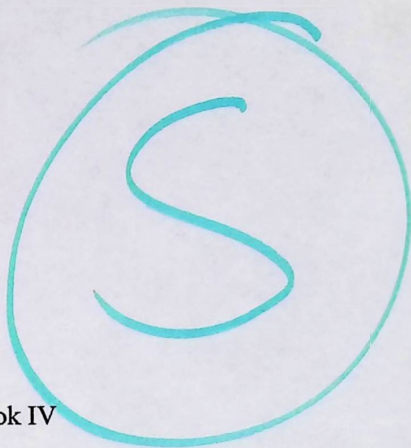


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Book IV



I must now inform the reader of an unexpected summons from the Maestro. It would remove me from Alois Hitler and his family for ~~eight~~ ^{known that} months. I can add that this alert arrived on just the evening early in

October of 1895 when Alois completed his apicultural negotiations with Der Alte. Two Langstroth boxes (each ^{with a colony of bees} ~~each~~ ^{installed in each}) and the

necessary accompanying supplies were bought plus a variety of tools, and enough pollen and honey to feed these newly-acquired inhabitants through

the winter, the purchases being transported by Alois' dray pulled by the work-horse Graubart from Der Alte's premises to the Hitler home.

It proved an exceptionally exciting trip for Adi who sat beside his father all the way and could not sleep that night in anticipation of morning when the hive-boxes would be set up under the shade of an oak tree some twenty paces from the house.

If there is some curiosity concerning Alois' outlay, I have no very dependable way to make a calculation from the kronen and gulder of Alois' era to the hegemony of the present American dollar. The discrepancies distort any comfortable sense of comparative costs. Alois' pension in that year may have been the present equivalent of sixty or seventy thousand dollars a year now, and it is likely that he rued the cost from the beginning since Der Alte sold him a sufficiency of necessary and not-quite-necessary items that might come to the rough equivalent today of a thousand dollars. Alois, fully anticipating that he was going to pay too much, was weary, however, of dealing with the old man and so did not push beyond the small success of acquiring at the end a few extra tools at no extra cost, one of the

few times in his life when he was not ready to bargain with his ^{characteristic} usual determination.

However, it was at just this point that I was ordered to leave Adi and the other members of the family ^(as well as the rest of my clients in that area) with three of my assistants. ^{That night I}

~~I departed three of my agent were deputized to remain~~ ^{ob Austria.)} and I embarked for St. Petersburg where I was brought to focus on the needs and

dimensions of a new and massive project. We were going to attend the coronation of Tsar Nicholas the Second, scheduled for May of 1896 in Moscow, seven months into the future.

Off I went, then, to St. Petersburg. and on that very night. How I made the voyage is too complex a matter for discussion at this point. While devils are able to travel as if they were human beings, that is, we can for a period insinuate ourselves into many a man or woman (even as forty-two years later, I would be occupying the mind and body of an intelligence officer in Himmler's Special Section IV-2a) still, we ^{also employ} ~~can use~~ much more rapid means. (But, of that, I will wait to speak.) For now, leave it that I was instructed to go by the quick alternative and ^{begin} ~~enter~~ my orientation into the late Nineteenth Century Russian soul—belly, vices, beliefs, ~~recent~~ ^{history} harmonies and inner disharmonies—by morning of the next day.

And in that Slavic realm, so much nearer to God and to the devil than any other land above the equator, I stayed for all of a winter in St. Petersburg prior to coming down to Moscow on a cold April morning before the coronation in May.

During that period, I did receive news of Alois, Adi, Klara, and Angela. Even ~~the~~ ^{variations in the} day-to-day temperament of the dog, Luther, and the horses, Ulan and Graubart, were reported, but that was by summary for the most part, and cannot be comparable in interest to the new venture, ~~not at all~~. If a devil is ready to afford a few personal desires other than the over-

arching demand to satisfy the Maestro, then I had, I confess, become a little ^{while they were the focus of my interest in that vicinity,} too full of the Hitler family's intimacies. ^{I have to say that} I had hoped to receive more of a

major assignment. Now, I had it. Our O.O. was in the first stages of

bringing off a mighty mischief. We all knew that, every one of us, major

and minor ^{spirits} ~~devils~~ all. Even at the time, I sensed that this could come to more

than any of our recent full-dress efforts to disrupt the larger purposes of the ^{arrayed on}

other side. It is true. I swear it. I ^{could feel} sensed ^{stirring} a metamorphosis forming in the

intentions of our leader.

Now, I will make one apology, but will not repeat it. Having read the best and worst of novels for many years (which is, I repeat, part of a good devil's duties and education) I should know by now (and do!) that not even the best of readers will put up for long with a novelist who can leave his narrative long enough to jump into what must seem, at first, an altogether unrelated subject. Until now, I have indeed spared the reader reference to my other cases, particularly the month I spent in London back in May of '95 when I attended the trial of Oscar Wilde and was in the courtroom on the day of his conviction for "sodomy and gross indecency"—a matter in which I played a hand with the jury's deliberations. (My instructions were to do my best to get him convicted. It is likely that the E.O. was looking to stimulate a rabid sense of martyrdom among some of Wilde's associates, particularly those who were of very good family, but to this I cannot attest. Only on rare occasions will the Maestro explain his strategies to us—we are there to satisfy his aims rather than our curiosity.)

Nonetheless, I was now harboring a conviction that our Maestro had prodded the D.K. into a state of some disturbance over the success or failure of the oncoming coronation.

For that I can only offer my own set of explanations. I more than suspected that the D.K. ^{had become} was now dissatisfied with the variety of formal organized religions serving in His name—although, as I will ^{soon} eventually explain, He was responsible for them. Yes! ^{ad} their faults were by His clumsy doing, ^(I do not speak of the sects) the unhappy structures of the Catholics and the Protestants, the Greek Orthodox, the Orthodox Jews, the Reformed Jews, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, ^{even perhaps the roots of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism} but ^{those were religions developed by humans rather than Gods} those were religions developed by humans rather than Gods. By 1895, a change had also occurred, ^{in any event, come 1895} however, in the viewpoint of our Maestro. Or, so was I ready to perceive. Through the centuries, ^{the} the O.O. had ^{been} succeeded in being a most incisive critic of the follies, disproportions, errors, miscalculations, and sheer blunders of the D.K., indeed! God, the Creator, having worked His way through the locks of His evolution, had by now trapped Himself into many grievous misjudgments concerning the potentialities of humankind. In contrast, the O.O. had, for ^{has} the large part, been satisfied to act in reaction to the D.K.'s endeavors, ^{and has} us intensifying where we could every misdirection of His human beings. We were out to increase the sum of emotional dissatisfaction among men and women everywhere, good or bad. Thereby—so went our working

assumption—we might come a little closer to eventually ^{altering, then} possessing the spirit of the species. One of our more effective methods over the last two thousand years had certainly been to encourage intense religiosity of the most ~~formalized and~~ organized sort. If we came up short now and again—usually with more luminous individuals (saints), we did succeed in warping the intelligence of a good many ~~good~~ humans. You can find fine folk everywhere, locked into a mosque, a synagogue, or a church, all clinging to the same oxymoron. Yes. Despite every other difference, they are all attached to the obtuse belief that God is All-Good and All-Powerful. This premise—given its inner contradiction, vast and built-in—is intrinsically incapable of serving as a tool for the ^{human mind} since it can find no answers to the contradictions embedded everywhere in human existence. By that means, we have succeeded in tormenting the best minds of mankind century after century. All-Good and All-Powerful. Indeed! Yes, we had looked to encourage every fundamentalist we could find, Islamist or Hibernian—we didn't give a damn. "Come to us," became our creed, "come, all of you who are in need of rock-hard faiths and anchored

certainities!" How ready they were to believe they were serving God all the while they were working for us in ways they never perceived.

