



# Sergei's Oasis

Rolf A. F. Witzsche

There comes a point when the best established processes are not enough,  
when nothing remains to save us,  
but our humanity.

---

**A fictional war story from a novel by Rolf A. F. Witzsche.**

In the natural world the king of the beasts is not a tyrant, but a protector of his family. That's the role that Sergei Arenski has taken on for himself within the group of the strategic planners of the Soviet world. He aims to be a protector of our human world from tyrants that aspire to be king in the arena of nuclear war. His home is a mansion from Russia's imperial times, located far from Moscow and the Soviet era games. He utilizes the place as an oasis of sanity to bring sanity to a competitive world where sanity is fast failing. He brings his strategic planners to the oasis, individually, in an effort to keep their humanity alive. Except in the end his oasis of peace and his passion for humanity prove to be insufficient. The one thing that proves crucial in the end when everything begins to be falling apart is not the oasis that he has built, or the people he uplifted, but his personal integrity as a human being.

The story, *Sergei's Oasis*, is a war story from the novel, [Brighter than the Sun](#), by Rolf A. F. Witzsche.

[Start the story](#)

[More works by the Author](#)

---

ISBN 1-897271-07-7

(C) Copyright 2005 - Rolf A. F. Witzsche  
all rights reserved

Published by Cygni Communications Ltd.  
North Vancouver, B.C., Canada

# Sergei's Oasis

Sergei had retired when the emergency signal sounded. It had been a day filled with happy events and much eating and drinking; his daughter's wedding day. The siren's pulsating whine injected an eerie feeling over the satisfaction and happiness the day had brought. A new reality dawned that didn't fit this delicate human world. Anything prior to this moment became meaningless, suddenly, in the face of an impending extinction. He was well aware of what the siren meant. Its whine was a call to battle stations. It was a call to a kind of battle that no one had ever fought before. It was a wake-up call that stirred a new world into existence which had been carefully hidden within computer files, strategic models, thick walled steel tubes buried deep within the earth, and in submarines that carried death for the world's great cities.

This 'parallel' world had been intentionally ignored, though everyone knew of it. Few had dared to confront it or even speak of its danger, and those who did were scoffed at and ridiculed. In this fashion the myth of a benign nuclear force lived on like a fairy tale mythology of a mighty motherhood holding back the tide of evil. The reality was different. There was no greater evil in the world than the thing itself.

Sergei could feel it in his gut that the myth had ended. The real face of deterrence was about to appear in all its full ugliness. Nourished for ten-thousand days by armies of tireless workers, supported by the 'blood' of whole nations, the monster was about to unfold and shake the earth, and turn back history to its primordial beginnings when life was scarce on this planet.

Half asleep and half drunken from the day's celebrations, Sergei Arenski hurried from his bedroom as fast as he could, barefoot in his long nightgown, his robe hanging from one shoulder. He struggled to get his arm through the other sleeve as he rushed along the dimly lit corridor to the top of the stairs towards his office. He stopped briefly at the hall, looking down the circular stairway. There was no one coming, except Peter, his secretary. Apparently the guests below had not heard the siren. The music continued uninterrupted. Peter came running up, two stairs for each step, mumbling something Sergei could not make out.

Moments later, in the conference room, the two men looked at each other in silence. There was no need for words. As soon as the computer terminals came ready they would know how serious the situation was. One fact was in both their minds; the siren had never sounded before.

While they waited, the muted sound of the party pervaded the stillness. How happy Natalia had been, Sergei thought. She had danced like a whirlwind, deep into the night. She was everyone's favorite. She had always been loved and respected by everyone. That's just the way she was.

"She's a real ball of fire, that girl!" Sergei's friend Nicolayevitch had exclaimed to him after he had returned from the dance floor with her, wiping sweat from his forehead.

"Oh, is she too much for you, old friend?" Sergei had asked him, grinning and raising his glass for a toast.

All this was history now, a bright shadow of the past.

The wedding party had grown into one of the best of those legendary Russian celebrations. Vodka had flowed from early morning; spirits were high, exploding into vigorous singing, dancing and tall story telling, interspersed with bursts of laughter. "What must it feel like," Sergei thought. "Would one even notice anything at all, being evaporated alive?"

Deep in thought, he stared at the amber message on the computer screen. It told him to be patient. It indicated that the log-on was in progress. Both he and his wife Laara had treasured the moments of the wedding when Natalia's face had radiated great joy. Laara was convinced that Natalia and Gorki were the finest couple on earth, which no mother would likely dispute.

The wedding had been special in another way. While it was a civil wedding, a brief religious ceremony had been conducted in the private domain of his house surrounded by his friends and the local priest whom he knew and loved. The priest had been a friend of the family for a long time. Sergei and the priest more than respected each other in spite of their differing viewpoints, or maybe because of them. In any case, Sergei respected the clergy in a historical sense. Of course he claimed not to be a pious man, himself. He boasted that he had never set foot inside a church in all his life. But there was a Bible in his bookcase, an old copy, leather bound, with a heavily shaped back. The book had been taken down from time to time. Sergei was fascinated with historical things.

When acquaintances talked about religion, he would answer that he had his own religion, a private way of looking at spiritual reality. When asked to explain, he would sometimes talk about the struggles of the Siberian oil workers that he came in contact with when the northern bases were built. He would say: "Surely, if there is a God, he must live in those people up there and others like them, who toil against incredible odds to bring their product to far away markets, serving their fellow man and their country in the best way they are able."

Often he would add, "Out there, is where my church is."

Seldom anyone disagreed with him. His type of religion was one that easily crossed doctrinal boundaries. Its essence was an unbounded respect for his fellow man, which was deeply intertwined with a respect for the country he loved.

The silence in the big conference room was a brooding presence that crept into the mind. The feeling it roused was amplified by the soft background noise that filtered upstairs from the party, muffled by the heavy carpet that covered the floor. He could hear their laughter. It did not fit this world anymore that the guests downstairs were unaware of. Sergei became impatient, staring at the screen. He began to sweat. It seemed ages since the sign on had been started to gain access to the National Security Network. Eventually the logo appeared with a menu of eighteen control options. "Look at the message file," Peter suggested, waiting for his own sign-on to complete. A few keystrokes later a page of messages appeared on the screen.

"Damn! Damn!" Peter exclaimed. He slammed his fist on the table. He had never done this in Sergei's presence. Moments later his own sign-on had completed. He rushed to his terminal. Within seconds a long stream of Russian profanity flowed from his lips.

"Display the message file," he said to Sergei again.

