

Koop and Bua Go Traveling

by Arnold Dyck

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About Bush Farmers in General and our Friends in Particular

“A-f-f-u-uh...” Bua sighed hard.

He was all out of breath. And he was sweating, so sour it had gone for him.

Slowly he pulled his schneppelduak out of his pocket and wiped his face.

At least two hours he had been sitting by his neighbor and friend Isaak Koop in the grootestow on the sleep bench and urged him on.

In love he had urged him and in anger, all the way from soft to loud.

Once he had even crashed his fist down on the table. But scared himself doing that and looked back jumpy at the corner-room door; because—what she was, the Koopsche, she couldn't stand such table pounding. And Oomtje Bua was scared of her. He always said she was an angry wife.

And when Koop finally said yes, Bua, like I said, was all out of breath.

What riled him most was that Koop, who had started with this trip himself, now said he'd just been joking. Joking!—By gosh, why would Koop be joking, he never joked other times!

But finally they saw eye to eye: they agreed to make that trip to Saskatchewan. Four of them: they two, and Teews and Wiens, their neighbors, they would take along too.

Maybe I shouldn't be making such a fuss over this trip. My goodness, Saskatchewan isn't on the moon. And people have gone there before. And come back too. Who knows, maybe people travel there every day and come back again. But that's just it: people like Koop and Bua don't travel there every day.

Koop and Bua—in case you haven't met them before—are farmers somewhere in south-eastern Manitoba not far from the Red River, in the bush. Or struck—brush—as some call it. A pair of ordinary struckfarmers, of whom there are many there.

But they are not called struckfarmers because they sow struck instead of grain. No, they don't do that. They don't need to do that because struck and stones grow there all by themselves. Just let 'em grow and you've got 'em

When these folks do sow something, wherever they can among brush and stones, then it's wheat and barley, oats and rye. They also plant potatoes and raise cucumbers and other vegetables.

The women and small kids dig seneca roots, hunt for wild strawberries, blueberries, cherries and whatever else grows among the struck and stones that can be eaten or even sold.

In winter the men cut firewood to sell, take care of the stock and catch bush rabbits by the ton.

Na, and in season they shoot deer, prairie chickens, grouse and wild ducks. Once in a while this or that one is supposed to have been shooting out of season too. I only know that from hearsay, though, and it probably isn't true anyway. Probably not, I'd say.

Wolves and bears they shoot the year round, or hack at them with a hatchet when there's nothing handy to shoot them with. And of course that isn't against the law because these animals tear their sheep to pieces in the fences and drag their pigs out of the pens.

All this shows that these folks live quite close to nature. About the way old Rousseau wanted it. They don't do it because of the old man, though, they do it for their own sake because they've always done it that way and aren't used to doing it any other way.

As for their neighbors farther north, the wheatfarmers, the ones with the big tractors and combines, with their two-storey homes and eight-cylinder cars, they don't think much of struckfarming. Some of them don't care much for struckfarmers either. But they're wrong in that. You shouldn't always judge people by their money bags. It's not uncommon for a fatbellied money-bag guy to fall short of a hollowbellied guy with his flabby snap purse in at least one thing. And that is in natural, simple humanity.

That must have been exactly what old man Rousseau meant to be the important thing. And that's what I mean too. Even if what I mean doesn't count for much.

Yes, that's the way those folks in the bush are: fair to middling in doing and not-doing, straight and true in their thinking and speaking. They speak the way they drive in the bush: tight around the corners and cross-country—na prostets, as we say opp plautdietsch, or by a schorkott, as we also say opp plautdietsch.

It's because of their direct ways that these folks in the bush appeal to me. So when I heard that some of my friends were going on a big trip, I said to myself: you've got to go with them, you'll have a good time with them.

And if any of you want to go along come on, we'll squeeze together in Oomtje Koop's car. The two on the sleep bench have already decided to make the trip in that.

The morning they were to start out finally came.

Jasch Bua was the first to drive into Koop's yard. There stood the travel car all ready. And she looked ship-shape. The boys had given her a good wash. And they'd done even more: they'd smeared the rust spots over with black paint, and wherever something had been tied down with binder twine they'd painted the twine black too.

"Yep, I tell you, there's nothing wrong with the old gal, she's fit to be seen," said Bua to himself after he'd eyeballed the vehicle from all sides.

He was just checking the springs to see if they were stiff enough to carry his weight, when Teews suddenly arrived. And he had Wiens, the Russlenda, with him on the buggy.