Now all this, I would warrant, is ultimately a product of the D.K.'s inability to anticipate the direction His creatures would take once He had developed them. His strength (as the O.O. will be the first to acknowledge) is that He can create a plenitude of forms throughout the natural world, some relatively successful (the honey-bee is one example) and some most improperly designed. (The dinosaur, the squid, the leech, ^{the house-fly} and the mosquito come immediately to mind.)

By the time He raised primates to the level of humans, He ^{had} ~~became~~ much too proud of this last creative accomplishment. He chose to provide men and women with enough reason to ~~burst their limits and~~ exercise free will. He was prepared to permit ^{this} a power of will ^{to even} that would be free, on occasion, of Him. Just so confident was His enthusiasm, His belief in this latest Creation. *It did not fear that they would break their limits.*

Such miscalculation was calamitous. It was equal to raising so powerful a ^{beast} ~~dog~~ ^{hound} that the ~~dog~~ turns on its master. God's finest creation, men and women, given free will, proved unmanageable ~~with that free will~~—they

gave every indication they would, left to themselves, depose Him. He was reduced to resorting to a most drastic measure. He gave up the heartfelt notion of engaging in a profound ^{partnership} ~~companionship~~ with this highest form of His Creation. Instead, He now looked to terrify men into obedience. He could not recover from the blow to His comprehension occasioned by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He ~~was~~ ^{felt} now obliged to go back to the judgments of Jehovah, and ~~he~~ proceeded through His new ^{developments of} ~~religion~~s to terrify humans all over again. "Obey Me and fear Me. I am All-Good and All-Powerful." The message that He had wished to transmit through His Son—"Love each other and you will share in My love" was now converted to "Fear Me, Respect Me, and I may answer your prayers."

This retreat ^{back} ~~this return~~ to oppression, opened vast territories to the Maestro. I will put it simply. Our cause, as I comprehend it, is to diminish the potentiality of humankind. We want to reduce the vitality of the greatest creature developed by the D.K.. Naturally, we look to encourage religiosity that is ever more intense and more mindless. Distort the brains of men and women even further than the D.K. intends, and their human emotions will be corrupted. (For imbalance is the beginning of rot.) Accomplish our job

well enough, pick up what remains, and we may be able to alter it into our Creation.

Through many an age, I believe that this ^{has} ~~had~~ been the working premise of our Maestro. And be assured our activities have not been restricted to churchgoers. So many varieties of human type are suitable, atheists, athletes, actors, and any angels we locate who might be turning bitter at the edges—I will not pursue this through the alphabet. But, ^{My point} ~~in this~~ ^{is that as human kind was} time approaching the end of the 19th Century, I began to sense that the O.O. ^{fundamental} was contemplating a ~~revolutionary~~ change in our procedures. ^{I was not} ~~Was he~~ ^{inclined to believe that he was} looking to develop a species of faith designed expressly by him rather than by the Dummkopf? ^{Did this mean that?} ^{was} Was ³ our Maestro actually prepared to make ~~this~~ vertiginous leap from criticism to Creation?

I could not conceive of what form such a new set of beliefs might ^{require from us} ~~take~~, but I will say that the possibility did cause me uneasiness. For who could know more about the pestilence and slovenliness of human nature than those of us who had worked through the centuries to swell and inflame all that was soft and misbegotten in the D.K.'s calculations. I need not even speak of His miscalculations—all the animal residue in His human beings of

unfocused rage, all the continuing excess in men and women of free-floating ill-will. It was one more sum of blunders fashioned by the D.K. in the course of developing ^{this — his most} ~~His~~ advanced Creation! Given the objective need to protect a high but delicate level of animal life that would still be able to survive through grievous and often incalculable conditions of heat, cold, flame, and death, the D.K. had to endow man (and woman, most certainly!) with a sense of self-importance crucial to their survival. But, once again, ~~— was it due in part to our efforts? —~~ (the balance did get away from Him. ^{Human} ~~The self-righteousness~~ so necessary to survival) also produced envy. The self-righteous, unless immensely successful, cannot look with equanimity upon better fortune for others—particularly not close friends and acquaintances. Envy worked as dependably in our favor as compound interest serves an investment. The D.K.'s powers to fashion new varieties of Creation were once—it must again be admitted—immense, but His skills as a cosmic engineer were wanting. His problems, even if spared our presence, would not have been trivial. His endless reworking through trial and error over the eons of evolution, even His readiness to live with His mistakes until such time as He could correct them (and most certainly, His outsize rages as a younger

god!—His frenzies as Jehovah!) had compounded a multitude of errors in every avenue and byway of human history. Now, I had to wonder how the O.O. could look to refashion such a boggled Creation after we had finished corrupting, corroding, and demoralizing it further? I was worried. Yes.

-2-

There is no question that I will yet delineate in some detail the determining effect we were to have on the coronation of Tsar Nicholas the Second, but I would prefer at this point to return to the small events and minor adventures of the Hitler family in Hafeld before I attempt to outline the more exceptional activities we ^{undertook} ~~were to undertake~~ in St. Petersburg and Moscow that ^{were to} ~~would~~ culminate in May of 1896. Those eight months from my departure in October of 1895 until my return to Austria in June of 1896 ^{were} ~~will~~, I expect, ^(of some future importance) ~~be of interest~~, but ~~until now~~ we have followed the intimacies of apiculture with so much close attention that I do not wish to ignore its continuation at this point.

I have to point, however, to a serious difficulty. As I have remarked, my knowledge of the various experiences of Alois, Klara, and the children were communicated to me during my absence by the agents I left behind. (Naturally, given the greater import of ^{our mission} the activities in Russia, I had taken my ~~two~~ ^{we with} best assistants with me.) That left ^a problem. Lesser devils are, in many a regard, comparable to lesser humans. This is particularly true of their characteristic insensitivity to significant detail.

While I can retain a reasonably close notion of what is transpiring among my clients and their near associates even when obliged to rely on the reports of mediocre agents, the work does lose ^{its tone} ~~its~~ During this absence, I could only allocate a fraction of my ~~available~~ ^{available} energies to thinking about Alois & Co. ~~and Company~~. So, the account of these missing months—October '95 to ~~1996~~ June '96—may prove sketchy. What will save the value of the narrative received, however, is that there were a few notable and determining events in Adi's development (and these matters I most certainly did ^{study} ~~pursue~~ ^{to adequate}). Otherwise, nothing of great moment did occur until the return of Junior, Alois Hitler, Junior. Of course, that was not until June, by which time I too had returned ~~to~~ ^{to} them.

So my narrative will not suffer ~~too~~ critically. Mediocre agents, like mediocre human beings, may be humdrum in their powers of summary but they are not wholly incapable, and I will warrant that I had brought even the least unpromising up to a necessary level of performance. If I am not ready to explain our systems of recruitment ^{in obtaining} of new agents, that is because such exposition would bring us immediately into a far more sacrosanct question: How are devils created in the first place? Is the ~~E.O.~~ ^{Evil One} personally on the alert for superior humans who might be ready to serve us, ~~and might be put under~~ ^{contract by the E.O. himself} or, as is more usually the case, do they come to us as lower varieties of humans, a brood of rejected spawn? These last are often individuals who were so disheartened, infuriated, demoralized, or altogether outraged by what they perceived in the hour of their death as a shocking demotion of their prospects for a good reincarnation—a new life they might deem worthy of their merits—that they opted out, simple as that, they declared their desire to be liberated from the wheel of human reincarnation in order to serve another power, us! (How this arrangement was ever negotiated by the D.K. and the E.O. is altogether beyond my knowledge.) While I cannot declare why or when it happened, I am familiar

with the results. Apparently, the D.K. was willing (or necessarily obliged) to ^{trade} ~~top~~ off a fraction of His stock of those souls clamoring for reincarnation.