"Actually, it isn't that bad," Sergei replied. "We should be thankful it wasn't a global attack."

"But can we be sure that it won't get to that," Peter cautioned him. "You don't know if our launch wasn't an automatic response to an incoming missile. In fact we don't know anything. There are no details logged! Is everyone asleep?"

"You're right, the launch reason should have been updated into the message file," said Sergei, a great deal calmer now. "The system is designed to journal these things, including the reason for any action taken. It might be just an exercise, Peter."

"What about the Strategic Committee, could these idiots start a war on their own?"

Sergei shook his head. "Theoretically yes, but not in practice. And if they had, a message to that effect should have been logged in the system. That's just the problem, Pete, nothing's been entered. All there is, is this single entry from North Point radar, reporting a launch from Freedom One, that's Lenin Base. There should have been lots of messages: Who authorized it? Why it was ordered? Who was in command of the launch? And, damn it, why was only one missile sent? For heavens sakes, why hasn't Lenin Base responded with a launch confirmation or denial? Even if something went wrong, there should have been an explanation of what has happened?"

"Maybe nothing has happened."

Sergei shook his head. "If North Point station was seeing a ghost, Lenin Base should have immediately responded with a denial."

"It really looks like they're all asleep up there!" said Peter, and leaned back in his chair.

Sergei agreed. "You'd better call Lenin Base and find out what they know.... Unless they have been wiped out by a surprise attack."

Peter stared at him. The two men looked at each other in silence. "Stealth Cruise Missiles would not have been seen by North Point radar," said Peter.

"You're right. You'd better get me a line to NORAD first," said Sergei. "Get me Ralph Weissenberg if he is there. I met Ralph and his daughter at Disney World last year. We've talked a number of times since. We understand each other; he won't lie to me."

"Shouldn't you leave the diplomacy to Moscow?" Peter replied.

"No, Peter, don't argue, just do it. Moscow is talking to the generals, I want to hear the story from someone in the war room, someone with lesser rank, someone I can trust."

Peter complied with his wishes.

Sergei felt that if this were an accident, he would be partly responsible. It was his primary duty in the service of his country to keep the strategic planners in line so that there would be no accidents! Safety was regarded equally as important as strength. Only, could one man, working alone, do such a thing and do it in secret? An impossible task! If he failed, it wasn't his fault, he reasoned. He had done his best, had he not?

One of the most recognized facets of the old Soviet political system, under which his career begun, has always been its secrecy. In this regard, nothing had changed. The veil could still be so dense on occasion that several departments might try to control the same mission without any one knowing of the other. The Department of Strategic Planning was one of these.

The strategic planning office resided in a thirty-nine story concrete tower in the capital's

university district. Were it not for a ten foot iron fence surrounding the grounds and military guard stations at its entrances, the complex could well be mistaken for an institution of learning or research. In a broad sense perhaps, it was an institution of research and learning. Behind its vast mosaic of double pane windows the country's strategic thrust was born. With mathematical precision, strategies of nuclear deterrence and war fighting capabilities were formulated, modeled, studied, evaluated, modified.... Unknown to all but a few, a second Strategic Planning office existed thousands of miles away, set up to keep the thrust of the first within reasonable limits. This was Sergei's domain.

His operation was based inside an old country estate in one of the finest ranching districts south of the Ural Mountains. Its location was ideal, on a high plain near a lake, surrounded by forests and open lands. The ranch once served as a summer escape for Moscow's nobility. Sergei called it his oasis. For his purposes the place and location was ideal. It provided the needed isolation that his job depended on. He needed to be distant from the influence-seeking mania that reigned within the strategic department in Moscow. He had selected the ranch himself. He needed a place to take the various policy makers to, when he felt they needed to get away from their desks in order that he might re-shape their ambitious plans by injecting some common sense, as it were. He felt this could be achieved in the solitude of a country-estate setting.

Usually, when his visitors arrived, they had a long journey behind them. Usually, he would have them arrive by train from Gurjev, which can be reached from Volgograd via a local air service with a twin engine turbo prop. Peter would pick them up at the train station, adding a two-hour bus ride to the end of their journey. This was all part of the plan. He could have arranged for air transportation right to the ranch. The ranch featured an airstrip long enough for a small bomber to land on. Except this fast access would have destroyed the feeling of isolation which he felt his visitors needed.

Officially, the ranch also served as Sergei's home. The top floor of the main mansion had been converted into a totally self-contained apartment, his inner sanctuary within the oasis. Often he spent his mornings there, having breakfast with his wife. The third floor features another balcony, also facing the lake. On clear winter days the railway station can be seen from the balcony, and on hot days it can serve as a place for having tea, combined with lengthy discussions. These things happened frequently.

Once Sergei lamented to Laara that he was facing great difficulties in keeping his veil of secrecy in place. "Most of our people at the center are kindly inclined and considerate in their private affairs." He had paused and reached for a piece of cake that day to have with the tea. "But as soon as they pass through the gate into the strategic center they become 'cool-headed' planners and suppress their human sensitivities. I find it harder and harder to persuade them to pull back and think as human beings with human feelings. The hardest part is, that it must be done without me directly ordering them to do so."

"Perhaps they may not be aware that they are losing touch with their own nature," Laara replied. "Many men have cut themselves off from humanity and encapsulated themselves in a dream world that is not in tune with the nature of a human being. I don't think your men at the center have the faintest notions of what monstrous games against themselves they have become involved in."

"They built mathematical models," Sergei replied, "to analyze the stress/terror balance and calculate a security index from which they determine a numeric representation of deterrence. The whole process is then subjected to critical path analysis to define the size and types of the required weapons to match the country's political aims."

"You would have done better to employ women," Laara grinned. "Women are less torn by sexual urgencies than men, they would react from a different basis, we might never have had an arms race. Even if men would find it possible to be more true to their nature, which has made the human species such a successful survivor, we wouldn't be in this mess of threatening to blow each other off the face of the Earth!"

Sergei grinned back at her; "You are joking of course."

She just shook her head; "You don't even know what I am talking about, do you?"

"All that I know," said Sergei, "is, when the pressure mounts at the center, it is nearly impossible to maintain a level of sanity befitting a human being."

Laara just nodded.

"If I bring them to the ranch for a man to man talk," Sergei added, "the men become angry with me and restless. The back to nature perspective doesn't help anymore."

"You don't know what your nature is," Laara said sadly and turned away. "You insist on suppressing it. You simply don't know anymore!"