"Hallo—good morning!" Bua shouted at them. "I tell you, we're ready to get going just about any minute now."

And so they were, with Koop himself now coming outside and joining the three others, who stood there admiring the car.

Now that I've got our travelers all together in one pile, I should take the time to introduce them to you one by one. After all, you want to know who you're dealing with. And the four oomtjes can all be seen clearly right now, even though it's still a bit early and the sun hasn't come up from behind the bush yet.

The easiest to see is Bua himself. Not only because he's the fidgety sort—scampering about and poking his hands in the air the way he always does. But on top of that there's just more of him to see. I mean on the outside. You might say, of the four he has the greatest air displacement.

To tell you the truth, he's barely medium tall, but everything about him is built pretty much on the wide side. You have to wonder how in his bare fifty years he could have eaten together such a nice pile of lard. It sits mostly where an ordinary person has his "waistline"—that's how refined people call it if I'm not mistaken—the thinnest part between shoulders and seat.

That means, Bua's legs, as far as you can judge from his twisted pant legs, are hard put to hold this "waistline" above ground and push it around, even though they are nice and round and solid, if a bit bowed. A bit considerably bowed. But they didn't get crooked because too much weight was loaded on them. No, it wasn't that. Apparently he bent them himself—forcibly—when he was still lying in the cradle. At least that's what the ladies have told me, the old mummtjes who know all about such things. Even then he already had a fair little belly—some of the mummtjes had even wondered if that might be another kind of "English" disease, like rickets. Anyway, he kept bending his little legs over his little belly trying to cram his feet into his mouth. And so his little legs finally grew crooked and stayed crooked too.

Whether it all happened in exactly this way—I don't know, you'll have to ask the mummtjes yourself.

Bua's head and face are like the rest of him, round and easy to see of course. He is ruddy of skin, has blond hair, and if he'd worn a beard, who knows, it might have been not quite fire-red but at least pretty reddish.

For the rest, Jasch Bua is a friendly man and quite likeable. What you have to get used to is that he's always in the right and that he can talk just about anyone to death.

As for Isaak Koop, the angry Koopsche's man, he's the exact opposite to Bua in every way. Well most ways at least. In age and stature they're pretty much the same. But that's where the resemblance ends. In appearance and nature they differ like day from night.

Whatever is pushed out in Bua, in Koop is pushed in. Where Bua is assertive, Koop is unassertive. And so on. You have to get down to their legs to find a resemblance again. Koop's legs are crooked too. But that's where the comparison breaks down again. Bua's legs curve outward, Koop's inward. And that's why their overalls also stop resembling each other over the years. Bua's gets patches more on the outside, Koop's more on the inside.

When they speak the two are very different too. When Bua speaks, he tears off a good strip, so that it was worthwhile starting. And he speaks so he can be heard easily. Na, as far as that goes, with his arm-flapping he can easily be seen speaking too. When he talks he sounds like a brand-new Russian box-wagon, the kind with a swon—a ringing sound—that is fresh and pleasant. Koop talks, and it's like an ancient Russian powos—farm wagon—creaking, and you've got to be alert to understand anything.

When you come right down to it, Bua has already talked Oomtje Koop to death, and you seldom hear the powos-creaking. He must have laughed him to death too—never in my life have I heard Koop laugh.

That's how they are, these two. I sometimes think that Koop and Bua should be tossed back into the baking trough, kneaded through again and freshened up completely. You should then take the dough—or whatever stuff you ended up with—and not just cut it in half approximately, but make each piece the same by weighing it off exactly. That would give you a pair of really fine oomtjes. But then I've never heard of that being done, maybe it's not even possible, so I suppose the two will have to use themselves up as they are. But it's too bad all the same.

How these two ever found each other and became friends—that belongs to those few things before which the world still stands in darkness.

Then there is also Jaun Teews. He'd be around sixty. A tall man. A bit portly. Slow and deliberate in manner. Slow and deliberate of speech. And he says very little. He's a quiet man who smokes pipe.

Jaun Teews' face and clothes always look a bit dressed up even on weekdays. Today he looks his Sunday best. It even smells like Sunday best around him: he's smoking his Sunday best tobacco today.

And the fourth, that's of course Wiens, Peeta Wiens.



A. Dyck



If Koop was introducing him to you, he'd probably add: but he's a Russlenda—meaning that he was one of those strange Mennonite refugees who came from Russia in the twenties and that there was nothing more to say and you could now ignore Wiens. That's Oomtje Koop for you: he just doesn't like Russlenda.

