

They had not bathed for so long that their skins felt like rubber.

And not black rubber but yellow rubber as their skins suffered from lack of sunlight in the dingy darkness of the little dungeon prison that received an itsy bitsy light through a peephole in the ceiling.

The peephole teased them. It was big enough to grant them hope in the land of the living but not big enough for them to walk through and escape.

To escape they wanted for theirs was a death sentence. Not of circumstance nor ill fate but of untamed and unbridled human nature. It is oft repeated that it is a good day to die. If that be the case, the Firing Squad (FS), anointed by the Council oiled their rifles waiting for the helpless men to take their walk not a walk for boys but a walk for men.

It was Friday, the Fourth of May, 1945. They would make sure it was a good day.

Twenty minutes to go.

“Heinrick Schlomo,” shouted a rough impassioned voice into the scrappy burglar barred window of the little dungeon of the hidden Buchenwald Prison, near Jena, Germany.

A skinny Jewish man with a shaved head and a mole on his cheek slowly stood to his feet. Malnourishment was getting the better of him. Starvation sunk into his creaking bones. He wobbled along to his caller by the dungeon door.

Rough Voice reeled off the other names in rapid fire. “Avraham Solomon, Ya’akov Solomon, Kingsley Von Reid, Levi Frankel, Mordecai Judah.” Five skinny men with shaved heads slowly stood to their feet.

One man named Nimrod Levein remained squatting on the floor.

After having slept on a concrete and dirt mixed floor for twelve hours a day for one week his hip joints were sore. He maxed out resting on one side until could not feel his leg any more so he switched to the other side. With both sides maxed out he new better to squat during waking hours to ease the pain.

Funny how the human skeleton system largely goes unnoticed until you are sleeping on a concrete floor for a week. Rough Voice forgot to call his name or did he?

As the Five men filed out of the dungeon, Rough Voice pushed them along. Ya'akov, Avraham's son tumbled to the floor. He slowly got up trying to balance his starving skeleton beneath the weight of his head that now was too large for his body.

As Rough Voice's eyes adjusted to the darkness, he noticed a man still stooped on the floor inside. Rough Voice rushed over to him.

"Get up," said Rough Voice pulling Nimrod to his feet. Nimrod fell back as his knees gave way. Rough Voice barked to the entrance and two more guards rushed inside and propped him up.

"What is your name?" said Rough Voice. Under the weight of hunger, he could barely talk.

"I am Nim- Nimr- Nimrod Le- Levein, number 6...1...2- I forgot the rest," said Nimrod with his head dropping to his chest.

"I don't see you on the executioner's list for today," said Rough Voice. Rough Voice pushed his hand under Nimrod's chin trying to lift up Nimrod's head. It did no good. Nimrod after a long pause managed to look up at Rough Voice. His eyes had sunken deep into its sockets.

“I am here I th- think one w- one week,” said Nimrod with a hungry look in his face.

“One week you say,” said Rough Voice.

“Well you’re on the list now. Congratulations.” Rough Voice wrote Nimrod’s name at the bottom of the list.

“Drag him,” said Rough Voice to the guards. The guards looked at each other in slight bewilderment, shook their conscience to the floor and dragged Nimrod out of the dungeon.

A half a century passed before the emaciated men arrived in the courtyard with their entourage. The courtyard was long and the least bit inviting. At the far side, a red brick wall rose high to the open sky. The wall had splashes of crimson stains mixed with shrapnel dugouts and chipped holes.

If you winced your eyes slightly open and stared at the wall, the stains spelled the word “LIFE.” The Executioner nicknamed it the Wall of Life. I suppose to the afterlife he was referring.

Crimson stained spent shells littered the ground beneath the wall.

It was Hilleil’s job to sweep all the spent shells from the wall and discard them in the back of the prison. Hilleil, a disabled orphan, was the groundskeeper. They gave him meals and a room in the barracks in exchange for his services. A few prison guards treated him like a mascot, often smacking him in the head when he passed them by. Hilleil knew that food and shelter were hard to come by in 1945 so he put up with it.

It was obvious that Hilleil had forgotten to sweep after the morning execution because spent littered the ground beneath the wall.

It was now Five in the afternoon.

Hilleil figured he would wait until the afternoon executions before sweeping everything in one fell swoop. He was disabled but not an idiot.

Ten minutes to go.

The Walking Men huddled in one corner under the watchful eye of their entourage. The men had on skimpy tattered white t-shirts that barely hung from their slender skeletons and white boxer shorts that were no longer white nor short.

“Take your positions,” said the Executioner who stood against the wall opposite the Wall o’ Life.

The Executioner was dressed in a rich deep blue almost royal navy blue overalls.

The Firing Squad ten men strong were also dressed in blue but the inferior blue that almost faded to white. Their well-starched blue overalls stood upright on their defined physiques as they took their positions lining up along the midpoint distance to the Wall o’ Life.