Was this in order to obtain a less disruptive and dissatisfied environment for Himself in the realms of the Hereafter? I suspect ^{this} ~~that~~ was so. I would also

assume that our O.O., looking to make his way up onto a nearer level of equality with the D.K., was, of necessity, ready to accept this exudate of spoiled human possibility.) Over the centuries, over—it well may be—the

millennia, he was then obliged to use a very large part of his resources into shaping and training the low-grade and highly disturbed material we did

receive. It is analogous in difficulty to developing a symphony orchestra

^{from} ~~out of~~ soldiers cashiered ^{as relieved out of} ~~from~~ the Foreign Legion. I will not pursue these

difficulties further at this point. I will only say that the agents I had left in

Hafeld, the lees, so to speak, of my small squad, did their best to report on

Alois' ongoing efforts at bee-keeping, but they did not always have a close

enough sense of his difficulties, certainly not enough to satisfy my

understanding.

→ p 353

Forewarned, forearmed. I will now present ^{my} a small improvement on
the summary I received of what went on with Alois ^{his wife and his children} and his bees from the
end of 1895 until the following summer.

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In October, if I had permitted it, my agents would have overwhelmed me with detail concerning Alois' obsessions ^{concerning this} with his new occupation.

As I have indicated, I had no time to attend to this, and I was irked. Short of a direct entrance into Alois' working thoughts which, it may be remembered, is rarely done with men and women who are not directly our clients, the agents had to do most of their work by way of milk runs. In what our O.O. calls "the markets of sleep," the dreams of most men and women are reasonably available, open to demons and Cudgels alike, and can be picked up (at least in superficial degree) by no more than passing through the night chamber.

We also learn a good deal by the simple expedient of listening to a family's chatter. ^{To be sure,} ~~Indeed,~~ a plethora of superficial information came in, ~~and~~ ^{that was} more than enough to annoy me. My experiences in Russia were of ^{a higher content,} ~~more interest.~~

In addition, I knew that I was receiving an insufficient portrait. My agents perceived Alois as weak, but ~~(knew)~~ they lacked the requisite skills of insight required when dealing with the worries of men or women who possess strength. It is easier to comprehend those who are weaker than ourselves than to anticipate the moves and true feelings of those who are more powerful. Nuance is demanded, precisely what my ^{lower level of} agents were lacking.

Being of no great stature themselves in their former lives, they tended to pick up all that was second-rate in Alois. I was left, therefore, with the burden of analyzing insufficient and weighted materials. While I will ^{give some treatment to} ~~summarize~~ what I received, I would also abjure the reader to avoid passing judgment. ^{We must not forget that,} ~~Since the man who became Adolf Hitler emerged from a~~ ^{boy later} childhood with this father and mother, ^{So, it was to be,} ~~it is obvious that we need to~~ ascertain Klara and Alois' real strengths and, needless to say, their real weaknesses.

(somewhat uninspired account)
Very well. Here then is my ~~summary~~ of Alois' woes now that he has insisted on becoming a beekeeper.

His first concern (which I find ~~somewhat~~⁷ comic—since he has spent his life in uniform) is that he has to remind himself constantly to put on light-colored gloves and a bee-keeper's large trapezoidal hat and veil, always of the whitest material. He must avoid dark coats or trousers, and since that is what he usually wears, is always concerned that he will forget to change before going out to the hive-boxes under the oak tree. Somber colors, he knows all too well, ~~will~~^{do} irritate bees, knows that ~~much~~^{much} by simple experience. On the evening some years ago when he had been stung while working with the little colony he then kept at the edge of a small town just on the Austrian side of Passau, he had made the mistake of inviting an attractive woman out with him one Friday afternoon in order to demonstrate his working competence with the hive. Naturally, he was in full dress uniform. How else to accompany so good-looking an acquaintance? That twilight he was stung so fiercely that his fears still rise in one quick spurt at the pit of his stomach from no more than the recollection. Alois' hopes of fornication were obliged to remain unsatisfied on that Friday night, indeed,

the lady was stung on the exposed flesh of her ample breast, no less. A petty romance was lost, but it proved a full blow to his best opinion of himself, and, as we see, he continues to pay the price. Spurts of fear, bright as rockets, fire off in his stomach.

Nonetheless, Alois, in some part, is still a peasant. He has not forgotten that after a small or large disaster, one does well to ^{stay} be on the alert to whatever value might still be embedded in the misfortune. For example, his ^{interesting} medical theses accompanied his pain on the following day—bee stings seemed to be good for his rheumatism. His knees, at least, felt better. When their meeting occurred, Der Alte, we may remember, was ready to agree, and even cited the honored Dr. Turc.

This confirmation may have been part of Alois' decision to accept Der Alte's opinion that imported Italian bees were superior to the Austrian variety. While Alois had his suspicion that Der Alte might be ^{telling} offering exactly what he needed to get rid of, still, the ^{telling} selling point (to Alois' present shame) was that Italian stock ^{was more} were easy to handle. They were gentle, Der Alte assured him. They were incontestably more beautiful. Possessed of a marvelous glowing rich yellow tan, not unlike the mellow hue of the best

shoe leather, Alois had to admit that he did admire the three golden

segments of their bodies, each fold set off by the sharpest edging in black.

So elegant! ^{Whereas the} ~~The~~ ^{and it did not} ~~Austrian~~ honey-bee was hairy, it was gray, ~~nor did it gleam~~

like these all-but-gilded Italians he had purchased, ^{Yet}, all the same, Alois felt as if he had been disloyal to Austria, unfaithful even. He should have taken the "Franz Josefs," the gray-beards.

What added to his unease is that he kept wondering whether he had made a basic mistake. Should he, after all, have waited for the spring? Now, marking time through the fall and the turn of next year, he would have to keep his colony warm enough and well-fed enough not to perish in the cold. He had bought winter bees, after all, who had been born last summer. The queen he had purchased (presumably still replete with some millions of sperm cells from the five, six, seven, or eight drones she had phallically defenestrated last June), would be ^{virtual} in hibernation now, and not laying eggs, no, not for another four or five months. Her hive would be gathered in a cluster for warmth, waiting for the honey and the pollen Alois would be obliged to feed them. To keep close watch on their condition, he would have to weigh the hives once a week (to make certain the population was

not dwindling). Yes, it would be some long months for these winter bees before they could go out to forage again along with the new-born who would, he hoped, be teeming forth in the spring.

All through these months, therefore, he would have to keep records of the weight of his hive-boxes complete with bees, ^{the increasing} plus taking the temperature of the air within the hive. He had even been advised to start a diary for recording the daily and weekly data. Yet, he must not open any hive. "No matter your curiosity," Der Alte had confided (as if in full command of the new apiculturalist's temptations) "you must not allow yourself to peer in, or extract any of the movable frames in order to study the combs. Why, the cold draft that could arise ^(from raising the large lid of the) from opening the box might so lower the temperature that ^{you} the bees would need hours to warm the interior again. Such a chill could decimate the population. Take no chances, Herr Hitler. Keep them warm. That is your new duty. And, of course, keep them well-fed. Up until now, from what you have told me, I expect you have only lived with the hives in June and July. Any tourist can do that. But to be the Skipper of ^(little people) your hive (through the ice-cold air of all the

winter months to come, that takes character, my friend." And then as if to enrich the assumption, he added, "My new friend."

-4-

Alois was about ready to recognize the given. If he had stood before himself as judge, he would have found the defendant guilty. Could retirement prove so enfeebling to a strong man? He had bought the farm on impulse and now, these two colonies, also on impulse, these bee-hives in their Langstroth boxes. All right, they were the latest improvement with their removable vertical slides on which his bees were to build their combs to be filled (although not as yet!) with larva and honey. A wonderful advance! Yet, why so suddenly had he given his commitment to this business of apiculture in the winter? Had that also been done on too quick

an impulse? Der Alte had had the consummate nerve to say to him, even as Alois was ready to guide his loaded dray onto the road, "You will soon see how much work I have saved you."

~~Indeed! What Alois did not perform in work, he now spent in worry.~~
~~He was still under sixty, damn it.~~
~~Not that he was old, damn it, not yet sixty, not by a year and more, but he~~
 felt such a sense of inner weariness before ~~all~~ these future responsibilities.

