LEBENSBORN or THE JOHANNEID

a modern mini epic

by

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PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

JOHANNA, a Polish woman of German lineage.

EVA MARIA, her daughter, four years old, with yellow hair and sapphire eyes.

LOKI, Norse God of Fire, the arch-plotter, ever on the look-out for some evil deed to perform.

HIMMLER, German Chief of Political Police under Hitler and founder of *Lebensborn.*

EPIC THEME AND STORY

I sing of Johanna, her journey of anguish,
of destiny's icy winds that drove her
through slaughtered forests and broken
cities.
Her daughter, snatched like Demeter's,
vanished.
Eva Maria, first-born, loved beyond bounds,
vanished.
As once had the Goddess of the beautiful
hair, Johanna rushed over sea and land,
descended to hell and emerged to the light
from where few have returned. Her cries
reverberated in the mountains. The captors
kept mute, serving the merciless Nordic
Gods.

INVOCATION OF THE MUSE

Muse, teach me to speak the unspeakable.
Give wings to my tongue to tell this tale
of tenacity
so its song flies to heaven
to prod the Gods to practice mercy upon
us mortals. Teach me how not to offend them.
Are we just sport that they have created
such evil within us and such largess as
resides in Johanna's heart to oppose it?

HIMMLER'S VISION

He was small of stature, his thick spectacles wire-rimmed,
his chin receding, his nature orderly like a bookkeeper's.
He fancied himself a soldier. The Nordic Gods, worshipped
in ancient time by his people, shunned and forgotten
because of one who called himself Jesus, were angry.
None more so than Loki the trickster God, who was also
bored. Not without humor, he chose him of the small
stature and promised him greatness. Late one night Loki
came down from the heavens and appeared to Himmler -
perhaps because of his heavenly name. Loki sat on his desk,
legs crossed, he played with his whip, sipping brandy.
His boots shone like mirrors, his voice was refined.
Himmler was scared. He took off his glasses and squinted.
Loki, the trickster God smiled. "You are the chosen one!"

LOKI'S PITCH

He said: "Once the Teutonic race was valiant, its blood
unpolluted. The male a tall warrior, proud of carriage,
slim-hipped, broad-shouldered and fearless.
The female a golden-haired goddess, clear-eyed and gentle,
with alabaster skin and eyes the color of summer skies,
her hips formed to bear children with ease.
But like a garden left untended a people, too, will go
to seed; if no one takes heed, weeds will take root.
They sprout and multiply easy, sap strength from the soil
and crowd what once flourished freely. Strong trees
succumb to the hideous vine that clings and strangles
the crown. Hearty crop robbed of - Lebensraum - yields
inferior seed. Or worse, the mingling seeds cross-bred
with nature's bastards bring forth inferior progeny.
You are the gardener. By being pitiless you will be kind.
As you cut off the rotting branch to save the tree,
so you remove those who are feeble and deformed in mind
or body. Do not trouble yourself, they will welcome
a merciful death to serve the greater glory of the race.
But he who pollutes the blood must be destroyed entirely,
or like a weed pulled gingerly, its root left in the ground,
he will return - a never ending curse!
Once you have culled the best, they must be cultivated.
A wise farmer takes his pure-bred stallion to stud
with all his better mares and breeds superior horses.
Remember: Allegiance to the blood is paramount!

If you find Aryans on foreign soil who measure up
they must be brought back to the fatherland, into the
fold like sheep that strayed, or else the enemy grows
strong with their nobility.
Are you listening, HEINRICH HIMMLER?"

HIMMLER'S ACCEPTANCE

He of the small stature and reptilian eyes hailed Loki.
"I shall obey," he said. "I shall do your bidding.
I shall create the MASTER RACE!"
He fell to his knees, then he jumped up, stood stiffly,
threw out his arm and clicked his heels.

THE INVASION

Aeolus' savage winds drove black clouds into collision
and made the skies weep when the tanks rolled in.
The Polish fields dissolved into mud under their weight.
The few men left in the village were rounded up,
Johanna's husband among them, not to be seen again.
They say shots echoed through the nearby woods.