But even if he is a Russlenda I'm going to say a few words about Wiens.

He must be well into his forties. A bit on the tall side. Tall and slender. A fine-looking man really, and I can't think of anything in his figure I'd want to improve.

There's something rather striking about his face. Not that there's anything wrong with it, even if his nose is a bit long, his lips a bit thin and the whole face on the angular side. That's not what I mean. But there's something restless in his face, a nervous quality, as educated people would call it. His eyes are strange too: at times they seem to see nothing, at other times too much. As though they can see directly through anything. It's a bit creepy and you get the feeling that inside Wiens is not quite the calm, steady guy he seems to be on the outside.

Wiens doesn't talk much either. But that doesn't really reflect his nature. When he first came to this continent he is said to have talked a lot.

He came to America via Siberia and China. For months he apparently wandered through those Siberian forests with nobody around to talk to. Some say that's how he lost the habit of talking. But, like I say, to begin with in the States he talked a lot. And the people there listened to him eagerly. Over and over he had to tell about Russia and about Siberia. And about how it had been in the typhus epidemic and in the famine. His listeners sat around him and enjoyed letting his horrible stories make their flesh creep. Then suddenly he fell silent. People tried to get him to tell more so they could keep on enjoying the feelings of horror. But he remained silent.

When he left the States and came to Canada, here to the bush country, he was already the way he is now: of what happened in Russia he says almost nothing. Except to Oomtje Teews. But he's started joking with Bua, and laughs with him too. Who knows, maybe these bush folks and time itself will in the end get him back to normal.

Having packed their food boxes and whatever else they were taking in the car, our travelers now climbed in themselves. Koop and Bua in front, Teews and Wiens in the back. One of Koop's boys—they had come outside in the meantime—had to crank on, and after the engine had sneezed and banged a couple of times, the car sprang loose. She had the habit of starting with a jolt. Or maybe it was Koop himself who had the habit. At least one of his two boys, watching the car leave, said: "Furratje will never learn to start properly." The other just nodded. And as they trudged towards the barn the second one shook his head and said: "I just hope things go well with the oolash on their world tour." The "oolash" themselves had no such concern.

And why should they! Who could possibly think of misfortune on such a beautiful morning.

And the morning was beautiful. By all appearances the weatherman had pulled an exceptionally bright morning out of his weather chest and draped it over the earth just for our friends.

But it only looked that way. This morning was no different from other days. The only difference was that other days our friends looked at the sun and all she shone on with different eyes.

It was the same here as it always is in life: the way you see things is the way they are. Yep, and when do you see the world as friendlier than on the morning you are starting out on a grand sight-seeing trip!

And that's how it was for our travelers: they thought they hadn't seen such a fine morning in a long time.

Well, I really can't say as much for Koop. Even today he had put on his sour-pickle face. Maybe he didn't have any other, then again maybe he thought it was good enough for Saskatchewan, where the dust never stopped blowing. Anyway, he sat there behind the steering wheel with his everyday face and didn't look right or left. Mind you, they were still driving through the struck and over stones, and you have to keep the reins tight on such an old Ford or it starts bucking.

So it may have been quite normal travel worries that made Koop's face look so black, and I repeat I don't want to say too much against Koop.

When it came to Bua, though, there was no doubt that he was the right man to travel. He showed that from top to bottom. Today the whole world was for him one big bagpipe. And he wanted to keep it that way. Which meant dragging out his food box with a lot of groaning and panting because his belly kept getting in the way.

But you shouldn't right away think that Bua cared only for food, and that he had no eye for the other beautiful things in life. No, you shouldn't. Who knows, he may really have been hungry. He had been too excited and concerned over whether the trip would really come off, whether Koop would back out in the end or something else might cross them up. So how could he help being hungry now that they were finally on the move!

I mean to say that he wanted to eat because he was truly hungry, even though I have to admit there are people who like to grab a bite when they are enjoying themselves. So they can enjoy themselves even more.

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At the Red River

The car was winding its way slowly through the bushland.

Suddenly Bua, who had undertaken to get them to the Red River by the shortest route, put down his farmer sausage, stopped chewing and said: "I tell

you, we're getting close to the river, Koop, watch it now! Have you ever driven downhill?"

"No-o-o, only uphill."

