

## Chapter 15

### The Little Grated Window

Gryphus was followed by the mastiff.

The turnkey took the animal round the jail, so that, if needs be, he might recognize the prisoners.

"Father," said Rosa, "here is the famous prison from which Mynheer Grotius escaped. You know Mynheer Grotius?"

"Oh, yes, that rogue Grotius, a friend of that villain Barneveldt, whom I saw executed when I was a child. Ah! so Grotius; and that's the chamber from which he escaped. Well, I'll answer for it that no one shall escape after him in my time."

And thus opening the door, he began in the dark to talk to the prisoner.

The dog, on his part, went up to the prisoner, and, growling, smelled about his legs just as though to ask him what right he had still to be alive, after having left the prison in the company of the Recorder and the executioner.

But the fair Rosa called him to her side.

"Well, my master," said Gryphus, holding up his lantern to throw a little light around, "you see in me your new jailer. I am head turnkey, and have all the cells under my care. I am not vicious, but I'm not to be trifled with, as far as discipline goes."

"My good Master Gryphus, I know you perfectly well," said the prisoner, approaching within the circle of light cast around by the lantern.

"Halloa! that's you, Mynheer van Baerle," said Gryphus. "That's you; well, I declare, it's astonishing how people do meet."

"Oh, yes; and it's really a great pleasure to me, good Master Gryphus, to see that your arm is doing well, as you are able to hold your lantern with it."

Gryphus knitted his brow. "Now, that's just it," he said, "people always make blunders in politics. His Highness has granted you your life; I'm sure I should never have done so."

"Don't say so," replied Cornelius; "why not?"

"Because you are the very man to conspire again. You learned people have dealings with the devil."

"Nonsense, Master Gryphus. Are you dissatisfied with the manner in which I have set your arm, or with the price that I asked you?" said Cornelius, laughing.

"On the contrary," growled the jailer, "you have set it only too well. There is some witchcraft in this. After six weeks, I was able to use it as if nothing had happened, so much so, that the doctor of the Buytenhof, who knows his trade well, wanted to break it again, to set it in the regular way, and promised me that I should have my blessed three months for my money before I should be able to move it."

"And you did not want that?"

"I said, 'Nay, as long as I can make the sign of the cross with that arm' (Gryphus was a Roman Catholic), 'I laugh at the devil.'"

"But if you laugh at the devil, Master Gryphus, you ought with so much more reason to laugh at learned people."

"Ah, learned people, learned people! Why, I would rather have to guard ten soldiers than one scholar. The soldiers smoke, guzzle, and get drunk; they are gentle as lambs if you only give them brandy or Moselle, but scholars, and drink, smoke, and fuddle -- ah, yes, that's altogether different. They keep sober, spend nothing, and have their heads always clear to make conspiracies. But I tell you, at the very outset, it won't be such an easy matter for you to conspire. First of all, you will have no books, no paper, and no conjuring book. It's books that helped Mynheer Grotius to get off."

"I assure you, Master Gryphus," replied Van Baerle, "that if I have entertained the idea of escaping, I most decidedly have it no longer."

"Well, well," said Gryphus, "just look sharp: that's what I shall do also. But, for all that, I say his Highness has made a great mistake."

"Not to have cut off my head? thank you, Master Gryphus."

"Just so, look whether the Mynheer de Witt don't keep very quiet now."

"That's very shocking what you say now, Master Gryphus," cried Van Baerle, turning away his head to conceal his disgust. "You forget that one of those unfortunate gentlemen was my friend, and the other my second father."

"Yes, but I also remember that the one, as well as the other, was a conspirator. And, moreover, I am speaking from Christian charity."

"Oh, indeed! explain that a little to me, my good Master Gryphus. I do not quite understand it."

"Well, then, if you had remained on the block of Master Harbruck ---- "

"What?"

"You would not suffer any longer; whereas, I will not disguise it from you, I shall lead you a sad life of it."

"Thank you for the promise, Master Gryphus."

And whilst the prisoner smiled ironically at the old jailer, Rosa, from the outside, answered by a bright smile, which carried sweet consolation to the heart of Van Baerle.

Gryphus stepped towards the window.

It was still light enough to see, although indistinctly, through the gray haze of the evening, the vast expanse of the horizon.

"What view has one from here?" asked Gryphus.

"Why, a very fine and pleasant one," said Cornelius, looking at Rosa.

"Yes, yes, too much of a view, too much."

And at this moment the two pigeons, scared by the sight and especially by the voice of the stranger, left their nest, and disappeared, quite frightened in the evening mist.

"Halloa! what's this?" cried Gryphus.

"My pigeons," answered Cornelius.

"Your pigeons," cried the jailer, "your pigeons! has a prisoner anything of his own?"

"Why, then," said Cornelius, "the pigeons which a merciful Father in Heaven has lent to me."

"So, here we have a breach of the rules already," replied Gryphus. "Pigeons! ah, young man, young man! I'll tell you one thing, that before to-morrow is over, your pigeons will boil in my pot."

