

Arnhem, 27th July, 2025

The mistakes didn't show up right away. Their endemic nature only became apparent when it was far too late. That's the thing though, about mistakes, they're always <sup>pre</sup>assumed to be incidents. When they're not = then what? A mis-take; implies recovery implies that one can try again. That it can be fixed, the mis-take.

Before we divulge more salient facts and gory details of the enfolding cataclysm, consider the exponential (or logarithmic, I'm a writer, not a mathematician) effects when mistakes start interacting. Clusterfuck does not begin to describe it.

A clusterfuck is a misconception. It's a military term, and they're used to mopping things up. This implies that the mopping up is of something apparent; in your face or under your boot so to speak.

This clusterfuck was of the sneaky kind. It crept up on you with a long incubation time, like that of a virus. Very unfair! - as if viruses have any morality.

Alright, so what about the clusterfuck, you ask? It was the machines.

The machines.

The machines.

Dora took the train that fatal, cataclysmic, cold winter morning because she had a most prosaic hangover. Her breakfast consisted of two paracetamol tablets and a glugged-down quarter-liter of milk that was more or less off, depending on how much notice you'd take of the clamouring of your tastebuds. Why milk, you ask? Well, she was Dutch, and it was her patriotic duty to save the world from the "milk lake" that would inundate the world, and destroy the economy, or whatever, at least, that was the drill in the eighties. She also just liked the taste. And she placebo'd her stomach into thinking that the <sup>clockwise</sup> right-oscillations of the stuff that came out of a semi-tortured or at least gaslighted cow, would counteract the highstrung ~~anti~~ counterclockwise machinations of her upset gastric system.

Normally she would have taken a ride with her colleague who had an EV that was actually charged every morning. She couldn't remember to charge her toothbrush; and more often than not, her fridge was out of juice too. Hence the penchant for items that were on the winding road to fermentation - that, or starve.

"Thank God for PCM," she thought, shivering on the platform 3, more aptly could have been named "Blasted Windtunnel" with the icy easterly Siberian wind frosting her eyebrows. Huddling like Emperor penguins, she tried edging/aligning with the placement of the 1<sup>st</sup> class carriage, aiming to scoot in and leg it through to the 2<sup>nd</sup> class compartment ahead of the other penguins, the lemmings, scuttling more like the roach from Kafka than a noble penguin/denizen of the Antarctic. She elbowed her not so ladylike way into the musty and ~~darkly~~ dimly lit corridor: delving right down into its stuffy maw.

The puddles on the tired lino in the hallway of the SubT carried the oily reflection of the <sup>sallow</sup> pallid faces of the commuters; none of whom had important or mysterious workx to look forward to. A slog, something to avoid getting a Neg Point for, some warm gruel for midday, grog with it if you were in the higher echelons or someone's relative, or in their Fief, but that was about the max of it.

Dora clenched her visapass in her pocket, picking at the fraying edges. It just had to last until X-Day, it just had to.

It would cost her 49 neuro at least: <sup>to replace</sup> a weeks wages. She was already paying her debt of rent with the loan from Erwin, and the windfall from the sale of her aunt's illegal books on 120<sup>th</sup> century German Art and Aegyptian archeology had gone to pay the interest on her <sup>outstanding</sup> juice bill. Lucky her aunt Elsie had a little cornucopia of PCM, diclophenac and some crumbly benzos as her inheritance, the old hoarder, so that went towards <sup>buying her odious chef +</sup> getting extra shifts in the workplace, the dept. of Records & Audits.

The subT slowed as it clawed its way out of the tunnel under the canal, the aging wiring causing the lighting to flicker. Dora sighed, <sup>reclined</sup> ~~rest~~ back into her seat, and muttered, "Geex, put an end to it all, would ya?"

Just as the pallid daylight ~~feebly~~ fingered the grimy safetyglass, the decades of machinery mistakes, the centennial clusterfuck, culminated into a colossal implosion, - the lights flared then collapsed, the train shot forward in a final paroxysm, then flew off its rusty undercarriage and plunged off the embankment into the watery ditch just after the Vinkebrug in the no-mans land of the Houtrakkerweg.

When she came to, it was to screaming agony in her head, blurred vision and a 100 dB high-pitched whine in her ears. Her limbs were tangled in those of other passengers. she could hear moaning, far away, some cries, as if she was in a fish bowl. She knew then she had to get out, get out, get the heck out of that cadaver of a train. Pulling herself up out of the soft and warm bodies, full of shards of glass, the leaking battery fuel and fizzling wiring madly dangerous, <sup>dripping</sup> <sup>dangling</sup> <sup>she</sup> pushed in someones stomach, who groaned and then nothing. Extricating her legs, ~~sore~~ ~~sore~~ <sup>sore</sup> and scraped and her canvas pants torn, but her boots thankfully still on, though covered in red grimy entrails, she retched but clawed her way upwards to the rent in the chassis, to the ashen wintry light.