Right away Koop was galled. He couldn't stand having anybody tell him how to drive. His wife always did that. And he had to put up with it because he was hitched to her. But he wasn't hitched to Bua, so he didn't have to take it from him. He was mad.

"Don't get all riled up, Isaak; I tell you, I mean it. It goes down steep here and if you don't know how to handle your car things can go schrots."

Koop said nothing. He did as if he heard nothing. And that kind of silence was what Bua couldn't stand.

"Go ahead, drive," he said a bit short, "and if you drown us all, you can look after our families too." With that he turned away and watched a crow being tormented by a couple of kingbirds. He began to whistle. He always did that when he was mad, and also when he wanted to get somebody else mad.

If that got to Koop he didn't let on. He just kept on driving. But when he passed over the last rise and saw the river far below and the steep grade down, he got a funny feeling. He could see now that even if he had only driven uphill till now, like he'd said, here he'd have to go downhill, steep downhill.

Teews didn't like the looks of things either. He knew Koop wasn't an experienced driver. And he felt like saying something. He wanted to say Bua should drive. But he said nothing. He was a quiet man.

Bua was still sulky and whistling at the whole scene. But without the crow now, which had finally managed to get rid of its enemies and made for the ground. He was whistling not so much for Koop's sake now as for his own: he was getting upset and felt that things were about to go haywire.

There was one person in the car who had no cares. That was Wiens. He knew nothing about driving cars and acted the way such people do: as a rule they don't notice the danger until they've broken their necks. And then they don't care much anyway.

And so they kept rolling closer to the river. Suddenly it seemed to Koop that the car was speeding up in spite of him. He shut off the gas. That helped for a bit. But not for long, the speed was picking up again. He slammed the car out of gear—now the speed really picked up! He pushed down on the brakes with all his might. And that helped. It helped so much that the car suddenly stopped altogether.

"Climb down once, Jasch, and crank it on," said Koop, without looking at Bua.

But suddenly that one was hearing nothing either. He had gone deaf too.

Not that Bua hadn't seen that Koop was making one domms after another. But—"I tell you"—let him go it alone now.

Even though Bua wasn't exactly whistling now, he still did as if he didn't really care what happened next. He got out his smoked worscht again.

"I tell you, one more time I'll eat before I drown," he said and took a bite.

“Anybody else want some? It’ll make the water taste better later.” And with that he poked his worscht towards the river, where the water was.

Wiens wanted a piece to be broken off for him. Not because of the drowning—he didn’t rightly believe in that—but because of the worscht itself, it looked so very appetizing.

Teews didn’t want to eat. But he got his pipe, which had gone out, going again. Maybe he just wanted to smoke “one more time.” You couldn’t really tell with him.

Meanwhile Koop had climbed down himself and cranked the engine. And so they got going again.

The prom or ferry was on its way to this side and was empty. Bua almost forgot himself and was about to give orders. He wanted to tell Koop to wait up here at least till the prom had arrived and been secured. But he decided to keep quiet. He kept on eating his worscht.

And so prom and Koop headed towards each other. The prom moving slowly, Koop speeding up. And just when it seemed he had reached bottom, along came a few hundred more feet which took his breath away and made his hair stand on end, so steep it was! Then everything got mixed up for him. “Ho-ho!” he yelled and tried to yank the steering wheel back. But it all went like lightning now....

What happened next came so fast that later nobody could describe it exactly.

Bua, of course, babbled all sorts of things. But it was all such weird stuff that nobody could make much sense out of it. He said for example that for a short time he’d been completely dead. Had heard all kinds of music and singing. Had seen this one and that one of his dead friends. Had spoken to them—about what, that would come to him too. And it did—right away, and he told that too. But slowly he got so mixed up and twisted in his story that he himself wondered how he’d find his way out again. And finally he had to admit that—who knows—maybe he hadn’t been completely dead after all.

Anyway, after the lightning struck suddenly everything stood still.

Really it was only the prom stood still. And even that no longer stood against the bank as it was supposed to. It stood a good three, four feet away—in the water, naturally. Well, the prom-man was standing too. He stood in one corner of his vehicle and still had his mouth open. So shocked he was. But then no one had ever boarded his prom at such a speed.

And that was all that was standing up.

The car was hanging with its radiator in the chain back of the prom, and its front wheels were playing in the water because they were still turning.

As for Bua, he was up front riding the engine hood, bareheaded. Isaak Koop was draped over the windshield. And Oomtje Teews lay crosswise over the front seat.