While waiting for his connection to NORAD, the feeling grew on Sergei that Laara might have been right. It was obvious that the ranch hadn't helped much, except to keep his position a mystery. Still he hated the feminist movement even more than his own bunch. The feminists hadn't done anything for their own ranks, but stir up trouble. Sergei was a practical man, interested in results. That's why he thought that he may have failed in his assessments, which now weighed so heavily on him, especially now that the world might be called upon to pay the price for his failing. This was the undeniable, practical reality that stared him in the face.

A beep from the terminal indicated that the call routing system had accepted Peter's telephone request, and that the request was now cued, pending security clearance. This was a normal response, but still, time consuming nonsense, as far as he was concerned. Time was critical now!

He bit his nails. How would he explain this to them? How would he explain to them that this was an accident? He knew nothing more than they did. And damn! What if it wasn't an accident? What if it was a calculated, sinister plan to start a global offensive?

"You should also scan the alert lists," he said to Peter. "See if Lenin Base had anything special going at this time!"

Sergei himself was busy trying to gain access to the security system's log file, to see if it contained a clue as to where the launch had originated.

"Did it ever occur to you that the whole thing may be a test?" said Peter. "Maybe someone is testing us to see how fast we can respond?"

"If this is a test, I'll hang the one who thought of it. But it doesn't look like a test, Peter. Nobody would call a test with no information to respond to. No Peter, that's no test, something has gone awfully wrong, I just can't figure out what it is."

At this point the telephone began to ring. The National Security System had finally

established the requested telephone link to NORAD center in Colorado that Ralph was assigned to.

"Its about time!" Sergei muttered. "The whole world could go up in smoke before one can get any response out of these damn machines."

The commanding officer was on the line, shouting angrily at Sergei before he had a chance to speak a word.

"I suspect you have registered our launch," Sergei replied calmly.

"What the hell is going on?" the American commander requested.

"I wish I knew," Sergei replied. "But let me speak to Ralph Weissenberg if he is on duty, he speaks Russian better than anyone else at your base. Actually, I only want to verify with you what our own radar has reported."

Weissenberg was less excited.

"OK, what can you tell me, Sergei," he asked in Russian. "Is this another one of your famous tests, eh?"

"I have a gut feeling that this may be a test of some sort," Sergei came back, "except I see no entry in the system about a test, or anything else, only a radar report that something has been launched from Freedom One, that's Lenin Base."

"You've launched one all right," Ralph replied, "Alaska confirms that it came from Lenin Base. Our generals here are wondering why it hasn't been terminated yet. Usually your tests are terminated very quickly...."

"Lenin Base should have issued the self-destruct before it left the base perimeter, unless it was a malfunction during the alert," Sergei responded. "The trouble is, Lenin Base didn't even acknowledge that anything went up, nor did they respond to my emergency call. You wouldn't have attacked them with your new stealth aircraft, would you?"

"Hey, you don't honestly believe that the Air Force would inform us so that we could pass information like that on to you? Not a chance my friend. We, too, only follow orders, and are told no more that we need to know. And I can assure you, the only thing I know for certain, is that your damn missile is still coming towards us, and that your people haven't made any effort to stop it."

"Don't worry Ralph, we have a good team in the north," Sergei replied. "If the base hasn't been blown up, by an accident or whatever, they'll get the thing terminated before it goes out of range. They always have in the past, haven't they?"

"...Yes, but it has never taken them that long!"

At this point Peter came to the phone, saying that he had gained access to the alert files.

"Lenin Base had an alert in progress, for launcher 243."

"Get me the missile status file, Peter."

"Eh Sergei! Your missile is still coming," Ralph shouted in the phone. "It's six minutes down range, now. It should have been destroyed if you were serious at bringing it down."

"Maybe they had a computer failure at Lenin Base, or an electrical failure; that's all I can think of," replied Sergei.

"I don't care about your computer or your power failures, get that thing terminated, you hear! Stop trying to snow us!"

"Relax Ralph," Sergei repeated as calmly as he could. "Even if Lenin Base would fail to get



the missile terminated, you are in no danger. We have a new system installed that sets up missile targeting after the launch. If a missile is erroneously launched, it will have no targeting parameters applied. When this happens there won't be any separation of the warheads. The warheads will remain clustered inside the missile and burn up with it on re-entry somewhere over the desert in New Mexico. Most likely, there will be no nuclear explosion taking place at all."

"And you expect us to believe this!" Ralph shouted back.

"Don't worry, no one will get hurt," Sergei assured him. "Our strategic committee in Moscow is probably telling your President the same thing right now."

"The guys here don't believe your fairy tale," Ralph replied.

"Well Ralph, what more do you expect me to say. I invented the Post-Launch-Targeting system myself, and had it installed under my personal supervision, and I personally verified it. I tell you it works! It isn't a fairy tale!"

For six long years Sergei had struggled with his invention, to get it approved, to get it implemented. A fairy tale they called it! Little did they know how he had fought for their safety, gave his life to it, risked his position so that innocently targeted people wouldn't get killed if some technical mistake happened. And now, the very people he tried to protect scoffed at his efforts.

The idea had come to him six years before the project was finally installed. It came during an afternoon's ride with his friend Nicolayevitch, an ardent horseman. There were days when the two would go out riding for hours, sometimes just to talk, which seemed easier on horseback, and sometimes to ride quietly, to think. There had been great opposition to his project when he first announced it. It took thirteen months of political fighting to get it approved. And even after it was built, the project was still in danger of being canceled at a moment's notice whenever there were political uncertainties.

Ironically, the safety of human beings mattered nothing against the concerns of national security, as if the two weren't one and the same thing. It took countless hours of arguing to get the simple fact acknowledged that the security of people's life, everywhere on the globe, and the security of Russia, were in essence related. There was always a fight going on for the project's survival, throughout every stage of it. The ranch proved to be a valuable asset during those days. If it was good for nothing else. This one thing alone was worth the price of it.

Most of the opposition came from high ranking military officers over whom Sergei had no authority. He went to rather grotesque extremes to address this impasse. Once he staged a foxhunt to persuade a certain general to drop his opposition. It was no small task to convince the general just to accept his invitation, though this proved still easier in the end than organizing the hunt itself. Foxhunts had long been stopped. A fox had to be found. Hunting rules had to be researched....

Peter had been put in charge of all the arrangements. Peter was a genius when it came to organizing unusual events. But even he had a hard time getting the fine details worked out, to find the proper hounds that were not too swift....