What with his two occupied boxes now ^{set} properly under the oak tree (no, never beneath the walnut tree for its nuts would pelt the ground in late spring and summer, ^{with} the shells hard as stone, and might ^{panic} ^{few} damage a host of bees ready to fly out for forage), no, the boxes had to be under the oak tree, placed on a stout bench, with tarpaper underneath for warmth, and more tarpaper above, weighted down with stones. Each day he read the temperature of the heat within the box, and did his weighing once a week, keeping up that diary full of data and notes, but part of the real problem was that he did not have enough work, just enough to leave him with a slew of worries ^{over the future}. All through the dark months while feeding his winter bees ~~with sugar and water~~ (a most tricky technique in the beginning), he would console himself with the thought that if the colonies

looked to be weak when spring came, he might combine two boxes into one, and, if necessary buy more bees at that time, more expense, more of Der Alte, farting in his pants no doubt, he would be laughing so hard at the great esteemed High Customs Officer Herr Hitler with his ten thumbs all there to be stung by what he didn't know about bees. Already, in November, Alois was lecturing Angela and Adi, even Klara, on the need for absolute immaculate hygiene when warm weather arrived. They must certainly not leave the hives open no matter how warm the day. Above all, they must never spill any honey. If they did, they must mop it up instantly, ^{Der} or the bees could be drawn to it and ^{might} ~~would~~ begin to fight for free honey, easy honey, as it lay in a pool on the ground. If the puddle were deep enough, they could drown en masse.

Such were his fears, enough to harangue his family this winter for what might or might not occur in summer. And then he would go back to worrying about the putative weaknesses of a winter colony. So much depended on what he read ~~about bee-keeping~~ each night, negative or ^{on the subject of keeping a winter hive,} positive. One of his newly purchased books (ordered from Vienna) stated with a confidence that came to him off the page as directly as an unexpected

odor, that if two colonies proved to be weak, it ^{was} ~~would be~~ advisable to combine them. Just kill the queen (probably a poor sort anyway) and look to add these two inferior hives to a third colony (if you had one). That last might also be mediocre stock, but if it could boast of a good hard-working queen who could keep filling empty cells with larva, the investment could be saved. Of course, one should not look for too exceptional a queen. The low level of the added colonies could pollute her efforts. But how was he to evaluate the new queen in any case? *The article presented him with more questions than answers.*

Had he gotten into all this merely to ^{stay} ~~be~~ occupied ^{with} ~~by~~ some activity through the winter? He engaged in a flurry of work and built two new hive boxes (which he certainly did not need immediately, but was proud of the skill it demanded—yes, he could have been a decent cabinetmaker!) but also had to admit they were not the equal of his Langstroths ^{whose exterior} ~~which~~ he now proceeded to paint. Three colors were used, blue, yellow, and ultra-violet. His manuals told him to do as much. His bees, if they ever got to flying again, would be able to recognize (yes, each one of the tens of thousands of them) precisely which hive-box they belonged to. By the color, of course. Not red, not orange—those colors were not to be recognized by bees, how

strange, he remarked to Klara, considering the number of red flowers bees entered.

Still, he was ^{enjoyed} ~~was enjoying~~ working with his hands for the duration of the carpentry ^{box} ~~and the painting~~. At least, his worries eased for a week. His chest even puffed up again with an old truism, ~~safe as a sound house~~. "Good

German blood understands," said Alois to himself, "that blessings do not come from God, but from hard work." ^{(That idea is a good sound as a sound house,)"} Still, it was an unfairly ~~tilted~~ remark.

Why not say, "Good Austrian blood?" ~~That did bother him.~~

Even this ~~small~~ ^{concern} stayed with him ~~too long~~ like a minor sore that does not heal. He was ~~attracted to the notion that blood possessed its~~ ^(obsessed with a question. Did blood)

~~own~~ natural virtues and powers. ^{? Father's ~~could~~} ~~Yet the thought might also be confusing.~~

^{Why should he say or speak?} ^{Is that what he had?} Why was he supposed to be proud of German blood? (He was an Austrian,

^{He had} after all, proud of (an Emperor who could live with the ^{huge} ~~immense and~~

~~sometimes~~ idiotic problems of keeping the Czechs, Hungarians, Italians,

^{the} Poles, Jews, Serbs, even ~~the~~ gypsies, living together under the Hapsburg

empire. ~~The~~ Germans couldn't do that. Always fighting with each other.

Without Bismarck, they would still be nothing. Petty principalities. ~~little~~

~~duchys~~. Always squabbling. Mad King Ludwig I, ~~and~~ then ^{comes} Mad King

Ludwig II, ^{both} Crazy Bavarians ^{then} and those Prussians with a ramrod up their ass,

^{why} speak of good German blood? Yet, he said to himself, "All the same, I

know what it means," and he pondered ~~what it might~~ ^{But what did it} signify to say to

himself that he knew something when ^(- get to the fact -) in fact, he didn't, not quite. Except

in some way he ^{most} certainly did. ^{Was he now thinking like} a philosopher? ^{Not so bad for the boy who} was once a peasant.

^{the question} This, he decided, was a question to be taken up in the bar at

^{where was} Fischlham. Was ^{was it?} one's true loyalty ^{to one's culture} (which ultimately, ^{Et this} Alois

^{the language one spoke} decided, might be equal to one's language) ^(allegiance) or was it to one's nation? Could

it be as simple as saying that to ^{3 people} be German ^{from birth was equal to making} was to have German blood? ^{in oneself?}

He didn't bring it up at the tavern, after all. They were dolts. He
 resented the time he spent ^{with them} ~~there~~. (By November, he had even found himself
^{drinking beer}
 going over in the afternoons, a proof if he needed it, that there was not
 enough work to do. For that reason, he had ^{chosen to} stay away for a week, and
^{done} all the carpentry ^{extension of the hive boxes,} and the painting, even built a framework on which to
 hang ^{some} netting near the hives so that the birds would ^{stay} be kept away in the
 spring. He even ^{debated whether to} thought of going to visit Der Alte, but recollections of the
^{odor} smell in the hut kept him away. The ^{smell} odor of urine was nothing to put up
 with, ^{For that matter,} especially since Alois felt all too close to ^{leaking in} sprinkling his own pants,
 now and then.

Before long, he was back in the tavern. Just about every day. There
 One pleasure he did find ^{that} beer that
 was one pleasure he could not relinquish. The dolts, ^{glot} full of ^{stupid} their superiority

~~(that they had been stuck in one place for life)~~ were coming nonetheless to
had begun to

(see Alois as an expert on apiculture. Maybe he ~~still~~ ^{yet} had a lot to learn but he was

~~did~~ ^{needed to} not show that to them. Recalling every bit of ~~the~~ advice Der Alte had

offered, plus whatever he had picked up of late in his reading, ^{was} he now

~~(Alois would be the first to say that honesty)~~
presented as his own wisdom. Honesty and modesty were excellent virtues, but they

~~Alois would be the first to say, but they~~
but were best employed ^{or with experts} when dealing with superiors and experts. An

^{however} An inferior mind ^{he was} wanted ^(were in the company of a) nothing more than to feel they with wise men ^(man) when

^{Sine he was} ~~(they were drinking)~~. Being more available to the locals than Der Alte, Alois

^{see how} ^{he had} had, for practical purposes, ^{on the cultivation of bees} become the local bee expert. ^{an apiculturist} One farmer

^{A farmer} ^{seek his} even walked over one Sunday afternoon for advice on how to get started.