Teews was the first to sit up. He looked around in wonder, slowly climbed back to his place and wanted to light his pipe. But couldn’t find it. He still said nothing. He remained a quiet man.

Bua was the first to find his tongue. "I tell you, Isaak, my cap, what did you do with my cap, I say?"

When Isaak didn't say anything but calmly kept supporting his windshield, Bua was startled: "By gosh, Isaak, I mean, you aren't dead, are you?" He sprang down from his mount and ran over to Koop. He pulled on his legs, yanked at his arms, and twisted his head from side to side to see if everything was still attached to his body. Everything was still connected. And everything was in its place, as well as it had been able to grow together in Koop in the first place. Yep, Koop was the same as he'd always been, except that he looked pretty crumpled. He was a bit pale too.

And then he spoke. "Leave me alone," he squeaked at Bua and sat up.

Bua left him and turned to Teews. "And you, Teews, are you all right?"

Teews nodded but kept on searching. He was dying for a smoke.

"Now look at me, did anything happen to me anywhere?" Bua asked and turned this way and that for Teews.

Teews finally looked up and said: "You've got a hole in one spot...and there's something hanging out."

Bua almost jumped out of his skin and began to feel himself all over. Teews suddenly spoke again, all on his own. "Na, it's not your guts." And he spoke up again, for the third time. "Looks to me, it's your shirt." And that was enough for one time. He didn't say anymore.

By this time Bua had found his torn spot. The hole was only in his pants, but right in the place he used when he sat down. It wasn't all that serious but he couldn't help saying "Hotsdeitja," then stuffed his hernia back in and clapped his hand over it.

"But hargomms, men!" he called out again. "I mean, where's Wiens? Our Wiens!" And he ran to the side of the prom and looked down at the water. There was no Wiens to be seen there. Then he went after the prom-man to ask where the fourth man was, there'd been four of them in the car.

The man had caught his breath by now and had looked around a bit. He pointed his thumb up at the grade above.

And lo and behold there was Peeta Wiens, the Russlenda, coming slowly down the hill. That is, it had to be him, but he didn't look at all like himself. He looked so odd, so schnorrijch. In his right hand he still had the piece of farmer sausage from Bua that he was going to eat before drowning. He had Teews' pipe stuck between his teeth. On his head he wore Bua's new cap. And in his left hand he carried Koop's steering wheel, which that one had managed to rip off right enough.

When Bua saw Wiens like that he began to laugh like crazy. Not because Wiens looked so schnorrijch, no only because of the four of them nobody had drowned and because they were still on their way to Saskatchewan. In all the hullabaloo he had completely forgotten about their trip. Now that he suddenly remembered it, his travel-joy came back full force. And that made him laugh. He bellowed at Wiens.

"I tell you, Wiens ol' pal, where in the world have you been dawdling around? Don't you want to come along to Saskatchewan?"

"Well, yeah, but you guys drive too fast. I'd rather get off and go on foot."

"Get off!" Bua guffawed, "did you say get off? You must've made short heels doing that. I mean, I would've liked to see that!"

"You can't see anything if you don't open your eyes. You covered yours with both hands," said Wiens, and bounded over the open strip onto the prom.

They sorted out their things then so that they all got what belonged to them and looked more like themselves again. Teews' mouth got its pipe back, Koop grabbed his steering wheel and Bua's new cap covered his head again. No, not his head; this time he used it to cover his other end where he had torn it.

And now they turned to their car to see exactly what had happened to the old gal.

They dragged her back onto the prom, sniffing and tapping at her from all sides. The old dame seemed to be all right. The radiator was bent back a little, but Bua said it looked better that way, more streamlined. The hood was a bit dented but Bua ignored that knowing that he himself had done the damage. But when he put his hand on the hub of the right rear wheel he blurted "Hotsdeitja, that's hot." He didn't touch the left-hand hub, just spit on it and knew it was hot too by the way it sished and steamed.

They tried starting up the engine and found it ran nicely, as such a good old Ford engine always does. Even the car, it seemed, had escaped the worst and except for Bua's rear-end break no real harm had been done.

As the prom slowly floated towards the other bank Wiens said: "Yep," he said, "a good beginning, not even twenty miles from home and we've had all this good luck already."

The others agreed, and saw it as a good omen for the remaining 2,000 miles.