Sergei's plan depended on the fox having a better than even chance. The hunt needed to be

a lengthy affair, long enough for his guest to become fond of the little creature. Ideally the fox would escape many times before the hounds cornered it. Then he would hand his exalted guest a rifle, urging him to put an end to the fox. This would leave the general only three options. He could refuse to accept the rifle. Or he could have pity on the little creature and forego the killing. Or, if Sergei's hunch were correct, he would shoot the fox.

Once he shot it, it would then become Peter's task to make certain the general felt as rotten about it as could possibly be arranged. The rules of the hunt would decree that the general must carry the blood stained, lifeless body back to the house. Peter would insist on it. At the house, then, he would take the fox from him, examine it, declare it a worthless mess, and hurl it into a garbage container with obvious disgust.

It was a risky plan. But the plan worked. In fact it worked so well that it had a greater impact on the general than either Sergei or Peter had envisioned.

Two weeks after the hunt, Sergei received a call from Moscow. He was informed that the general was about to resign. Laara suggested that he might have been already wavering, but as an old guard general, didn't want to lose face. He may not have shot the fox if it were up to him.

As it was, the general's resignation didn't fit Sergei's plan. The named successor was a 'bloodhound!' Sergei needed an ally in high places. So, several more invitations were required, and hours of patient arguing preceded the old general's promise to remain in office long enough to convince the rest of the generals that it was in their own best interest to let the security project proceed.

In time, Sergei and the general became good friends. On one of his later visits the general explained how deeply this incident had touched him. "The idea of targets suddenly appeared in a different light. Code-names no longer hid the fact that our targets were children, men, women, struggling to build a life for themselves in an often hostile world." He told Sergei, he became disgusted with the idea of regarding people as factors in a mathematical equation. "There was something about the fox. He had outwitted us. And it wasn't the dogs that killed him. I did that." What bothered him, was that we could have pity on a fox, but not on our fellow human beings.

With the general's support, the post-launch-targeting project became a reality. The exotic recruiting had paid off, while the controversy surrounding the project continued to smolder in high places.

"Damn! Ralph; hold it! I can prove to you that I'm not lying," Sergei shouted into the telephone in response to Ralph's outrage. "Let me supply you with evidence that we really have this Post-Launch-Targeting system installed. I will send you a copy of the status file for the missile that got away. This file will contain a target list with no names entered, which means that targeting is in a 'reset' state. In other words: there are no targets assigned to the launcher."

Sergei leaned back into his chair while Peter entered the appropriate request to access the status file for launcher 243. As the list appeared on the screen Sergei nearly fainted. The list wasn't in a reset state! It was active. Targeting had been applied. Post targeting was indicated as being turned off, but it shouldn't have been; Peter had been successful....

A meeting of two weeks prior came to mind, while he struggled not to faint at this crucial hour. At this meeting he had pleaded with the technical people not to make the targeting mode optional. They hadn't listened. What happened now was the direct result of it. Or was it his fault? Had he not pressed hard enough? Was there anything more he could have done?

A group of visitors had announced themselves that day. They had phoned Peter from Volgograd, informing him of their arrival. As usual, Sergei watched for them. Peter's bus could be recognized from the upstairs balcony a long ways off by the cloud of dust that it raised on a dry day. Sergei got up to get himself ready when the bus was half way back. Looking at himself in the mirror, he remembered a clown he had once seen at the waterfront boardwalk in Odessa. The clown, in entertaining a group of children, had attempted a rope trick. He had cut a piece of rope in two and let the children examine it. Then he took the two pieces and went through some impressive contortions to join them back together again. At last he was finished. In a ceremonious gesture he let the rope unfurl in front of the children's eyes. There was laughter. A great big knot joined the two pieces of rope. When the laughter had faded, he asked the children. "Well, what did you expect? Magic? Nobody can do real magic, he told them. Make-believe magic, yes, but never real magic."

Afterwards the clown had invited the children on a make believe train ride. Perhaps he wanted to show them that dreaming is easy and often nice, yet never a bit more than just a game of make believe. He made train sounds with his accordion as he led the procession. A child behind him blew a whistle. Excitedly, the procession marched off and disappeared among the crowd.

Sergei had been thinking of this episode still, when he heard Laara calling that his guests had arrived.

The visitors were not statesmen. They were a delegation from the engineering team of his project. Normally such a visit would have been a matter of protocol, but the fact that the chief engineer himself had made the effort to come meant that something was deeply wrong.

"We've come to report, not to negotiate!" said the spokesmen right off.

Sergei bought himself some time to evaluate the situation by offering everyone a glass of Vodka. With their glasses in hand he invited them to join him in the garden.

What could they have come to report? The project was finished. He was puzzled. Their arrival made no sense.

"Is it safe to talk in the open?" asked the spokesman.

Sergei assured him that it was. "But if you like, we can go upstairs to the conference room," he added.

They decided to stay. It was cool in the shade of the large oak tree. A breeze came in off the lake.

"We have bad news," said the chief engineer. "Every significant measurement that was recorded during the test at Freedom One Base fell short against the design specifications. Of the five re-targeting cycles that were planned, only three were executed. The rest of the time was taken up with transmission retries and subsequent data verification. These were all tasks that you insisted should be run after a communications error. The Bureau feels that a three hundred percent safety margin is not enough. For this reason they have ordered Post-

Targeting to be made optional until the long-range telemetry stations are on line. This means that post targeting can be turned off in times of a political crisis."

"Does this also mean that everything is left to someone's discretion?" Sergei inquired.

"Without the long-range stations we can't be sure that correct targeting will take place," said the chief engineer.

"It will be turned on and off according to political conditions," said the spokesman of the delegation.

"Right now, the system is switched to the old mode," said the chief engineer. "You can find out which mode it is in by looking at the Status File frame on your terminal."

"You can inspect the status, but you won't be able to alter it," added the spokesman.

"Don't tell me a three hundred percent safety margin is not enough?" Sergei blasted his guest. "Being engineers, you know darn well that it is plenty enough."

"Yes, but the Bureau says it is not. It will take another two months to get the long-range stations working."

Sergei was angry now. "They were supposed to work before the system was up!"

"We had hoped to import some major components for the data link from the USA," said the spokesman, "but the US Commerce Department refused to issue IBM the required export permits. We have to build the required equipment ourselves. As you might appreciate, it is expensive to get such a huge task done in two months. The lab is working three shifts a day, seven days a week. At this rate we might just make it in the two month time frame that we quoted to you."

"Until then our country's entire missile fleet will be hot, armed, and dangerous?" Sergei interrupted the speaker angrily, staring at the spokesmen of the group who obviously represented the interests of the Bureau. The man was becoming red in the face.