^{proceeded to} Alois ^{details} overwhelmed him with the subtleties and difficulties of feeding a hive

through the winter. ~~Why look for competition in the June~~
~~summer when there would be honey~~
~~for market?~~

"Given the cold weather,
~~"for winter, you must not open"~~

"You cannot open the lid of the Langstroth," he said, "so how do you

get the mixture ^{down} to them? Every other day, you must feed ^{your bees} them, and this

mixture is precise, the honey is ^{has to be properly} diluted, one part honey ^{absolutely equal} to one part water,
 and ^{stock best summer} but this must be honey ^{that comes} (from your own bees) ^{in the previous summer} that means you must be able to

trust the man who gives you the honey ^{these} for winter feedings when you

purchase his ^{stock} bees. Trust is essential."

Even as they ^(were both) nodding their heads with something of the

same reverence with which Klara ^{might exhibit kneeling in church} would genuflect ^{before a cross} before a cross, Alois ^{was}

to asking himself ^{whether} if he could really trust the honey ^{he had} received from Der

Alte. What a laugh ^{laughing stock he would be to} for that grandiose ^{also it is the only} doctor and piss-bum if ^{both} all of Alois'

^{bees} were dead of disease by springtime. ^{Of course Alois did not} But Alois could dispose of such ^{really believe such anxiety. He could dispose of it}
 anxieties by assigning rule-of-thumb ratios to them. ^{percentage/such worries. Der Alte he} (He would expect that

~~had to be~~ ^{At the least!} ~~Der Alte was~~ 80% trustworthy. ^{his reputation too} After all, it would hurt him too if Alois' ^{venture} bees went kaput. ~~he~~

"But how do you feed them," asked the visitor, "if you can't open the lid?"

"Ah," said Alois, "there is a ^{special} technique. You open a very small plug ^{that is installed} ~~at~~ on the top of the box and ^{(you lay} ~~you~~ lay the feeder over ^{the top of} that. ^{It is} ~~It's~~ a special feeder! A five liter jar with a cover of the finest mesh ^{fastened} over the mouth. ^{Expensive mesh!} Into ^{the jar} ~~it~~ you have placed water that has been heated but not boiled, ^{then} and you stir in the sugar until ^{that} ~~it~~ is completely dissolved."

"I am confused," said his visitor. "You were speaking of honey and water, and now of sugar and water."

"My apologies," said Alois. "I was thinking that for a beginner like yourself, sugar ^{could} ~~may~~ be better. ~~More expensive, but~~ ^{Easier}. You do not have to trust the source. Perfectly simple. ^{Use a} ~~A~~ different ratio, however. Three parts of sugar to two of water."

Alois was ^{beginning to feel like} ~~feeling something of himself again, yes,~~ the fine fellow he had ^{once, yes,} ~~been~~ before his retirement. "The trick," he said, "is to master the

technique of ^{this} ~~the~~ special feeder. Because you not only put in the liquid nourishment, and cover the mouth of the jar with the ^{fine} ~~the~~ mesh, but you must

have a small pump built into the jar to create a vacuum since you will ^{next} ~~be~~ holding the vessel upside-down over the bung hole above the brood ^{that is} ~~waiting~~ to be fed. Do you follow? ^{"Alois could see that he didn't."} ~~The~~ vacuum in the jar keeps the sugar-water

from pouring out, but the bees ^{are able to} ~~can~~ absorb the liquid through the tiny spaces

in the cloth mesh. I feed over one liter of sugar-water or ^{in my case} honey-and-water to

them once a day, ^{they} and after every feeding I wash the jar in boiled water.

Cleanliness is an absolute demand, ^{4 the} ~~in that matter.~~

~~that my agents were expounding, these~~
All the while he ~~was~~ expounding these matters, and offering ~~expositions to me; I was~~ ^{grew more and more} ~~restless, knowing~~ ^{these matters, they had so} ~~little insight into Alois. All they could offer were his~~ procedures for calculating the amount of sugar or honey needed for each

~~what they were missing was~~
box over the course of a month, he was sensing the commencement of new

^{in him,} anxieties. Was there to be a direct penalty for such bluffing? Alois did not

~~intending to be such an~~ ~~fool himself. Being a great expert was a bad bluff.~~ By the time his visitor,

~~if thoroughly disheartened had said goodbye - he was~~ ^{had said goodbye.} ^{not likely to be competition, come June,} ^{2 new} ~~had left.~~ Alois was out in the cold again, staring at his ~~two double~~ boxes

~~(honey-box above brood box)~~ ^{his} and wondering if disease would strike ~~these~~

^{was done} colonies before winter ~~had finished.~~

^{but his anxiety remained that night}
 He spent the night reading his books ^(HE) and had dreams of living in one
^{was he part of a cluster}
 of his boxes, himself a bee. Would it turn into a matter of clustering
^{living} together in deepest and darkest obscurity? How could they ^{these bees} guide
 themselves in that world, so stygian, so bereft of light? Were their antennae
 of aid? How many facets were there to a bee's eyes? ^{was} What had he read? A
 thousand? Even the experts seemed to disagree. He decided that if humans
 could speak of a sixth sense, perhaps these bees with their ^{multitudes of} thousand facets
 in each eye, had a ~~kind of~~ seventh sense that could penetrate into the
 caverns and catacombs and labyrinths of darkness.

^{this dream}
 By the end of the dream, Alois was in a nightmare. His bees
^{had raised it to the level of}
^{First more interest in what my}
 (Now I could ~~put more~~ ^{agents were guiding me} Alois! ~~we~~ have now
 multiplied in the darkness of the hive and ^{then they} became so many that
^{the cluster}
 they could no longer bear ^{its} their confines. ^{The bees escaped} They fled from the box and flew

away, so far away, they could not be found, ~~and then~~ ^{leaf} they all clustered within a hole in the trunk of a tree—back to their old habits, yes.

When spring came, might that happen? Would he lose a good half of his hive ^{this} in June? He felt for Klara in the dark, and his hand came across her belly. She was so big now, ~~and yet her~~ ^{the} new one wasn't due until January. Would he ~~yet~~ ^{? The new one} be a giant of a fellow. He would make six in the house, seven when Junior returned.

She came awake with his hand on her, and would have nestled into the embrace of his arm, but he felt a ^{need to discuss a worrisome matter} ~~drive to talk~~ in the middle of this darkness. Before he had said more than a few words, she was wide awake, ~~and~~ unhappy, embarrassed, ~~you could say~~ and agitated.

"I hope," Alois said, "that you haven't spoken to Herr Rostenmeier."

She knew immediately what he would next suggest. Herr

Rostenmeier ^{was the} ~~owner~~ ^{lot} of the country store in Fischlham where once a week, on

Saturday, ^{she} ~~she~~ and Angela would buy a few foodstuffs they did not raise in

their garden ^{plus} ~~and~~ a roast of meat—no livestock as yet for them at Hafeld, not

with Alois swallowed up in his bees. ^(Besides, they were not about to kill the cow!) Klara liked Mr. Roseⁿmeier, and had

^{begun} ~~even tried~~ to talk to him about the future sale of their honey. Alois had told

her not to make any deals ^{not} ~~yet~~ since there was always the possibility, slight,

of course, that he would do business with Der Alte. She had taken pleasure

in the thought that it would probably be ^{here} ~~at~~ Rostenmeier, and she would be the

in-between, ^{and} ~~even~~ ^{to} literally bring a little money back to the house and hand it

over to Alois. Her fingers tingled each time she ~~had~~ thought of such a ^{direct}

transaction, ~~she hardly knew why.~~

But now

Now Alois would go to Der Alte. She knew that. "I thought," she

even as

said in the darkness, ~~while~~ ^{as} he patted ~~the giant to be in~~ her belly, "that you

that man

didn't like ~~him~~ ^{that man} at all, yes, I remember you said you would have to smell

him."

"Alois said shortly, the knuckles

"He will be good to consult ~~when I need him.~~" The suggestion of the

of the nightmare were still with him, ~~the~~
~~that was not with~~
~~bees swarming!~~

"Yes, yes, yes," said Klara, "but you told me you don't trust Der Alte.

becoming

Yes?" She was close to almost hysterical ~~at being torn out of agreeable~~

To be torn out of an agreeable sleep for this!