Yes, even Koop agreed, though he was still a bit in the dark about the whole business. How he'd been able to maneuver his car down such a steep grade, without a steering wheel and unable to see, through half the river and then onto the prom—how he'd been able to do all that he couldn't rightly understand himself.

When the prom bumped against the far bank and came to a stop it was time to get going again.

Koop sat behind the wheel, Bua having attached it for him. He stepped on the gas to get off the prom and up the incline, which if anything was even steeper here than on the other side. And that's as far as he got. The engine found it too hard and stopped.

"Na, we'll have to get off," Bua commanded and turned to the back. "And you, Isaak, you see to it that you make it up there. It's uphill, and that's what you're used to anyway!"

Isaak burred loose again but the rear wheels dug in, the car lurched forward a couple of times—and stood still.

“What the schinda is loose again?” Bua demanded.

Nobody knew what was loose. Even Koop, the driver, didn’t know.

“Na, then spit in your hands and push,” ordered Bua.

And so they did. The three passengers pushed against the trunk in the back and Koop pushed up front against the steering wheel. And every once in a while he burred and gave gas till the three oomtjes behind disappeared completely from view. And if Bua hadn’t kept cussing loudly and sneezed and sneezed you wouldn’t have known there was anyone back there at all.

And, really, it looked as if three manpower could do more than 45 horsepower: the whole outfit was slowly forcing its way up the steep grade.

They might have made it all the way to the top, but that kind of manpower doesn’t last very long. Bua’s at least didn’t. “I tell you,” he began complaining between sneezes and groans, “I tell you, blast it, there’s no breath left in my body. What’s left in there is mostly gas. And what if it explodes in there?”

Except for his panting and groaning he was quiet for a bit. But not for long. “What the cuckoo, Isaak, aren’t we close to the top yet?”

“Just about, push a little more.”

And the three pushed some more. They pushed until their joints popped and their legs bent. Bua’s were bent almost crosswise.

And they made it. Suddenly it began to go easier, and when the clouds of gas had thinned out the pushers saw that what was left was only half as steep. Now they really went to work. The car seemed to pull itself the rest of the way. When they finally reached the top Koop stopped.

With their popped-out joints and bowed legs the three were huffing like a steam engine when they arrived on top. That’s how out of breath they were. First off they threw themselves down on the grass trying to pump out the gas and get some fresh air in.

“Tell me, neighbors,” Wiens began, squinting at the sun, “are we getting close to Saskatchewan? I mean, weren’t we going to get well over the border today?”

“Yeah, I tell you, we were going to. And we would if we didn’t have this fool and his damn car with us. But if we have to push these two all the way there it’ll take a while yet,” said Bua and gave Koop an angry look.

By then they were ready to try driving again. They all got in, feeling more than a little depressed when they thought of the many hills and ravines Saskatchewan was supposed to have.

They were waiting for Koop to get the car going again when suddenly a bolt of lightning struck over his head. And it didn’t come from the blue but from Bua’s mouth.

“I tell you, Isaak, what’s this,” Bua thundered loose, “that’s the way we were driving? I tell you, that’s why we had to push?” He was pointing down under Koop’s feet. “I tell you, Oomtje damned Koop, sir, if we weren’t right

on the highway here, I'd haul you from behind that steering wheel, sir, and thrash your behind so the sparks would fly!"

Whenever Bua gave anyone a tongue-lashing in anger he used the polite form of address.

"If that swinehound didn't have his brakes on!" He turned to the back. "What a dried-out camel's chick! First he drowns us in that muddy water, then he poisons us with that stinking gas, and after all that we twice-double-damned guys have to push him up the hill. And he sits there calmly with his brakes on! I tell you, men, hold me back or there'll be a bloody fight right here in the middle of the highway!"

He fell silent for a moment, as if waiting to see if anybody would hold him back. Nobody held him back. He turned to Teews: "Oomtje Teews, should I spank him?"

Oomtje Teews took his pipe out of his mouth, spit on the road and said: "No." Having said that he fell silent and stuck his pipe back in its place. He was a quiet, thoughtful man who didn't believe in spanking.

And Bua didn't do any spanking. But the crank handle got a rattling good kick.

All this thunder and lightning had made Koop turn a bit pale. He was at fault: with his brakes on he had gone down the hill on the other side and with his brakes still on he had dragged up the hill on this side. He knew he was to blame.

With the brakes released, the engine started nicely and the car ran smoothly.

All four felt better now. Slowly the blood came back to Koop's face, and disappeared from Bua's.