"It wasn't an easy decision," the spokesman defended himself. "It was made at the highest level. They are all well aware of your concerns with respect to safety, comrade Arenski, but they are also worried about an unconfirmed report of a secret new weapon that is being deployed in the USA. They would rather be cautious under these circumstances. In any case, comrade, your work hasn't been scrapped. They have committed a lot of resources to get it implemented as quickly as possible. So you see, it's only been delayed."

He stood up as if this finished the meeting. "Besides," he laughed, "the undeniable fact is that our missiles are no more dangerous now than they had always been."

"Sure!" Sergei approved, "but can't you see the danger the old system presents? Compared to this, I see no justification why the new system had to be made optional," he sniped back. "How can you be dissatisfied with a three hundred percent safety margin compared to the risks you impose on the people in the target zones!" He swallowed a half a glass of Vodka in one gulp.

"Comrade, we did not come to argue," said the head of the delegation in a firm tone. "I hear what you say. But it is also true that neither of us can change the matter. We only come to tell you how things stand, and to tell you that this information is to be kept absolutely secret. This was the reason why we hadn't telephoned." The spokesman pointed out that since the change in policy was temporary, it would not be announced to everyone. He said that only a few would ever know. The spokesman warned Sergei not to go around and lobby to get the

decision changed. That was the real reason why they had come.

Nothing more was said at this meeting about the project. Laara had interrupted their discussion with a pot of coffee and a tray of sandwiches. On the next morning, the delegation departed. There was nothing left unsaid that would have changed anything. Peter brought the bus to the front door after breakfast. Everyone seemed satisfied, except Sergei. The spokesman thanked him kindly for his hospitality and waved briefly as the bus started to roll.

Ah, but when Peter returned, Sergei called him upstairs to his office to make plans for a big lobbying effort.

"I know who might be behind the cancellation," he said in a whisper.

"There isn't anything you can do about it," Peter cautioned him, "you might put the whole project in jeopardy, including your job. What would you have achieved, then?"

"If we proceed cautiously we may succeed! It is irresponsible to keep our missiles at a volatile state when it can be avoided. We must at least try, even if it is a bit risky."

"Well, let me warn you," said Peter, "and urge you to stay out of this."

"No, that's not what you should do. You should help me. Go to Moscow and try to find out what this new US weapon is all about. If it poses no immediate threat, I will come to Moscow myself to get the project re-activated."

"I suppose, I could try," Peter gave in.

"Not just try, Peter! You must go and do all you can to find out what the US is up to. You have worked at the foreign office, you know a number of people there, and some have connection to the Bureau. Surely someone must know. It's probably just a myth, another justification to shut my project down."

"I can't believe that," protested Peter. "Did it ever occur to you that the Americans may really have a new weapon which could make everything we have built, obsolete?"

"Ah, and did it ever occur to you if such a weapon really worried them, I would have been informed about it?" Sergei told Peter that he suspected there might be a plot involved by some underground organization. He felt the situation was serious enough that Peter should leave on the first train the next morning. He even said he would drive him to the train station himself. "We can't get the Air Force to fly you, everyone would immediately suspect that we are snooping. It has to be done quietly, with finesse. It is less obvious to travel by train. Tell everyone you are visiting friends in Moscow."

It was a clear morning as the two men set out for the two-hour drive to the railway station. A cool breeze swept off the lake. Some stands of foxglove by the road provided a deer its morning meal. The deer sensed that the familiar bus posed no threat. It continued feeding as the two men drove by.

Nothing had changed at the ranch that reflected in any way the political tensions Sergei worried about. Nothing projected the reality that in fact everything had changed.

Now, he realized, this change had affected the world. All he could do now, was stare at the screen that indicated that the targeting was not reset and a missile was on its way. In the background he could hear Peter talking to Boulder.

"Here it comes," Peter announced, "the target list is released and cued for transmission. You should have it in a few seconds, NORAD!"

"I have linked it to Ralph Weissenberg," said Peter to Sergei.

Sergei, his eyes glued to the screen, didn't answer.

"Is not modern technology marvelous," Peter said to Ralph, who was still waiting. "It's great to have this computer link-up so that we can transfer information between us, to avoid these... Oh my God! Sergei! Look!" Peter interrupted his conversation as the summary page of the file appeared on his screen.

"Have you gone mad," Ralph shouted into the telephone almost at the same instant. "You son-of-a-bitch!"

Sergei heard it and took the receiver again.

"Is that what you call reset?" Ralph shouted at him. "Look at it: Seattle and Bellevue! Tacoma! Olympia! Everett! Aberdeen! Montesano! Bellingham! Oak Harbor, our naval-air-base! And Bangor, our Trident nuclear submarine base! And Pasco, the Hanford Works! God help us, you're blowing up the world's biggest plutonium plant and reactor fuel re-processing facility, and the country's largest nuclear waste dump! If that goes up the whole country will be polluted!"

"I see it!" Sergei responded, "but I can't believe what I seem to see! I swear it wasn't there two days ago. I checked every file...."

"The Bureau must have changed them," Peter butted in. "The Bureau are the only ones authorized to make changes."

"Or the system had made the switch by itself," added Sergei. "In extreme situations the system can override...."

"Something frightening," said Peter, "must have upgraded the...."

"You haven't heard about our second stealth bomber test flight, have you?" Ralph came back. "Last Friday, we had a group of three bombers cross your country...."

"You did what?"

"Didn't they tell you?"

"No Ralph, they didn't! I've been out of touch for the last two days, because of Natalia's wedding. What again, did you say, your Air Force had done?"

"They took three BXS17s to Norway, from Turkey, right across Moscow, and totally undetected, as before. They did it twice, undetected. It was a great success!"

"Success!!! How the hell did you think the Bureau would respond to that? It all becomes totally clear now. With that hanging over their heads, they couldn't possibly keep the missile's status in a reset state. With stealth aircraft entering the equation, there wouldn't have been time for any post launch targeting. You forced them to go back to the old way. They might have even gone one further and switched to automatic launch on warning, which has never been tested, for obvious reasons...."

"Actually I don't give a shit about your computers and targeting modes," Ralph interrupted him. "All I care about right now are four million people in the target zones that you're about to incinerate. Can't you stop that damn missile of yours? Stop it! You hear?"

"No one can stop it now! I have worked for six years to prevent a situation like this," Sergei cried. "No one can stop a missile in flight. We've got nothing to do it with. There might have been a chance if we had our long-range stations on line."