~~sleep~~ not so common for her. "Yes, you say you don't trust him, and yet

you choose this Der Alte over an honest man like Herr Rostenmeier? ["]~~A nice~~

~~man.~~

"Klava, this is all because you
 You feel embarrassed by ^{some} your commitment to him," he told her.
 "Maybe you had a little too much talk with
 him a while ago, mentioned, maybe,
 "Something you haven't quite told me. A real commitment. You and him

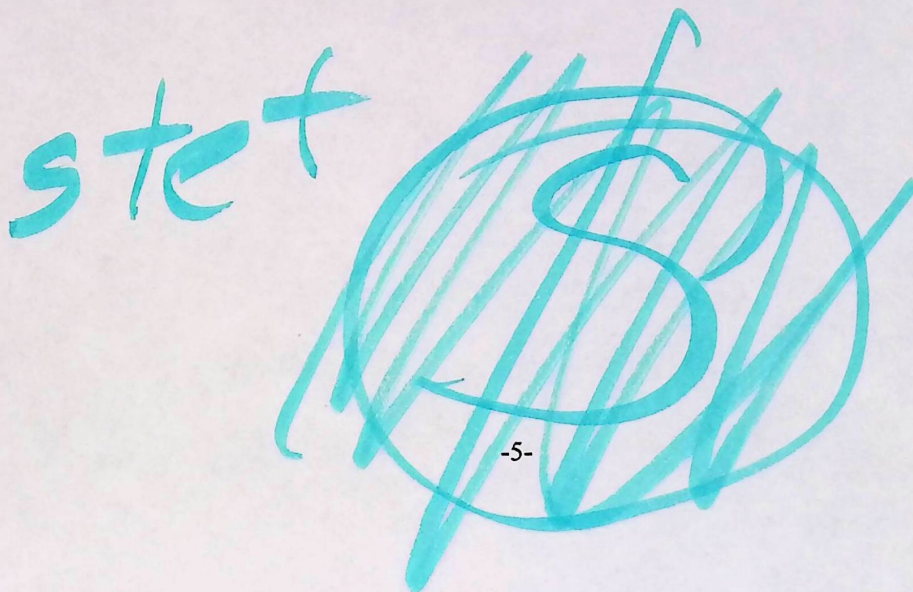
without speaking to me first."

"No," she said, "not at all. ~~It is done~~. I am not embarrassed. But this

I will say, I must say, I will never understand the thinking that goes on in a

person like you." She had been tempted to remark, "a man like you," but

knew better. He would have ridiculed her for such a stupid attitude.



So Alois went back to Der Alte after all. There were just too many
these
with ~~his~~ *bees,*
worries. (He was a realist, he told himself, he was used to bad odors. One
had to deal with the devil, nicht war? (My devils snickered as they
informed me of this.)

Alois paid his visit on the next Sunday and, once again, took Adi with him. He could hardly have said why, but I could have told him. Devils, when so instructed, can nudge a man or woman ~~to some extent~~ even when he is not a client. For whatever reason, I sensed that the O.O., despite a multitude of other concerns, had given enough attention to Hafeld to pass *on his desire to us that* ~~on exactly that suggestion:~~ "Let the boy and the old man *ought to* see each other again."

This time, Adi ~~even more excited than before~~ was paying careful *Like his school, it was* attention to the route. ~~It was~~ only a mile away. There would be nothing to walking it by himself *But he must* ~~provided he remembered~~ the turns and forks of the road, and this he did, full of uneasy excitement. It was as if a woe large as a loaf of bread had settled in his stomach. Yet his chest sitting above such

heaviness was alive, ~~He was steaming with excitement, or so he thought,~~

~~since~~ his breath on this cold morning ^{coming forth} ~~was~~ full of vapor. He knew he would

not tell his father that he planned to visit Der Alte on his own. ~~Already he~~

~~could taste the honey that might be waiting for him.~~

"Yes," he kept saying to himself, "in the daytime I will not be afraid

to walk by myself. ^{In} ~~For~~ the night, ^{maybe} ~~yes~~. There are too many spirits in the

woods, ^{In the dark, they} ~~and in the dark, they~~ are mean, ~~they get much meaner~~ because of the cold. ^{yes} ~~And the colder he felt in the midst of~~

~~cold.~~ ^{And the colder he felt in the midst of} ~~This was~~ ^{logical to him as the categorical imperative was once of} ~~this excitement, the more he longed for~~ ^{summer, when the bees would be flying} ~~of~~ ^{inestimable clarity to Immanuel Kant} ~~Adi was now think of all the bees in~~

^{in and out of} ~~his father's two hive boxes. He had not seen one of them yet, but he had~~ ⁱⁿ ~~smothering woods from his father. "We~~ ^{heard so often of his father's fears when summer came} ~~"You must never~~

leave a box in the open sun. If a branch blows off the shade-tree and the

hive is exposed to the sun, you must ^{call to me and I will} ~~get me to rescue it~~, ^(the box) to move it to the

shade. Otherwise, ^{it will be too hot and our} ~~the~~ bees will become agitated, yes, ^{agitated} almost to the point of ~~insanity~~. ^{you see, Do you realize? In} They will feel trapped, ~~and in~~ the course of such a disturbance,

buzzing ~~around~~ inside the box with ~~no room to fly~~, they will use up all the ^{available in such tight quarters,} air inside, yes, they will consume too much oxygen, and then the

temperature in the hive will ~~proceed~~ ^{start} to rise. If it ^{goes} gets over twenty degrees ^{higher} ~~more~~ than the temperature ^{on a very hot day} above the heat ~~on the hottest day~~ of summer, ~~even~~ the wax of the cells in the

combs will melt. The cells will collapse. The ^{larvae} ~~colony~~ will perish."

He had heard all this on the ^{first} drive home from Der Alte's house ~~after~~. ^{It had been} ~~the first meeting~~ ^{had} It was dark by then in the woods and the boy listened to

his father with an unhappy sense of all ^{these} ~~the~~ creatures in the wood whom he could not see, ^{what was said and Ali} but they would hear, and he vowed that when summer came,

~~not be the one to~~
he would ~~never~~ allow a hive-box to sit in the sun, no, ~~he wouldn't~~, but Alois,
~~Alois Junior was not so~~
Junior would be back by then and ~~he would not be~~ good. He would leave a
box in the sun.

Der Alte, alerted to their visit, was ready with a spoonful of honey,
and the taste left the boy with such a glow that what with the weight in his
~~stomach~~
~~stomach~~ and the excitement in his heart, he was almost ill.

All this quieted, however, for Der Alte and his father had a long
conversation about the marketing of honey, and there was some dispute on a
price which Adi could hardly follow, nor did he care to. He was
disappointed that Der Alte, ~~once he had offered the honey, did not seem to~~
~~of honey no longer seemed~~
~~be~~ interested in him.

we can be certain that Adi was mistaken,

~~Adi was mistaken.~~ After business was done, the old man could not

stop talking to Alois, ^{(back} and to Adi as well) about the mysteries of bees ^{and} ~~one~~
~~than~~ the subtleties of their keepers. "Yes," said
 had to contemplate it—the further and further mysteries to be found in
 the Alte in a most resonant voice, "I never weary
 of contemplating the existence of these tiny creatures with their honey and
 their near to immortal sting."

Yes, Der Alte was off on a conversational discourse, rich, not

interruptable, and fascinating, ^{as well (for he)} despite himself, to Alois, who would retain

enough of ^{such speech)} the metaphor to expound on it himself tomorrow night at
 Fischhaus. Yes, ^(pess-bum!) there would be All by way of the
 (Fischhaus) Something grandiose to offer the dolts! Adi, in his turn, was—

no other word is accurate—Adi was spellbound. Words he could not quote
^{took flight nonetheless into his mind}
 understand ~~altogether were of less importance than those he could, and~~
^{of} because ~~(their sounds and meanings)~~ rich
 besides, the sound of words he did not know was more than rich in some

~~kind of~~ ⁱⁿ meaning, as if his mother, in the good old days, ⁹ before Edmund had
 been born, was ^{still} rubbing oil into his back ^{while his} even as his pain seemed to leave
^{eased out of}
~~her~~ his flesh by way of her palms and fingertips. How he listened!

