey as an irreparable weapon. He always had the laughers on his hand and was therefore the born leader.

Chaim Luizendoorn. Chaim was a small southern-looking young man with curly hair, from a well-to-do family from Bloemendaal. He studied aircraft engineering. His father was a pilot and his mother was the director of a large furniture factory that had been passed on from father to son and from mother to daughter for centuries, so to

speak: old money. Although the best man was blinded by the perspective in which he had grown up, namely an overly wealthy childhood he had grown up in, the best boy was good-hearted, extremely creative, and enterprising. Like Julius, he had a natural leadership, but this innate leader acted more in a fair way: without pranks. He had a natural preponderance and managed to silence the fox many times, simply with his charisma.

And then you had Pieter Polleke, an alternative kid who, just because of his serious facial expression, had bluffed himself into the student house as a serious counterpart to the big money. He was the only one not a member of the corps. Floris had a fine, if somewhat superficial, relationship with Pieter. Cows, calves ... and sports. Together they rowed at the civil rowing club De Delftsche Sport, an activity that Floris was only too happy to maintain in addition to his rowing schedule at Laga, the rowing club of the corps.

That evening started as always with watching the NOS news on the beeping tube, after which the creaking monster was turned off. Fortunately, Pieter still had a bit of whiskey at home before they started eating the space cake, so that they wouldn't have to start sobering to discover the stones of wisdom that 'getting stoned' regularly causes.

It was about half-past eight and dusk had set in. You could still hear a number of students laughing in the street, on their way home from their club drinks, hoping to learn something in the process of the ensuing sobering for the exam, the next day. The conversation started pleasantly, chatting about nothing but tasty women, who were largely missing in Delft. About an hour, sipping on Pieter's divided poured bottom, the space cake came on the table. MTV was turned on and through the dusty room came the clear sound of Peter Gabriel: 'Digging in the dirt.'

Pieter passed around the glass, serrated gold-rimmed bowl with the pieces of the devil's cake to be eaten. Floris hesitated. Lacking alcohol as a catalyst, as well as the pressure of his watching housemates, it was inevitable that he would bring the heavily scented cake up to his merry mouth with his crooked teeth and

work it slowly but surely down his throat, which lacked Adam's apple, a quality that characterized him as if he had never eaten the apple of good and evil before, an impression that no longer had any legitimacy after that evening.

The ticking, coming from Floris' electric clock, became more and more apparent, as the conversation gradually fell silent. Floris had no idea that he noticed anything in himself from eating his slice of silly pleasure. He did think that his housemates had a different facial expression.

Their eyes turned gray and their appearance was more rigid than just before. This was not what Floris had as idea of a cozy house drink. However, now that the push had come to an end, he had to surrender to this ghostly scene of a group of self-estranged youngsters.

Floris took another slice. He still didn't notice. Everything seemed normal, right? Or had the room suddenly become much larger? The clock was ticking slower and slower.

Floris tried to get up to change the batteries, but two invisible hands on his knees stopped him. MTV's music also seemed to be playing at a slower pace, though they were all songs he knew. Never before, however, had he heard these slower versions.

The table lamp on the ceiling, with a lampshade like a floor lamp, started to give off flickering signals like a fire pit.

"Why do we do everything the way we do? I mean, right here on Earth. It's insane!" Chaim bellowed in a voice three notes lower than Floris had ever heard of him. Chaim's eyes seemed to give a trail of green light and quivered like a tuning fork in his eye sockets.

"Are you okay, Chaim?" Floris tried to break his trance.

"Chaim is dead, driven to the magma. I am Archangel Gabriel."

'Act normally, Chaim!' Floris cautiously expressed his concerns

"You dare deny this, renegade Dodo?!" Chaim yelled across the growing room.

The cabinet seemed to move back and forth a meter within a second. Floris was shocked but still managed to muster the sensible thought that he had imagined it under the influence of the illuminating cake.

"Okay, it's all right, Gabriel, if that's what you want. It is well ..."

A low growl came from the corner where Julius was slumped. It was soon drowned out by the noise from outside, thrown into the acoustics by laughing students like a flan in the green meadow. Drunkards, who were looking for a way home by bicycle from the "*Virgiel*" student association, made themselves felt in the ancient town.

"What's the matter with you, boy?!" Floris suggested in the direction of Julius. Again a loud growl came out of his mouth. His eyes looked purple and had lights in the middle. It may have been Floris' imagination, but strange things happened here. Where life went on as usual outside, as you would expect along a canal in a student city: inside this room, the atmosphere became grimmer every second, and outside normal reality.

Julie! What is it?

Julius. That's not how I know you. Stop the joke!