"Who gives a damn as to what might have been! You'd better think of something that works

now, and quickly," demanded Ralph. "Alaska says your missile is still coming. Washington has ordered a reprisal if we see no evidence that you are trying to stop your bird. Can't your people do anything to get this damn missile down?"

"There is nothing that can be done at this stage," replied Peter.

Sergei had put the receiver down. His hand covering his face, he sat motionless in his chair.

"I see a broadcast message," Peter told NORAD, "that twelve squadrons of fighter aircraft are on their way to intercept, with anti-satellite gear. But, I doubt they'll have a chance."

Ralph agreed.

"If only our long range telemetry links were operational," said Peter, "it would be easy to self-destruct the missile, but they aren't built, because your government had withdrawn the promised export license from IBM for the data communications equipment we had intended to buy. You can verify this with IBM, at AFE headquarters in New York. So, it is partly your own fault, isn't it?"

"Alaska has verified the squadrons," Ralph replied in a less violent manner, "but your aircraft are out of range. They scrambled them too late!!! Damn, can't you guys do anything right? At first you let your missiles run away, then you get your fighters away too late, and now you have the gall to blame us that you can't stop your own damn missile over your own damn stinking country!!!"

"Shouldn't you better get ready to intercept the warheads at the reentry points?" Sergei interrupted his shouting. "I'll send you the entry data."

"We've already got that," Ralph shouted back. "But how the hell do you expect them to hit anything? Those guys have no hope. They won't even see the damn warheads. It's like shooting at a cannon shell closing in at fifteen thousand miles an hour. And even if they could see it, they wouldn't be able to react fast enough to take aim, and even if they could react that fast, their damn airplanes wouldn't respond that quickly. If we have had LaRouche's Star War system built, we might have had a chance, but your people wouldn't cooperate. LaRouche practically begged you, but you gave him the finger and had him put in jail to shut him up."

Sweat was running from Sergei's forehead as he searched for an answer. Time was running out. He felt hot and exhausted in spite of the open windows. The open window allowed the cool midnight air to flow through the room. What else could he do? What more could anyone do?

"I have news from Alaska," Ralph came back. "Their analysis indicates that your missile is going to New Mexico as you said. They also said there is no sign of a separation of the warheads from the missile, which should have taken place. Maybe you are right. Maybe the thing is pre-targeted for the desert."

"I wish to God it would be," Sergei replied, "but NO! The fast burning boosters that we use now, allow us to extend the bussing phase till midpoint. You didn't know that, eh? That, too, was all part of our great safety measure that you forced us to turn off."

"Damn!" Ralph came back. "Isn't there anything logged in your system that shows whether the mode was changed after or before the launch?"

"There should be, but I can't get to it," Sergei apologized. "Maybe I am missing a password. I am tired. I don't feel well."

"I can't help that," said Ralph.

"You'd better make preparations assuming that the Pacific Northwest will be destroyed unless some miracle happens on your side," suggested Sergei.

"I see a note on my screen that we've sent you the self-destruct code," added Peter. "They are also setting up a line through which we can transmit the command sequence ourselves, if you can provide a transmitter."

"But this works only until separation time," Sergei cautioned.

"That's not enough time!" Ralph replied. "You're almost at midpoint now."

"Damn! There's nothing more we can do from our side," shouted Sergei, almost crying again.

"There's nothing we can do from this side either," commented Ralph, swearing profusely in his own way. "We couldn't even get an intercept missile up. We haven't got a damn thing to sent up! And even we had, they only have a five percent success rate."

"God, it hurts just sitting here, waiting for the thing to blow," said Peter.

"Our technicians are wracking their brains too, to come up with something," said Ralph. "But they can't do miracles. The missile is over our territory now and we can't do a damn thing, either. Not a damn fucking thing! It's maddening, I tell you! My own daughter lives in Seattle," Ralph cried, "you knew that, didn't you?"

"Yes, Ralph, I'm terribly sorry...."

There were tears on Peter's face as he tried to gain access to the system's log file to find out when the targeting mode was changed, as if this could somehow forestall the disaster. Perhaps it was modified after the launch, he hoped.

"Sergei! Somebody wants to know what the numbers on the target list mean," Ralph came back.

"The first two digits indicate the warhead size, in metric megatons," Sergei explained. "The next four digits indicate ignition altitude in meters. The other group of numbers define the geographical location of the target and a coded description."

While he talked, Sergei reached for the hard copy of the status file that Peter had printed earlier. "For the Trident base this translates to a 25 megaton warhead," he explained, "set for ground level! The Hanford Works at Pasco are shown three times, that corresponds to three warheads, each being a ten megaton device."

"Can you imagine what this means?" Ralph replied. "We have five nuclear subs docked at the Trident base. A 25-megaton blast will excavate every one of them out of the ocean and evaporate them, missiles and all! Some of the 1200 warheads they carry may be triggered, to say nothing about their nuclear fuel, and those thousands of replacement missiles that are stockpiled at the base together with spare fuel rods. God help us when this shit comes back down as fallout. The entire Northwest will become uninhabitable for hundreds of years."

"And Western Canada too," added Sergei.

"...And what's the asterisk for behind Montesano?" Ralph demanded.

Sergei gulped. "The asterisk indicates that a nuclear power utility has been chosen as mark zero," Sergei replied.

"What the hell are you trying to do?" Ralph screamed back into the phone, "are you trying to poison the whole country? I see a total of four asterisks on your list!"

"Hey, you of all people should be familiar with this strategy, it was invented by your own people in the Pentagon," Sergei replied. "Offense is the best defense. It was agreed upon to



increase deterrence! I have been fighting this idiocy for decades, but nobody is listening. There is no physical defense possible. You jailed the only person who could have saved you."

"You should realize that our target selection is automatically adjusted by the system according to the severity level of the threat at a given situation," Peter interrupted. "It is based on a mutually agreed upon algorithm by which the target lists are generated. Obviously, your stealth aircraft scare affected the target selection pattern."

After this exchange Ralph was called away from the phone. His last words indicated that separation had taken place. "So the nightmare is on!" he shouted into the phone and said that he would leave now.

"Yes, it appears these devices will accomplish what they were created for," said Peter and cried.

"And so will ours," added Ralf and plunked the receiver onto the table.

A lesser officer, who could speak some Russian, came to the phone.

"The official response to your aggression is still being discussed in Washington," the new officer said in Russian. "We expect a retaliatory response to be ordered. If this happens, you are advised to make no counter moves so that the affair will not escalate into a full-scale war. Is this understood, Sergei Arenski?" he demanded.