"Can we," asked Der Alte, "ever pay enough attention to ^{this} a work of
^{itself} ^{Ach, it is} ^{it is such an}
 Creation ^{so} full of genius ⁱⁿ ^{asseveration with} wise measure and wisdom, ^{and}
^{absolutely, for it possesses} ^{yes}
^{Think of it! These}
 the everlasting quintessential power to surprise us, ^{these} little devils come
 to us ^{from} from the Good Lord's science, ^{yes} His divine and curious aesthetic—
 so enigmatic, so supernatural. Our bees are a ^o cornation of nature's wisdom
^{as it expresses itself}
 in the most bizarre and unexpected form, the very reification—if you will
 permit me the word—of God's secret rites, His investiture in wonder and
 awe."

Der Alte went on, and on. ~~How~~^{exactly!} he could go on! His endless references to God's ballet, God's gymnastics, ~~yes!~~^{yes!} God's gymnastics, God's intuition of the paradoxes of Creation. He ~~was like~~^{Der Alte} many of ~~the devils I had~~^{our clients} ~~known.~~^{however,} They were always ready to praise God aloud, but I did not enjoy the ~~hyperbole that Der Alte could offer.~~^{Der Alte's hyperbole.} It was too large, too soulful, too suggestive of private regrets at the depth of his commitment to us.

In any event, he went on so long that Alois was, ~~again~~^{once more,} repelled. That too much time ~~elapsed~~^{had} without ~~hearing the sound~~^{exercise} of his own voice was certainly at the core of his irritation, ~~but he~~^{Moreover he} did not know if he liked the look in his son's eye. ~~His~~^{Those} blue eyes, like Klara's, were always so large and so ~~alive,~~^{so expressive.} ~~but~~² there was reverence in them now.

"Why don't you take us into the other room ~~you have here~~ and show ^{us} ~~him~~ your little viewing box," Alois ^{at last} ~~was finally~~ able to interject.

It was obvious that Der Alte would prefer not to, but Adi spoke up.

"Oh, please, sir," he cried out, "I have never seen the inside of the bees'

home. They have been with us back at the house, for so long—" he tried to

count quickly—"for seven, no, I think it is eight weeks, and I have not seen

even one of them. ^{Do I have} ~~I don't want~~ to wait until summer, [?] ~~please~~, please."

"Spring," said Der Alte but he shrugged. "All right," he said, "but be

prepared. They will not ^{be so near to} ~~look like~~ what I have been talking about."

They ^{were not} ~~didn't~~ (In the other room of the hut, ^{have but for} ~~with~~ a small stove, a sink, a

hand-pump above the sink, and a pail beneath for the run-off, was also a

kitchen table and at one end ^{of it sat} ~~was sitting~~ a narrow box, perhaps two feet long

Over each of the long sides was a
~~high, or either of the~~
 and one foot wide, which would soon reveal itself once the black curtains
 When drawn back, the box consisted of no more than
 on each side were drawn. It was constructed of two glass walls between
 not two inches apart and between them
 which resided the vertical frame, visible on both sides, with endless small

cells, no larger in diameter and depth than Adi's smallest fingernail. Were

these the cells his father ^{said could house the unborn larvae}
~~would talk about?~~
 or store the honey?

Adi was ^{as} disappointed as if he had ^{received a poke} been struck in the solar plexus.
 It all look so dull yet so chaotic, nothing but
 At first glance, it was all so ~~dab~~, and then it was dull, but chaotic (a cluster

of ~~endlessly~~ ^{dark} pullulating little things, hardly bigger than pills in a bottle, and

they kept climbing in and out and over each other, startled by the light, a

poor helpless gang of congested, jam-packed, over-stuffed, over-crammed,

^{jam-packed} brimming, feverish, ^{leaving just an} ~~rioting, pullulating~~ ^{teeming} assembly of what looked to

^{as ugly as roaches}
~~almost like little beetles~~ Their wings were all folded
 be squashy little creatures, (Adi had not been so disappointed since he had

^{tiny} ^(SP?)
 first seen Edmund's ~~wizened~~ homely ^{angular} little face on Klara's breast.

^{Now, these bees}
~~It was a leaden and deadening surprise.~~ They did not look that much
^{even if} ^{could} ^(might as well)
 alive although they ~~did~~ move. They ~~could~~ have been beans stirring in a pot,
^{except they} ^{move alive than that}
 They ~~were~~ ^{alive}. They looked nervous at being exposed but still so

^{still so} sluggish. What a terrible way to live! They must miss the sun, the boy

thought. He had been thinking of them all ^{those} ~~the~~ months since summer,

recalling them as flashes of light in the garden, ^{but} ~~and~~ now they were

^{and just} ~~stunned~~
 stupefied, ~~Were they very cold?~~ They pushed against each other ~~all the~~

~~time.~~ Were the ones inside the cluster crying out in ways he could not hear?
^{asking not to be squeezed so hard?}

Adi had never seen ^a ~~tomb~~ but he had read ~~the~~ ^{that} word and others like "bier"

and "pit" and "sepulcher," "grave" and "vault" and "pit" ^{he} had looked at

~~(pictures)~~
~~and those words were there for read under that.~~
 indistinct photographs in some of his father's war books, and now he chose
 those pictures. ~~Tombs, he chose~~
 to sigh in preference to bursting into tears. Could those ^{these} bees breathe? What
 an awful way to live.

"At this moment," said Der Alte, "they are the poorest of the poor. I

know you see them as no better than slugs in the slime of their own exudate,

~~but that is because they live at~~
~~the extremities of existence—they offer the~~

~~sweetest substance to come to us from nature, and yet with~~
~~enough of them~~

~~upon you, prepare for the end. They can sting you to death. Here they sleep~~
~~in an attack and you can, I am able to~~

~~do no more than~~
~~and root about in a morass, but in summer, you will see them gain, as~~
~~yet~~

wonderful and as beautiful as drops of dew before us in the earliest sunlight

~~of morning, dancing in the air, too rapid and too alive for us to perceive~~
~~pinpointing~~

~~precisely how they look and so fearless as they enter into the petals into the~~
~~golden~~

gold of the flowers waiting for them. The real beauty in these matters is to ~~extricate~~
~~discover all of value that lies buried in chaos~~ ~~that lies buried in chaos~~ ~~all that is potential in what~~

~~only~~ appears to be meaningless. *One has to find the value that lies buried in chaos,*

"⁴Yes, hear, hear," said Alois despite himself. No matter the ~~negative~~ *awful*

aspects of this awful man, ~~he~~ *Der Alte* ~~did~~ have a manner one was obliged, despite

Like a great snailly old actor,
 one's revulsion, to admire. *an old go* He had never met a man as eloquent as Der Alte.

Adi was thinking, "these bees can sting you and you are dead." He

shivered in the dank room of the old man's kitchen, shivered before the

improbability and incomprehensibility of dying, and yet it came over him in

the midst of this chill that he ~~felt~~ *did feel* closer to the old man than to his father, and

knew he could listen all day and all night to the wonderful words of that so-

odd person. Yes, the sounds that came out of his voice were ready to wash

through
~~through~~ the inside of yourself.

"Come and visit me," the old man succeeded in whispering to him

before Alois gave the signal to leave.