In fact, Floris hoped that Julius and Chaim would burst out laughing spontaneously, that everything had been a joke, that the desire to experience something mysterious had seduced them both into this mysterious game, but the atmosphere grew colder. He could not have imagined this beforehand. Floris had no experience with any form of drugs, but his expectation was that their use had a slightly more cheerful effect on the community than this terrifying hell.

He had expected bursts of laughter, possibly some extrasensory perceptions, but not this deadly chill. "Come on, guys. Have a nice time. Isn't this a house drink like this?!"

Again no one responded, but the walls seemed to glow, which was unusual as it was cloudy and gray outside. There seemed to be a purple glow from the walls, and around the ceiling pendant light, the normally ever-present blowflies seemed to have turned into fireflies.

Because none of the boys flinched, Floris gradually started to feel a little uncomfortable, even a little scared. Not wanting to give in to this unwelcome mood, he began to shout a song in a somewhat flat,

student-like manner, hoping that this might change the mood somewhat into something that felt familiar:

"We want beer and tits before we take root..." From the corner where Julius was sitting, a grunt came towards Floris, which seemed to form into a sentence.

"Child of man. There is still so much you do not know."

Julius, act normal! Come on, guys. This is a house drink, not a Shakespearean play."

"I'm not Julius. I am Zadkiel, Archangel of the Archangels."

Floris tried to laugh out loud and thereby get the others to join in a more light-hearted atmosphere, but none of them seemed to go along with his attempt. His laughter was met with a chilling silence.

"Zadkiel, you know very well that I won the battle with you. Look at the world. I made them believe in science."

"But Gabriel. It has brought humanity nothing. People are still searching."

'Shouldn't you let man search?' said Chaim monotonously, 'permanently let him search humbly without feeling he has any control over his environment? I brought them out of the isolation of the desperate faith that had nowhere to hold on to. I gave them the universe. I have put Dinosaurs in the ground so that man can hold a clear belief that he understands! I've bred heroes like Copernicus. I gave them the relief.'

"It has brought nothing to man. He still doesn't know anything about death or anything. It's a make-believe reality," Julius said, irritated.

"Guys, come on! Stop this weird game!" Floris shouted across the room. "Peter, will you say something!"

There was no response. Peter seemed to have fallen asleep. It was getting dark outside, much darker than you would normally expect at this time, but inside everything glowed: the walls, the floor, but also the clothes of his housemates seemed to radiate a glow of light. It was not a friendly glow as one usually sees in the case of infatuation. It was an ominous light.

This must simply be the effect of the space cake, Floris told himself. This isn't real. Floris, this is not real.

Chaim opened his mouth again, and in a slightly milder tone continued, "Zadkiel! Remember when I asked the big boss to make the orbit of a thrown apple in the shape of a parabola? I did that to give people something to hold on to, the feeling that they could always explain the world and its surroundings. I knew that humans are smart enough to discover laws in this. As you know: I was right! The gravitational acceleration of g was soon discovered and people quickly came up with a gravitational formula. The beginning of a new episode had begun."

"...and with that began another episode of an even deeper bite from the apple of good and evil," Julius—or should I say Zadkiel—completed him.

Why should a person understand his environment? Animals don't do that, and yet they feel complete just from being always in the here and now," Julius continued.

"Guys, guys! Stop this. I'm a little scared of you," Floris shouted.

"You know what it is, Gabriel: With science basically shutting down the world of magic, there's no more room for prophets. Science says categorically: that the universe consists of natural laws. As a result, the great schism between the physical world and the world above has arisen, shall I say."

"But Zadkiel! Man needs to hold on to. In this form of security, he will be better able to show his neighborly love. That's something the big boss wants too, isn't it?"

"Well, what a charity in this society. The arrogance explodes. Man simply needs an internal guide, but because of his own arrogance, he no longer has contact with his deeper layer."

Floris became nervous and decided to light a cigar. He had no idea how to interpret this role play. He had never even thought about it. He was happy in his own little world, loved computer science, and had his usual things. That was his hold.

What is this all about? Bunch of idiots!

Although he should really laugh out loud, Floris didn't. A purple blanket of fear came over him. The fact that he had eaten the forbidden fruit also did not help him in maintaining his usually

excellent ability to put things into perspective. He began to tremble... and to sweat.

Floris inhaled deeply his thick cigar, which, in addition to his already somewhat unpleasant feeling, gave him a considerable coughing fit.

What kind of house drinks are these?! he wondered in surprise.

In that respect, Floris would rather have drunk a bottle of whiskey. Then he felt bad for a day, but then you knew what you had. This was spooky... way too scary for the innocent at the time

Floris.