The Executioner said, “Ready, Aim.” The Firing Squad lifted their rifles and held position.

The Executioner said, “Excellent. Stand Down.”

In perfect sync, The Firing Squad on command replaced their rifles to their sides. The Executioner glanced at the list that Rough Voice handed to him.

Two minutes to go.

“Levi Frankel,” barked the Executioner. One of the guards that accompanied the walking men picked up a dingy crusted red stained black hood from the pile of hoods that lay in the corner next to where the walking men huddled. He dragged it over Levi’s head and tied Levi’s hands behind him.

It was also Hilleil’s job to scurry and grab the black hoods off of the fallen dead and return them to the pile for recycled use. It was sort of like the ball boy in a champion tennis match that would scurry and grab the fault balls during the heated exchange.

The two guards, part of the entourage, pushed Levi Frankel until he stood alone against the Wall o’ Life facing the Firing Squad with that awful crusty hood over his face.

Tears streamed down Levi Frankel’s face but no one could see them. The black hood separated him from the world, from seeing the world. But more tragic, the world couldn’t see him, did not want to see him, did not care and did not believe in justice.

Levi Frankel was an innocent man definitely innocent but only The I AM that I AM knew. Only The Eternal One knew. Only YHVH the God of Mercy knew. Only Elohei Avraham elohei Yitschak velohei Ya’akov knew.

The Executioner began.

“Levi Frankel, you are here charged with the murder of Benjamin Yoseif. That on April 3, last year, you stabbed to death Benjamin Yoseif in Warsaw at 1 o’clock in the morning. You were taken before the Judaic Council of Elders and tried for the murder,” shouted the Executioner so that Levi could hear all the way across the courtyard.

The tears continued to stream but only soaked the crimson stained hood. The tears were strong and heavy but silent. Yet silent streams of innocence were not good

enough to stop the execution; was not good enough to rescue Levi Frankel now trapped behind the hood of branded guilt and shame.

The Executioner bellowed on.

“Now having been convicted, you are formally put on notice that you are to be executed at the hands of the Judaic Firing Squad. You have violated our sacred laws The Laws of Moshe ben Amram ha-Levi (Moses) to which we must adhere; an eye indeed for an eye. May The I AM THAT I AM, ELOHEI MISHPAT redeem the soul of Benjamin Yoseif which you mercilessly slaughtered.”

Levi went into a trance remembering that tragic morning. He was walking past the abandoned market and saw a robber beating up Benjamin Yoseif. When Levi ran over to the scene, the robber ran away dropping a knife next to the bloodied Benjamin.

Benjamin was bleeding what seemed like from everywhere so Levi threw his hands into the blood soaked areas trying to clear the skin to find the wounds.

Levi picked up the knife to cut Benjamin's pants leg to get cloth to tie the wounds and in the midst of tying straddlers walked by crying bloody murder.

The Hebrew community descended on Levi and he was taken to the secret Jewish Buchenwald Prison where he was held and tried and would now face execution. The trial was short and the witnesses that came told of how Benjamin's father Aaron Yoseif was planning on taking Levi to court over a bad business deal. Levi failed to turn over five acres of Frankel Family Land that Aaron had paid Levi for. The prosecution portrayed it as a reprisal killing. The Council agreed and found Levi guilty of murder sentencing him to death.

The Executioner lifted up his hands and said, “Ready, Aim, Fire.”

As the Executioner's hand went down, the Judaic Firing Squad blasted their rifles at Levi Frankel. The bullets riddled his scrawney frame pinning him against the Wall for a few seconds before splattering him to the floor. His black hood flew off on impact.

Levi's body fluttered before coming to a sudden halt. No last words. No last meals. There were no more streaming tears, just hard cold death.

As the gunpowder flooded the air, The Executioner lifted his face to the sky, closed his eyes and slowly drew in a deep breath. He held it then slowly exhaled. He had an orgasm from the fresh smell of gunpowder.

The Death Angel had received another one.

Rumours swirled for decades that the Jews had secret prisons in Germany set up to dispense with justice as they saw it under the watchful eyes of the Judaic Council of Elders. The Executioner played his role.

The Executioner had six more executions to complete before the start of Shabbat that evening.

"Heinrick Schlomo," said the Executioner. Before the guard could tie Heinricks hands and cover Heinricks face with a black hood, a hale of bullets hit the top of the Wall o' Life from the outside. The Executioner stared at the Judaic Firing Squad. He had given no commands to shoot so who had violated his orders?

The Judaic Firing Squad had not fired their guns. They too stared at each other in silence.

It was seconds before the main entrance door to the courtyard gave way to powerful stomps of Nazi boots. German boots. A sea of Nazi soldiers, Adolph Hitler's

soldiers, dressed in immaculately starched deep red uniforms with the trademark black and white Swastika armbands bursted into the open courtyard.

