

‘Remi, the most well-known war-time baby in the Netherlands, was everyone’s favourite at the Jewish nursery. That sealed his fate.’ *NRC Handelsblad*

‘Jewish baby Remi became a foundling in 1942. His older brother, left unaware, kept looking for him until 2002. This book describes the heart-rending adventures of the two Jewish brothers. Very moving.’ *Het Parool*

‘A well-written, tightly composed book, based on extensive archive and literature research. Despite the sad subject this is a gem.’ *Nederlands Dagblad*

‘A book about a little boy that will leave no-one unmoved.’ *Trouw*

‘A highly readable salute to this Jewish family. Beautifully written! Recommended!’ *Reformatrische Omroep*

‘Due to the imaginative writing style accompanied by the photographs and letters, you get a good sense of the situation. It feels as if you’re in that time period. An intense, but moving story!’^{*****} *Thrillzone.nl*

‘An impressive book that is also a good read. The reader is dragged into the story and you sympathise greatly with the boy. A must-have for your bookshelves!’^{*****} *TracesofWar.nl*

‘Want to read something worthwhile, then look no further than REMI by @kolf schooten. My oh my, straight to the heart!’ *Bookseller Inge Happé on Twitter*

‘An impressive book about the lives of very ordinary people in one of the darkest periods in recent history.’**** *Recensie.nl*

‘Impressive reconstruction. *Remi* is a story that helps you remember and sympathise! I read things in *Remi* that I hadn’t thought possible. The story is written from Eddy’s point of view and you can feel his pain and loneliness. As a reader you are moved by everything that happens to him.’**** *Hebban.nl*

‘A tightly composed reconstruction, filled with photographs, of a highly dramatic war-time history. An impressive book.’**** *EO-Visie*

‘Together with the conversations with survivors, this war-time history is also a passionate post-war book.’ *Leeskost.nl*

‘The well-written story is a moving account on multiple levels, not only of a local part of the Shoah, but also of the attempts at processing it all after the war.’ *Dutch Library Services*

‘Van Kolfshoeten excels at polite curiosity and compassion without any tears. This is how he grants the reader every opportunity to be moved.’ *Novelist Adriaan van Dis*

‘Frank van Kolfshoeten has brought to life a heart-rending story about a little foundling and his big brother in times of war; highly compelling.’ *Jan Terlouw, author of Winter in War-time and former Deputy Prime Minister of the Netherlands*

Frank van Kolschooten ●

Remi

In search of the most famous
Dutch foundling of WW II

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I. A Radiant Sunday

Jacques Goudekiet fell for his grandson the moment he saw him in his daughter Flory's arms. His son-in-law Maurits sits proudly beside the bed. Flory gave birth on 10 August 1930 in the Anna Pavilion, the maternity ward of the Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis in East Amsterdam. They named him Edward Bram, given name Eddy. Jacques' wife Kitty is also overjoyed with the baby. Flory's sisters Peggy and Lenie are equally thrilled with their little nephew.

Jacques Goudekiet enjoys his familial bliss. The lawyer is well off, able to buy all that he desires, but a first grandson takes it all. It doesn't matter in the slightest that there is a drizzle outside, to him this is a radiant Sunday anyway.

Jacques has achieved a great deal by his forty-eighth birthday. His grandfather Isaac Salomon (1820) was an impoverished porter, who lived in a dilapidated little house in the Joden Houttuinen with his wife Saartje (née Diamant, 1820). Isaac had ten children to feed, who were sent out into the streets at an early age to work as pedlars to



Eddy Gezang in 1931

help fight the family's hunger. Only when Isaac became a diamond cutter, was there more bread on the table. Late 1870, his income grew significantly after Amsterdam had become the diamond centre of the world through the influx of diamonds from South-African mines—the demand for diamond workers was suddenly huge.