Floris was about to run away from this nonsense, away from this room. He had already made his first step toward the doorway when the house phone rang. Since he was the only one of the boys standing up, he answered the phone:

"Yeah...hi, it's Eve. Can I come by later I've missed you so much," it sounded on the other side.

"Eva, listen up. Not now. I'm having a house drink. You don't want to see that."

"Are you drinking like that? Why, boy? Are you doing rowing training? Why always drink? You better kiss me... and who knows more."

The temptation sounded great. "Eva, I really can't leave right now. We've been using space cake and Chaim and Julius are acting really weird right now. I want to see you, I want you, but I have to sit this out."

'You?! To the space cake! Boy o boy. Why? That's not your style, is it?'

"But Eve. There was no booze..."

"And then you go... What a shitty move! I would have rated you higher."

"Honey, it wasn't my idea, but we had to do something."

"I'm not your sweetheart," it sounded on the other end of the phone, "suck it up. I'll find another guy.

A real guy who doesn't need that shit."

"Shall I come to you?"

Floris understood from the tutu-tutu-tutu sound that his suggestion had not been received as a welcome option. In the other corner, Pieter focused on:

"The greatest flaw in creation is that there is so much suffering. Why should a person suffer? Charity should come above all else."

"And what about love for the created?" brought in Julius alias Zadkiel, "the love and awe of God."

"Awe smacks of megalomania," Chaim took over, "if a man can just embrace his ilk, isn't that enough?"

That is why I had also given man the tools that he can explain his own environment. And the big boss contributed to it. The lighting has brought a lot of good," Chaim continued.

"And that's why mankind is searching again!" said Julius scornfully.

A painting on the wall with an old man on it, looked at Floris understandingly, as if to say to Floris: 'Yes, Floris. There's something in that too!'

Floris made eye contact with this man for at least twenty seconds, who now seemed more real than ever before.

Julius lit a cigarette. Every time he took a puff, his eyes narrowed for a moment. His vocal cords tightened with a crack. "And yet that science has drawbacks. Now those so-called scientists have discovered that smoking is bad for your lungs. Very understandable too, if you start from science. Harmful substances that get into the lungs; cannot be good, and according to humanity's belief that it is not good, that's what our big boss is acting on in the form of various diseases. In his actions, he is very sensitive to what people believe. But as a human, this misses the point.

A satisfied smoker is not a troublemaker. Because of that belief in science, a whole culture is fucking lost. The peace pipe, the cigar. We used to smoke it over the lungs. That will no longer be possible in twenty years!'

Meanwhile, the noise coming from outside had gradually died down as if everyone had left. The drunken students walking past seemed to have all found their way home. Only the barking of a yelp, probably from the house next door, came in through the window

opening and was the only tangible earthly sound left in this desolate room. It was Floris' only line with reality, at least the one he had always assumed for reality.

At that moment Pieter farted loudly and with booming laughter from all four, the oppressive mood was broken. Everyone seemed to have returned to normal.

Thank God, it sounded in Floris's mind.

"Let's go to the whores! You have them in The Hague near Holland Spoor station," Pieter suggested.

"I have a girlfriend, as you know. I'm not going," said Floris self-consciously.

"He's got a girlfriend ... little boy, isn't she And is she doing a little bit right?"

"That's none of your business!" Floris shouted annoyed.

"I think you're still a virgin, Floris!"

"Even if it were. What does it matter!"

"She doesn't want to, does she? I know those types. They will string you along for years." There was a silence.

Eva was the most beautiful girl Floris knew. He had fallen in love with her during his last year at the Lyceum. She is also on him. After a few drinks together, it was on so wonderfully innocent. He enjoyed the walks together on the beach, gently kissing each other. That was beautiful and it still is. But now Floris wanted more and Eva stopped that. Floris's desire to become a real man was certainly present in him. How he would like to position his noble member in the noble carriage of the opposite sex.

Doubt took over Floris. She would never realize that anyway. Besides, this was something of the house, something studenty. There was nothing wrong with that, was there? What were the chances that Eva would find out? Even if his roommates told her, the next time she visited him, he'd just deny it. After all, they had been under the influence of space cake, hadn't they? Then they didn't see the truth so clearly, anymore, did they? If he looked penetratingly into the blue eyes of his sweet Eva with his fawn brown eyes, she would surely believe him. Besides: What would it bother her if he had a little experience?! That would only make his best experience

with Eva even more beautiful because then he knew what he was doing.

All storm clouds in Floris's head disappeared like snow in the sun.

Again the orange telephone his mother had given him rang through the cramped stuffy room.

'Yes.'

'Yes. Eva here again. I do not get you. Why are you going on a slippery slope?! Drugs, dude. Stop that.'