To the Jews, the color Red stood for the millions and millions of gallons of blood shed in hate, the color Black represented the color of the Nazi soul and the darkness in their hearts and the color White represented the innocence and purity of a people tortured and almost destroyed by the reincarnation of evil.

The Executioner froze and did not have time to reach for his weapon. No one did. The sudden onslaught of German Soldiers was indeed a surprise. Not a complete surprise because word had come that week that the German forces were marching on Jena, the town nearest to the secret Buchenwald prison.

Yet no one expected them this fast. The Judaic Council of Elders had given The Executioner strict commands to complete the remaining executions swiftly so that they could shut down the secret prison.

Yet, the fast paced executions were no match for German timing and precision.

Hilleil stood wide-eyed at the sea of Red clad Nazi soldiers.

The Nazi Soldiers without question slaughtered The Judaic Firing Squad on the spot even though they had dropped their weapons.

The Walking Men stood even more silent than the prison guards.

The two prison guards, Rough Voice, and the Executioner dropped their weapons. They could only imagine the fate of their colleagues who were guarding the prison entrance.



The leader of this Nazi Unit that stormed inside the Courtyard was SS General Weidon Kinderstaag. The man was part human and part devil. He had to be. Kinderstaag single-handedly supervised the slaughter of Five Hundred Thousand Jews, Five Thousand Africans and One Thousand disabled persons. The Devil had Kinderstaag in a tight grip.

Kinderstaag's eyes were deep Black showing no sign of life just reflections of death. They reflected the stench of death. They reflected the taste of death.

Hitler branded it the Final Solution and sold it to the German masses like salt.

Kinderstaag's soul was hollow and empty, like throwing a coin down a well and never hearing it hit the bottom. His soul was evil pure unfiltered evil. He did not love. He did not think. He just acted.

"Halt," said Kinderstaag with his two hands in the air. He did that for dramatic effect only since all the armed prison guards who were in the courtyard had been disarmed and subdued already.

Kinderstaag glanced at the setting sun on this Friday evening. He knew what time it was. Shabbat, the weekly Jewish Holy Day was about to begin.

"Round them up in the centre of the courtyard," said Kinderstaag with his black eyes glistening like glossy black pearls.

Within minutes, The Walking Men, The prison guards, Hilliel, The Executioner and Rough Voice (the Jews) were standing in the middle of the courtyard surrounded by Nazi Soldiers.

“Get me a chair,” said Kinderstaag. One of the Nazi soldiers stomped out of the courtyard and returned in moments with a chair from the outer prison area. The soldier set it down in the middle of the courtyard in front of the Jews.

“Get me a long table,” said Kinderstaag. Three soldiers marched outside the same outer prison area to get the table.

You could cut the tension it was as thick as a pound cake. The soldiers returned with the table and set it down in front of Kinderstaag. He took a match out of his pocket and lit a cigarette. He sat down on the chair and propped his feet on the table.

The smoke swirled about his head giving him an even more devilish appearance.

He flashed a wide grin revealing his yellowish and brown teeth with a tinge of purple. Hilleil who stood next to Rough Voice fidgeted in place.

Kinderstaag got up from the chair and grabbed Hilleil with one hand pushing him against the table. Hilleil started to squirm but could not cry. Kinderstaag walked over to Hilleil and pulled down Hilleil’s pants.

Before Hilleil could move, Kinderstaag pulled a pistol from his waist holster and shoved the barrel to Hilleil’s temple. With the free hand, Kinderstaag loosened his own belt and pulled down his own pants.

Heinrick Schlomo could take it no more. He lunged after Kinderstaag. He and Kinderstaag ended up as a pile of twisted fighting arms and legs on the dirt and concrete floor. No one had time to react. The Nazi soldiers could not get a clear shot. Hilleil saw his opportunity, pulled up his pants and ran back to the fold of the huddled Jews.

Kinderstaag finally broke free from Heinrick's grip and rased his pistol above Heinrick's head. Heinrick slowly kneeled on the floor bracing for the inevitable. Kinderstaag turned as Red as his now wrinkeled uniform. Heinrick bowed his head, tore his frail white T-shirt apart at the chest with his bare hands exposing his chest to Kinderstaag's pistol.

## What happens next?

You have been reading sample pages of **The Walking Men**. The full version is twice as long. Will Heinrick Schlomo survive? Will the other Walking Men escape death? How will the Shabbat end? Some will not survive. Who will it or they be? Hilleil will run into trouble again. Will the Allied Forces show up at Buchenwald?

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## **About the author**

Conrad Milton Powell is an Attorney-at-Law.

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Photograph obtained via pingnews.

The Author wishes to thank The Pingnews photo service for their indelible contribution to serious preservation so that we never forget The Holocaust.