"Jawohl Herr Hitler!" Sergei replied in English. "You're crazy if you expect me to sit idle while you reserve yourself the right to murder our cities in a deliberate act. According to every bit of evidence known to us this launch from Freedom Base One was an accident. It was tragic, but it was an ACCIDENT! Let me warn you my friends. If you respond to this accident with deliberate murder, I will personally destroy the rest of the USA. And don't think I can't do it. I can do it without getting out of my chair. From my computer terminal, I have access to every missile base in the country. I can launch eighteen hundred missiles at you, and you won't be able to stop a single one of them as you have already demonstrated."

"I don't believe..." started the NORAD officer.

"You better believe that there are means to get by any security lock," Sergei replied in the same calm manner in which the NORAD officer spoke. "You'd better think about that before you start retaliating! You also should consider that you need our help in evacuating half your country that may become necessary. If you destroy Russia and Eastern Europe you won't have a place left in the world that can take in your refugees and support them."

The officer muttered something about Washington, and Moscow, and agreements, and having been ordered.

"Dam it, you're dealing with me, not Washington or Moscow! And to convince you that I mean business, I'm sending you a copy of the command index frame that is on my screen right this minute. Then you can judge for yourself whether or not I can launch 1800 more missiles, and you'd better rush to your phone and tell your president not to make any hasty moves. You may also tell him that there is nothing Moscow can do to stop me unless they want to shut the entire country's defense network down, which they won't do."

"Calm yourself," NORAD came back, "we're not going to murder your cities. We have something more effective in mind. The future of your cities will depend totally on your own action. You may recall NASA's Jupiter mission that was canceled four years ago. It was never

meant to go anywhere. It's a military rocket. In about thirty minutes, when fuel loading is complete, the old C5 will lift a warhead launcher into orbit that has a hundred targetable devices on board. This automatic platform will be parked in a synchronous orbit near your border. And now you listen! Its warheads will be pre-targeted and a timer that must be reset at frequent intervals will control their release. If for any reason our communication link to the platform is lost, the timer will expire and a hundred warheads will descend onto your cities. You'd better be careful my boy! The least nuclear explosion anywhere will probably be enough to interrupt this vital communications link."

"You realize of course, that you're also putting your own head into this noose," Sergei replied. "If those warheads come down, all of our missiles will be launched immediately, as an automatic response."

"Certainly," Colorado agreed, "and then we will respond in kind. You should also realize that there is no telling for how long those hundred warheads can be held up there before a system failure occurs. I would urge you, therefore, to stop us from launching it. I've been informed by the president that our congress demands that you agree immediately to a total nuclear disarmament with unrestricted on-site verification...."

"You guys are crazy," said Sergei. "What is there to inspect? Half of your country will be polluted with fallout and you talk about inspection rights. We should talk about rescuing people!"

"That's inconsequential at the moment," said NORAD. "Remember you have less than thirty minutes to respond to our offer to prevent the liftoff at Cape Kennedy. If you're sincere and you have any influence at all in Moscow, I urge you to please use it. As far as we know at NORAD, Moscow isn't agreeable to anything. You should also realize that it would be extremely difficult for us to retract the space platform once it is launched. Its internal defense mechanism won't allow any approach of another spacecraft, not even our own space shuttle. So you'd better call Moscow right now!"

With that the telephone was hung up in Colorado.

Sergei and Peter stared at each other, stunned.

"Can they do this?" Peter asked.

"Yes Peter, I have seen the booster. It is an immense rocket. I was certain at the time that it was a remnant of the defunct Jupiter mission. But it also looked like it was launchable!"

"Maybe they are bluffing as you were when you sent them that page from your private file, suggesting that you could launch all our missiles?"

"Peter, they had no way of knowing that it wasn't real. Not even I know whether or not such a command frame actually exists. It's entirely possible. The Americans certainly couldn't risk the chance that it might be real."

"Don't you think Moscow isn't in the same bind right now?" asked Peter. "They may also be wondering whether the Americans are bluffing. How can anyone make a sound decision with no information to base it on? That super missile sounds like science fiction fantasy, but it may also be real."

"This one is real!" Sergei replied.

"You realize, of course, that you broke your own rule by pulling the first bluff," Peter reminded him, "and this at a time when trust is of utmost importance."

"I know," Sergei admitted quietly. "The important thing is to assume that the Americans are not bluffing. We could never risk calling this bluff."

Sergei leaned back into his chair. "Did I ever tell you that Ralph grew up in Seattle?" he asked a moment later. "His daughter still lives there. If situations were reversed, I really don't know how I would have reacted in his stead." He wiped the sweat of his forehead again.

"Considering this, Ralph behaved exceptionally well," Peter replied.

"Indeed he has. They all have, Peter."

"Shouldn't you call Moscow?" said Peter. "Maybe you can persuade them to agree!"

"No, you must call them, Peter," Sergei replied, looking aimlessly out the open window. Lanterns were lit in the garden below. Some of the guests were outside, talking quietly.

"You must call Moscow," Sergei repeated, "because they won't listen to me anymore, not after this. They might listen to you, though. Remind them that nothing would have happened if they had not made my project an optional mode. No Peter, you better not say that."

Sergei stood up, switched his terminal off and walked to the door. The sounds of the party could still be heard in the background. He stopped by the door, briefly, and turned toward Peter. "I'm much too involved in this mess, Peter," he said. "I might say a wrong word and get them angry. I might botch it. It's up to you now, Peter. If anyone has a chance at all, it's you, the diplomat. If anyone can cool Moscow, it's one of their own that they trust. And you're a giant in that respect. Trust yourself with this one. You can do it."

Before he left the room, Sergei hesitated and turned around once again. "I think I am going to get drunk now," he said. "That's the very best I can do at the moment for my country."

As the heavy oak door fell shut, Sergei heard the phone ring. "By God, Peter, do it!" he said to himself as he walked downstairs to join the party.

He went directly into the cellar where he obtained a fresh bottle for himself. As he came up, he met his friend Nicolayevitch. He motioned him to join him in an adjacent room. "Come Nicolayevitch, help me to celebrate the end of the world."

Nicolayevitch shrugged his shoulders, smiled, and raised his glass....

## More works by Rolf A. F. Witzsche

Selected stories from the series of novels  
The Lodging for the Rose  
and from other novels by Rolf A. F. Witzsche



### A selection of love stories and stories about love

The primary focus is on the Principle of Universal Love in social relationships.



### Stories focused on healing

The focus for healing is wide-ranging, from bodily healing to the healing of perceptions, limitations, small-minded thinking, etc..