"Yes, I heard you. This is the last time, but I'm finishing this party. Hold on... Let me light a cigar."

"A cigar. Those stinky shitty things," came the voice on the other end of the line.

"Floris. Come on! We are leaving. Or do you still need to comfort your sweetheart?" Pieter shouted hastily across the stuffy room.

"Wait a minute, guys. Give me five minutes."

"Floris," came the other end of the line, "if you choose me, you don't choose that weird scum in your house and certainly not drugs."

Floris sighed deeply, then took a deep drag on his cigar and waited. He didn't know what to say for a moment.

(...)

"Eve..."

He waited for a response, but there was silence on the other end. "Eve. Shouldn't we also set each other free? I really want to be with you, but I also want to experience something as a student."

In the background Chiel, Julius and Pieter started laughing viciously and giggling. In high-pitched voices they cried:

"Floris, Floris. Listen to your dear friend. She wants to bake cookies with you."

"Listen Eva. I'm going to have fun now. I'll talk to you later.' And with a thud, Floris hung up the receiver.

"Okay guys, I'm coming with you. But you shut up to Eva, okay?"

'What do you take us for, cute little Floris? Of course, we don't say that!'

After the four gentlemen had closed the copper door handle of the monumental building behind them, they wandered through the old

Delft. No one else walked on the street, except for a calico cat, who smelled of her own urine, which she had just deposited diagonally under a car parked along the canal. The conversation gradually faded. Each of the boys, lost in thought, headed north. Snack bar Alev was only a hundred yards from their shared student residence, but time seemed slower and the distance greater than ever before.

Where are we actually going? Does any of the guys know?

Yes, of course, they knew they had to walk to the tram stop, but everything seemed so far away. And why was it so dark and so quiet outside?

It's noon, isn't it? Are we doing well? And where does that sound of that harpsichord come from? thought Floris.

"Chaim, do you hear that too?"

"What do you mean, Lucifer?"

"Oh, are we starting all over again? We're going to the whores, aren't we?"

"Yes, Lucifer. Once you have felt the warmth of the movement of your baton. Then you will always be warm inside. Then you don't need Eva anymore."

"Yes, Lucifer. Gabriel is right. Would you like a cigar, lad?"

"Yeah, okay. But stop this play!"

A moment later Floris started to inhale deeply again. It felt like fifteen minutes had passed since the previous dialogue, but when he looked straight ahead over the Oude Delft, he didn't seem to have made any headway. "Guys, I need to sit down."

In fact, Floris didn't pay attention to whether the others walked on or not but sat down by a doorway.

Suddenly he felt like a rocket shot up and saw himself from above, about the height of the roof. From this towering field of vision, he saw the boys standing next to the person he was supposed to be.

Heartwarming feelings took over Floris, permanently staring at his industrious housemates, who now suddenly seemed to care about him.

His field of vision turned upward toward the horizon. What a beautiful view he now had. Around the line between the silhouettes of houses and churches on the one hand and the sky on the other, a

purple-red intermediate layer was created, something like what some alternative people would call an aura.

But does a city have an aura?

Floris did feel much better than the hours before. The chilly fearful cold had given way to a peaceful scene. The archangels from just before had been transformed into loyal companions.

A car was approaching above the horizon, or so it seemed. It couldn't be a plane, because the vehicle had no wings. The object seemed to ride over the colored interlayer. Although Floris realized all too well, even in this condition, that all this could not be true, denying his perception was a form of betrayal to which he should by no means give in.

The car approached and he saw that there were two boys in it, boys his age. When they got closer again, he saw that the boys in that car weren't just any boys, but acquaintances of his. It was Henk and Diederik.

Just after the introduction week, Floris went to a party in Leiden with them. He had driven there with the boys. The plan for that evening was that he would also drive back, had it not been for Eva had surprised him and picked him up in her mother's car. That evening Floris really didn't feel like going with her at all, but his sense of duty and the sincerity and spontaneity of Eva's action forced Floris to accompany her to her mother's house. The next day after the party, he heard the shocking news that Henk and Diederik had run off the road and hit a tree. They had died instantly.

He now saw those same boys driving in a car, flying in the air, over the aura of the city of Delft. And that from a perspective of about three meters above the roofs of the Oude Delft. They didn't deviate from their orbits and headed straight for him, at least where his ghost most likely was at the time.

With a calm look, making eye contact with Floris, the two sky riders passed his position at a leisurely pace. His sense of reality led him to hesitate and fall from that position, some ten feet above roof height, through the wood of an open window frame, onto the first floor. As the final piece of his fall, Floris actually ended up in his own body.