LEBENSBORN

Weeks later, when life could not - not - continue,
they came in jeeps, scouting, some rode on horseback.
Himmler's henchmen, busy in the schoolhouse now,
measuring, selecting specimens, recording skin hue,
noting color, circumference, calculating brain capacity.

THE KIDNAPPING

Sophie, Johanna's neighbor, appeared at her house
her eyes crazed: "They have taken the children!"
Not Eva Maria, not my precious, not my little one.
Thank God, too young to be at school! Johanna ran
to the meadow as fast as her legs would carry her.
"Eva Maria! Eva Maria! Eva Maria! ***Eva Mariiiia!"***

Silence. Only the chirping of the birds. Softly
Pan's peaceful pipe singing in the grasses.
She must have followed the flowers. She likes
to gather them in bunches to give to mother.
Not Persephone's hyacinths, but common ones,
dandelions and buttercups, as yellow as her hair.
The soldiers came and scooped her up.
One more!

DESCENT INTO HELL

She sat in their bright house. They pressed her to speak,
but she could not. Her ears burned. Her eyes had swallowed
shame. Her lips remembered silently. They were patient.
The smell of the smoke still sat on her cheeks, reeking.
She had "*drunk the black milk of the morning at night and*
seen the graves in the air"[1] where there is room aplenty.

[1] (Reference to Paul Celan's Death Fugue)

At last Johanna said, I told them it was a mistake. I
shouted: “Look at my eyes! My own people! One of you!”
Luckily, they did not listen. Never one of them. Mistake?
The Masters of the Master Race make no mistakes - make
no mistake about it. We fell out of the wagons, the dead
and the living; being packed so tight kept us upright.
We walked through the gate marked - Arbeit macht frei -
already marked: you to the left, you to the right.

One day I saw my husband. He was sorting shoes.
It was his back and neck, I thought, just bonier.
Near the ovens. A bone man. On a pile of shoes.
Others were breaking gold from teeth. They had a
tool to do it. The guard, a woman. A pile of shoes.
A pile of teeth. I called: “Anton!” He turned to me.
It wasn't him. - *"Have you seen Eva Maria?"*

LIBERATION

They did not move. They could not swallow the
soup. Slowly it dawned on them. The soldiers
cried: “Go! You are free.” The soldiers, their eyes
round with horror. They had come. So late. Go
where? Go fetch the little one. Where can she be?
In a house, a hut, a hole in the ground, a grave
in the air?
She gathered her limbs. She ate the soup. It took

time to strengthen the bones. Maybe years.
She stood and walked to the end of the earth
to find - **Eva Maria**.

REUNION

The land was flat. Wrapped in grey wet
ragged mist it stretched to the rim and ran
into the sky endless no border no line
between up and down.
But the city shone with lights the villa
brightest of all filled with music and
voices with laughter aplenty and full
of worldly possessions.

"*Mother - a lady to fetch me*."
How I missed her sapphire eyes
looking on me.
"*Mother - a lady - a stranger*."
I know she knows behind her eyes
knows I am the true one.
"*Mother - how she looks on me."*
How I missed her looking on me.
My little one all tall and bright all
without me I should be grateful
I should dance.
Here comes the mother - don't
call her that – a lady, a woman,

striding down the hall, a woman
in warm brown wools, combs in
her hair, her stockings sheer, her
eyes without fear, two pale-eyed
boys in tow.
Are they stolen too?

Time parceled. A pact decreed
by the Gods or expedience. Time
parceled. A pact like Demeter's.
Winter in the misty city but in
summer and spring, the meadow
- a parking lot now – will sing.
Pan's flute will ring in the still
of the grasses rimming the lot
sprouting through cracks green
grass singing birds singing in
the nearby woods when she is
home.
Buttercups and dandelions dance
in her eyes as she folds her arms
around me. My daughter my life
my song - *mein Lied* - **Eva Maria!**

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