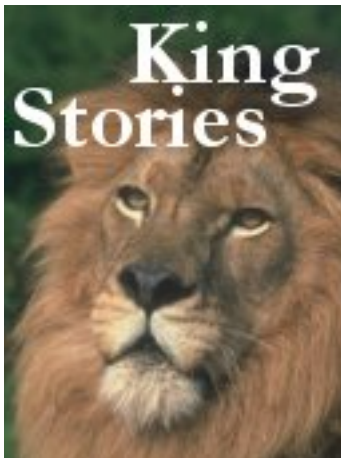
## War Stories

There are many types of wars being fought with the ferocity of lightning that flashes brilliantly until the driving energy is spent. Then peace resumes.



## Stories about sex

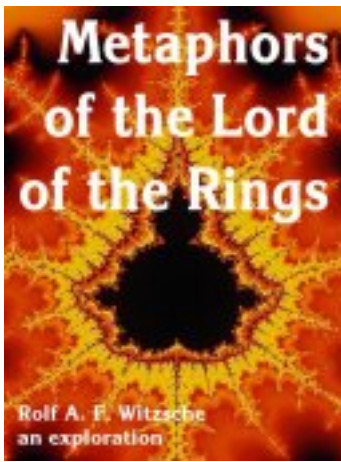
While the focus is on sex, the explorations focus on a passion for love in a higher sense than erotica, opening to the Principle of Universal Soul reflected in the brotherhood of all mankind as human beings.



## Oh, to be King for a day!

If we had the power to change the world, how would we change it? But don't we have that power already in our hand?

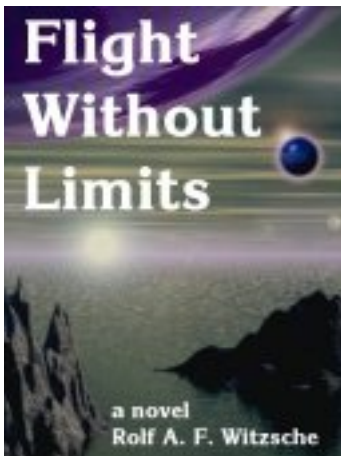
Political exploration



## The Lord of the Rings' Metaphors

It is a rare thing in literature that one finds a tale written a long time ago that is reflected in the present to such an extent, that it seems the writer had created a script for the future and the future has obeyed. Such a thing can be said about the story of J.R.R. Tolkien's mythical tale, The Lord of the Rings.

## Novels



## Flight Without Limits

(science fiction)

The novel is a science fiction work with a touch of reality. It is about a space voyage to Alpha Centauri, the nearest solar system to our own. But in metaphor, the novel is really about being able to move mentally without limits. Physically we may never be able to overcome all limits, but what would hinder us to break all limits mentally?



## Brighter than the Sun

(playing with nuclear matches)

This novel has two opposite centers. One reflects the tragic domain of our nuclear armed world, and the second the domain of spiritual freedom where old axioms become discredited and fall away while love unfolds its universal face. Will the latter prevail?

## The Lodging for the Rose a series of nine novels



### \* Episode 1 - [Discovering Love](#)

Here begins an epic story that spans eight novels. The subject is freedom powered by universal love, the largely unexplored 'country.' Few people have dared to cross its borders and travel its landscape.



### \* Episode 2A - [The Ice Age Challenge](#)

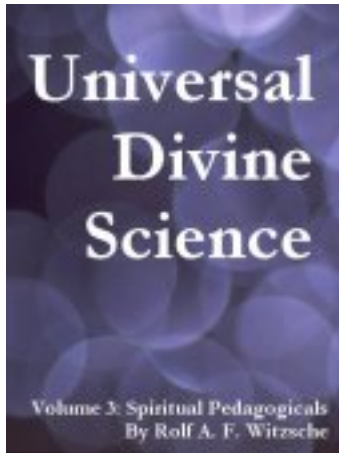
"The Ice Age Challenge" refers to the challenge that we face to create a new foundation for living when the coming Ice Age climate shuts down most of the world's agriculture. The resumption of the Ice Age could happen possibly 100 to 150 years from now. It may take that long to build the vast facilities that will be needed to feed the world from indoor agriculture. But is our love big enough that we can achieve the physically near impossible in order to assure a future for mankind beyond the space of our time? What limits would we put on the dimension of universal love? It appears we are in a triple race to meet all of these challenges. The big question is, do we have the skills to stay the course?



### \* Episode 2B - [Roses at Dawn in an Ice Age World](#)

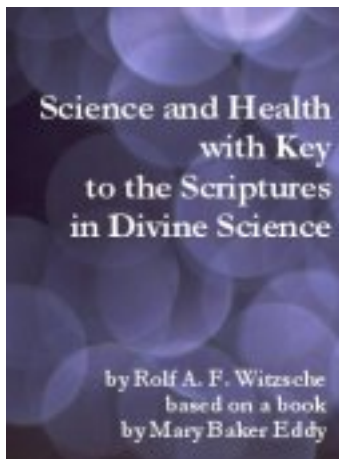
With the Ice Age resuming 100 to 150 years from now we are challenged to embrace the still rejected renaissance principle, the Principle of Universal Love, without which mankind may not survive. But will we be able to upgrade our human dimension sufficiently to accept the Principle of Universal Love and to reflect it in our daily living? God is Love, universal divine Principle. Do we dare to love universally in the social domain? Or do we pretend that the divine Principle of Universal Love doesn't apply there, especially when it comes to our personal loved ones and friends?

## Spirituality and Healing - research, exploration, pedagogicals



### [Universal Divine Science - Spiritual Pedagogicals](#)

Unknown to the world, Mary Baker Eddy created a scientific monument in the form of a vast pedagogical structure for the advance of universal Divine Science. The pedagogical structure is so large that she made all of her major works a part of it, and so far-reaching that it may have been a contributor to the rare period of nearly 50 years of peace in the world between 1866 and 1914



### [Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures in Divine Science](#)

A special Divine Science exploration of Mary Baker Eddy's book, **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures**, in a unique presentation interwoven with editorial notes and research into Mary Baker Eddy's pedagogical structure for what she hinted may be termed Divine Science.

[For more books by Rolf A. F. Witzsche see home page](#)

---

e-mail: [cygni@shaw.ca](mailto:cygni@shaw.ca)

[Rolf Witzsche home page](#)



[Rolf Witzsche books index](#)

---

Published by  
Cygni Communications Ltd.  
North Vancouver, B.C.  
Canada

(c) Copyright 2003 Rolf Witzsche  
Canada  
all rights reserved  
please do not copy the books