"First of all you should catch them, Master Gryphus. You won't allow these pigeons to be mine! Well, I vow they are even less yours than mine."

"Omittance is no acquittance," growled the jailer, "and I shall certainly wring their necks before twenty-four hours are over: you may be sure of that."

Whilst giving utterance to this ill-natured promise, Gryphus put his head out of the window to examine the nest. This gave Van Baerle time to run to the door, and squeeze the hand of Rosa, who whispered to him, --

"At nine o'clock this evening."

Gryphus, quite taken up with the desire of catching the pigeons next day, as he had promised he would do, saw and heard nothing of this short interlude; and, after having closed the window, he took the arm of his daughter, left the cell, turned the key twice, drew the bolts, and went off to make the same kind promise to the other prisoners.

He had scarcely withdrawn, when Cornelius went to the door to listen to the sound of his footsteps, and, as soon as they had died away, he ran to the window, and completely demolished the nest of the pigeons.

Rather than expose them to the tender mercies of his bullying jailer, he drove away for ever those gentle messengers to whom he owed the happiness of having seen Rosa again.

This visit of the jailer, his brutal threats, and the gloomy prospect of the harshness with which, as he had before experienced, Gryphus watched his prisoners, -- all this was unable to extinguish in Cornelius the sweet thoughts, and especially the sweet hope, which the presence of Rosa had reawakened in his heart.

He waited eagerly to hear the clock of the tower of Loewestein strike nine.

The last chime was still vibrating through the air, when Cornelius heard on the staircase the light step and the rustle of the flowing dress of the fair Frisian maid, and soon after a light appeared at the little grated window in the door, on which the prisoner fixed his earnest gaze.

The shutter opened on the outside.

"Here I am," said Rosa, out of breath from running up the stairs, "here I am."

"Oh, my good Rosa."

"You are then glad to see me?"

"Can you ask? But how did you contrive to get here? tell me."

"Now listen to me. My father falls asleep every evening almost immediately after his supper; I then make him lie down, a little stupefied with his gin. Don't say anything about it, because, thanks to this nap, I shall be able to come every evening and chat for an hour with you."

"Oh, I thank you, Rosa, dear Rosa."

Saying these words, Cornelius put his face so near the little window that Rosa withdrew hers.

"I have brought back to you your bulbs."

Cornelius's heart leaped with joy. He had not yet dared to ask Rosa what she had done with the precious treasure which he had intrusted to her.

"Oh, you have preserved them, then?"

"Did you not give them to me as a thing which was dear to you?"

"Yes, but as I have given them to you, it seems to me that they belong to you."

"They would have belonged to me after your death, but, fortunately, you are alive now. Oh how I blessed his Highness in my heart! If God grants to him all the happiness that I have wished him, certainly Prince William will be the

happiest man on earth. When I looked at the Bible of your godfather Cornelius, I was resolved to bring back to you your bulbs, only I did not know how to accomplish it. I had, however, already formed the plan of going to the Stadtholder, to ask from him for my father the appointment of jailer of Loewestein, when your housekeeper brought me your letter. Oh, how we wept together! But your letter only confirmed me the more in my resolution. I then left for Leyden, and the rest you know."

"What, my dear Rosa, you thought, even before receiving my letter, of coming to meet me again?"

"If I thought of it," said Rosa, allowing her love to get the better of her bashfulness, "I thought of nothing else."

And, saying these words, Rosa looked so exceedingly pretty, that for the second time Cornelius placed his forehead and lips against the wire grating; of course, we must presume with the laudable desire to thank the young lady.

Rosa, however, drew back as before.

"In truth," she said, with that coquetry which somehow or other is in the heart of every young girl, "I have often been sorry that I am not able to read, but never so much so as when your housekeeper brought me your letter. I kept the paper in my hands, which spoke to other people, and which was dumb to poor stupid me."

"So you have often regretted not being able to read," said Cornelius. "I should just like to know on what occasions."

"Troth," she said, laughing, "to read all the letters which were written to me."

"Oh, you received letters, Rosa?"

"By hundreds."

"But who wrote to you?"

"Who! why, in the first place, all the students who passed over the Buytenhof, all the officers who went to parade, all the clerks, and even the merchants who saw me at my little window."

"And what did you do with all these notes, my dear Rosa?"

"Formerly," she answered, "I got some friend to read them to me, which was capital fun, but since a certain time -- well, what use is it to attend to all this nonsense? -- since a certain time I have burnt them."

"Since a certain time!" exclaimed Cornelius, with a look beaming with love and joy.

Rosa cast down her eyes, blushing. In her sweet confusion, she did not observe the lips of Cornelius, which, alas! only met the cold wire-grating. Yet, in spite of this obstacle, they communicated to the lips of the young girl the glowing breath of the most tender kiss.

At this sudden outburst of tenderness, Rosa grew very pale, -- perhaps paler than she had been on the day of the execution. She uttered a plaintive sob, closed her fine eyes, and fled, trying in vain to still the beating of her heart.

And thus Cornelius was again alone.

Rosa had fled so precipitately, that she completely forgot to return to Cornelius the three bulbs of the Black Tulip.