Isaac's son Simon (1854) was educated as a diamond cutter and earned enough in the heyday of the diamond trade to move to a better part of the Jodenhoek with his wife Rebecca (née Warradijn, 1856), at Oude Waal 28. Simon and Rebecca had three children: Isaac (1882), Isidore (1883) and Jeannette (1893). Isaac junior was a good learner, obtained his MO certificate in bookkeeping [MO was the Dutch teacher training of its day] and established himself as a teacher of bookkeeping and accountancy. In 1906, he obtained a Master's degree in law from the University of Amsterdam and his doctorate later that same year—the first doctor of the family. Also that year, he married Kitty Spreekmeester (1881), daughter of a diamond cutter, and besides being an accountant, he then established himself as a lawyer too. He changed his name from Isaac to the more stately name of Jacques. They moved beyond the Jodenhoek and via Prinsengracht 822 wound up at Reguliersgracht 38, where Jacques also based his firm. Business was such that in 1913 he could easily afford to retain his offices at Reguliersgracht, but move the family home to a double ground-floor house at Den Texstraat 24. This street was in the Weteringschans neighbourhood, where many Jews of the well-heeled middle classes lived, Jewish professors and Jewish social climbers like Jacques. Most of their Jewish neighbours voted liberal, not socialist. While most of them weren't greatly involved with the orthodox Jewish community, they did predominantly socialise with other Jews. Marriages to non-Jewish partners seldom occurred. Every Friday afternoon, the pickler visited the area, to sell gherkins and olives for the Friday evening meal, which they also observed.

Jacques had both cultural and historical interests. He put together a library with many antiquarian and first editions and also many books on music; ultimately, his collection amounted to three thousand books. Jacques was also an art enthusiast. He bought paintings by old Dutch and Flemish masters, with which he filled all the rooms. There was a piano in the house that was mostly played by his wife Kitty and the pupils to whom she gave piano lessons.

Jacques and Kitty had three daughters in the Den Texstraat, in quick succession: in 1907 Rebecca Bloeme (given name Peggy); Florence, after a trip to Florence in 1908 (given name Flory); and in 1910 Helena Elisabeth (given name Lenie). In 1922, the Goudekets family moved to a larger double ground-floor house at Nicolaas Witsenkade 5, right behind the Den Texstraat. A few houses further up, by the quayside, stood the monumental villa of Gerard Heineken, founder of the Heineken brewery opposite. Jacques' younger brother Isidore also moved to the Den Texstraat with his family during this period. Isidore was very active in the Jewish athletic club Spartacus. He used to practise gymnastics himself and was so talented that he was chosen to represent



Jacques and Kitty Goudekets

the Netherlands at the 1908 Olympic Games in London, in the heptathlon event. These days, he was a board member of Spartacus. Jacques Goudekot handled the club's fiscal and legal business and frequently had the board round at his offices on Reguliersgracht. After such visits, they often went for a drink in the bar of the nearby Paleis voor Volksvlijt [Cultural Palace for Industry Workers], where Spartacus also trained until the monumental building burnt down in 1929, to the consternation of Amsterdam as a whole.

Isidore's children Lies (1908) and Simon (1910) were also dedicated gymnasts with Spartacus and now they were living

in the Den Texstraat they would frequently pop in to see their nieces Peggy, Flory and Lenie, who were the same age. In 1925, Lies asked Flory to come along on a Spartacus members' outing to Abcoude and Flory liked the atmosphere so much that she went along a few more times and became a member that very year, just like her sister Lenie. Inseparable brothers Maurits (1904) and Eli Gezang (1905) were also members of Spartacus and quite the accomplished gymnasts, although not of Olympic standard. Both brothers still lived with their parents at Willem



Maurits & Eli after gymnastics



Flory & Maurits in gym clothes

Bilderdijklaan 15 in Bussum; they took the train to their athletic club.

Their father Abraham (1877) earned good money with his metal goods factory Gezang & Co., established in Amsterdam's Warmoesstraat, enabling him and his wife Judith (née Matteman, 1878) and their five children (Leo [1901], Floor [1902], Maurits, Eli [1905] and Nanny [1908]) to leave the Jodenhoek where they had all grown up.

Maurits was a cheerful young man with a muscular body. At 1.62m he was somewhat short, but Flory was a head shorter and looked up to him. But height didn't matter when he was displaying his agility on the horizontal bar. Maurits and Flory soon fell in love and on 5 February 1927 they got engaged, although their marriage didn't take place until 28 August 1929. They married at the Portuguese Synagogue and went to live in East Amsterdam, first at the Christiaan de Wetstraat 58 and after that at Archimedesplantsoen 41.

After the ULO [Dutch junior high school level of that era], Maurits had changed jobs a few times, from desk clerk to telephone operator and is the general manager of an ironmonger's when his first son is born in 1930.

When Eddy reaches preschool age, the house proves too small and so, in 1933, they move to the Haarlemmermeerstraat 108. Flory would also like to do something besides looking after Eddy and takes a course in anatomy, to support the sculpture lessons she receives from well-known sculptor Theo van Reijn. She either arranges to have one of the neighbourhood girls babysit Eddy or takes him to the downstairs neighbour, Mrs Goldman, a German Jewish woman who fled to the Netherlands with her husband after the persecution of Jews began in Germany under Adolf Hitler. Eddy likes helping Mrs Goldman with all and sundry, while she talks to him in a language he cannot understand. Maurits and Flory become good friends



Marriage picture of Maurits and Flory, 28 August 1929

with the Goldmans. They also become acquainted with a family from Berlin, who are travelling to South Africa to escape the Nazis. The conversations they have on the worrying situation of Germany's Jews pass over Eddy's head.

Grandpa and grandma Goudekot often visit Maurits and Flory to see Eddy. Grandpa Jacques frequently drops by on his own when he happens to be in the neighbourhood for his work. They spoil their first grandchild considerably.

During the summer of 1936, Jacques regretfully sees his daughter, son-in-law and grandson move to the Bloemveldlaan 51 in Overveen (Haarlem), where Eddy will attend primary school for the first time. Yet even there he continues to visit unannounced after visiting clients in the area. On weekends, Jacques also finds himself having to recover from work remarkably often at a hotel near the dunes of Bloemendaal, close to Bloemveldlaan. His wife is there too and the couple then sometimes invites Eddy to join them for dinner at the hotel and stay overnight in their large hotel bed. To Eddy, grandpa and grandma's visits are always one big party.

On Friday afternoons once every fortnight, Flory takes Eddy to Amsterdam for the weekend. They take the train from Overveen to Amsterdam and then the tram to Annie Smit-Verkruisen, Flory's best friend, who lives at the Jacob Marisstraat 5 close to the Vondelpark. Annie is always nice to Eddy and teaches him to draw. Her father, who is a tailor, lives with them and is always working when they arrive. He often sits cross-legged on a large table, with a strap around his wrist that has a round velvet ball on top that is crammed with pins. Eddy cannot keep his eyes off him and thinks it is wonderful when he is allowed to help keep a length of fabric stretched out.

Eddy doesn't really know what to make of uncle Wim. The French teacher has a flat face with sunken eyes behind a pair of small metal glasses. Wim Smit's joking comments make him feel uncomfortable.



Eddy at the kindergarten in the Haarlemmermeerstraat [in picture: Memory of my schoolyear 1935]



The Goudekets visiting the Eisendrath family, mid 1920s

After seeing the Smits, they often go to aunt Lies Montanjees-Goudekets, his mother's niece, in the Deurloostraat. Eddy is told he has to be well-behaved in her presence. She has a little daughter called Ingrid, a cheerful girl with large brown eyes, four years Eddy's junior, with whom he can play for a bit.

After these visits, they take the tram to grandpa and grandma on Nicolaas Witsenkade. Eddy knows the house plan by heart. The living room door is on the left-hand side of a long hallway; further up, also on the left, there's the door to the library, grandpa's sanctuary; and the kitchen is at the end of the hallway. Behind the library is the loggia, partly extended across the garden. There the family takes afternoon tea. To the right of the hallway is a WC and the staircase to the upper floor with the bedrooms and a guestroom.

Sunday mornings are always the highlight of Eddy's stay-overs. He gets up well before seven and goes downstairs to