-6-

I do not know for certain how powerful an influence the exceptional
speech by Der Alte (so full of verbal ~~sterilities~~ ^{felicities} and ~~rodromontade~~ ^{extricacies}) could

have had on Adi—at no moment up to this point had I so regretted not being
^{present}
~~there~~ and thereby obliged to rely on my lesser agents—but I must say it had

its effect on the boy because many weeks later (on Christmas Eve, no less!)

he had ^{once} bundled himself into his warmest clothing after the rest of the house was ~~asleep~~ ^{asleep}

as entirely asleep, and ^{had gone out} ~~out he went~~ (to sit on the bench under the oak tree

where the ^{two} ~~two~~ Langstroth boxes had been set up, and ~~there~~ ^{he} remained for a

considerable time, ^{growing} ~~becoming~~ more and more chilled as the minutes elapsed.

Yet, he stayed, and having placed himself between the two boxes, there he

remained with each of his arms half-embracing the back of each box. He

was praying for the continued life of the bees who inhabited each ^{hive} ~~box~~.

As can be expected, this was of no small interest to me, and since we

did have entrance into Adi's thoughts—he was ^{undeniably} ~~certainly~~ one of ours—I ^{queried} ~~sent~~

^{(on what they could glean (if but a little more)}
my agents ~~back~~ again and again to dwell a few moments ~~on the boy's~~
^{from the far-ends of the boy's}

(thoughts. The more I received, the more valuable it appeared. He had heard

his father complain that ^{small} ~~the~~ ^{protecting} ~~screen~~ ^{hive} around the entrance, which covered a

^{now the loss}
a small hole had ~~been~~ torn away. It was not impossible that a mouse had

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decided that
entered the hive. Alois, having inspected the boxes, came to the conclusion

this — the hole was not large enough /
that it was unlikely, but Adi was convinced that there was one inside, and a

a mouse ~~who~~ had gotten in weeks ago. Since his father
he now sat beside the boxes, not knowing which one might have been
had repaired the screen weeks ago. Adi no
longer knew as he sat between the boxes
which one it might be, so he had set a hand
invaded since his father had repaired the screen that same day, weeks ago.
on each

Weeks ago! Anxiety had deepened for the boy each week. Now, on

the boy was full of his mother's
Christmas Eve with all the oncoming celebration of the birth of what Klara

told him was not only the Son of God "but the loveliest, sweetest, nicest

the loveliest, the sweetest,
human being ever on earth. And if you love Him, He will love you."

then
Adi had been certain this was the night to breathe the night air, no

matter how cold, for the essence of the Son of God would be in the wind on

a night so special as this. And that would ^{provide} give the strength he needed. For

Faxed 5/6/04
Thurs. D.

Judith - back to

he wished to summon into himself all the power that would be necessary to

kill the mouse with his thoughts.

I was more than fascinated ^{by such an} ~~with this~~ impulse. I knew ^{the limitations of} my agents well

enough to be confident that they had not been the inspiration for such a

thought, ^{no, not with that kind of} ~~and so intense~~ determination behind the thought. This had come

from Adi, ^{It was his alone, and therefore a} ~~and for me, it was a~~ most encouraging sign. If I had been present, ~~therefore~~

I would have fortified that sense of power, amplified it ^{substantially} ~~(yes, within bounds,~~

^(within some necessary bounds) ~~prodigiously,~~ so that the boy would be ready to believe that he could save

lives by his power to destroy other kinds of lives. That is one of the rarest

of the aptitudes that we can implant in our clients, and it demands a series of

small but concerted art-works, exquisitely focused dream-etchings, if you

will, ^{and other methods close to the arcane,}

Since I was not there, I accepted the incident as an augury of future promise, and ^{recognition} consoled myself with the thought that the Maestro might well have vetoed my suggestion ^{has to} on the grounds, already explained, that one ~~must~~ beware of projects ^{that are} too ambitious for children.

In any event, I was not ready to brood over a lost opportunity. More ^{(along with my assistants,} than enough was here to occupy me in St. Petersburg, and I was undergoing some considerable punishment as the price of my activities. Be it said that I had never encountered a group of Cudgels so ~~concerted and~~ brutal as the Russian crew, ^{grown & concerted at} so ^(they had become sensual) used over the last few centuries ^{to} engaging in ugly long ^{staving off} term battles with the many demons we succeeded in planting within the Greek Orthodox ranks. ^{In consequence, these Russian Cudgels} They were the harshest of veterans ^{and} so many of ^{not only} them were ^{but} powerfully motivated ^{but} indeed, one must speak of their zeal. ^{passessed of frightenning zeal} They

~~more than ready~~ ^{altogether, therefore} to defend the coronation of the young czar-to-be,

Nicholas the Second.

^{occasionally,} When the Maestro consulted me, ~~as was his wont,~~ ^{most occasionally,}

I presented ^a the notion that ^{later, it proposed} would actually ^{later} be adopted that our chances

of disrupting ^{the} ~~that~~ coronation ~~itself~~ were minimal, but ~~that~~ a powerful side-

measure before, or preferably, after the event could accomplish ^{much} ~~more for us~~.

As a presentation, it could be termed nothing less than cheeky since I had hardly any confident sense of what the O.O. was holding in mind for the future, but I had also known enough to speak my mind, since the Maestro has no desire to put up with ~~too much~~ ¹ lack of opinion among subordinates.

"It is much better to be wrong," he would tell us, "than to be stultifying. I

can always come closer to estimating the nature of the unfocused reality

the putative ~~concern~~ ^{standards}
 before us by comparing the lies and evasions you present, ~~That is much~~
 more useful to me than ^{a solemn} your silence for fear of being wrong."

Enough. It is easy to see that these matters in Russia were
 temporarily, at least, of more ^{concern} interest to me than the small ~~subdued~~ ^{subdued} events of
 Hafeld.

All the same, whether I was interested or not, Klara gave birth on
 January 21 to the new infant. ^{For Alois, there was little joy,}
~~It was not the much-anticipated~~ ^(by Alois)
~~strongman of the future,~~ ^{did not arrive} but, indeed, a little girl. ~~If Alois was dismayed~~

~~Now,~~ all the new ruckus and disorder of Klara's baby-feeding at night and baby
 yowling in the daytime, ^{was} for what? For a girl, when he ~~needed to have a~~ ^{had been counting on}
 powerhouse of a son ~~yet~~ for his old age instead of the three ^{boys} ~~he did have, a~~
^{try to} ~~beast a~~ ^{boy} ~~and a~~ ^{any baby} ~~little~~ ^{toddler} ~~cry baby~~ ^{snot}, yes, Alois was ~~hardly~~

unnready)

~~ready~~ to celebrate, but he did—at the tavern in Fischlham night after night

for quite a few nights (although the ^{beer soon} ~~beer~~ began to smell as sour as a ~~dirty~~

^{baby's throwback of milk}

~~baby~~.) Klara kept Paula as clean as ^{anyone} ~~he~~ could wish, but still, the ~~beer~~ made

^{now,} ~~him think of baby smell when it wasn't so good~~. So, he celebrated and ^{even as he}

complained ~~over each stein~~. There were now six human beings in his home,

and ^{→ no quiet one was he} late in spring there would be seven when Junior, the ~~noisiest~~, came

home, yes, the louder the tumult of voices in the bar, the more he ^{was ready to}

complained ~~of the~~ noise at home.

Indeed, the ^{steady clamor} ~~tavern noise~~ was enough to give us pause. Let men drink

~~enough~~ in a crowded room and a solidarity rises among them, an ability to

soar on the zephyrs of alcohol, a brotherly defiance against the demands and

depredations of angels and demons, a certainty that they are men and equal to both.

These are hardly the best working conditions for us, but openings present themselves, particularly when these good drinkers are alone again and on their way home. Give me a drunk staggering along on a narrow forest road, and I will certainly be ready for him. Sometimes, disgusted, we even shove them to the ground. They usually take it personally, their lament

is characteristic. "~~Something tripped me,~~" or "somebody shoved me,"

they often cry out. No one believes them, but they know better. Wrath had struck them between the shoulder blades and it was not their own rage, not at all.

-7-

Alois may have been ^(all-but) close to staggering from drink, ^{yet} but he was most

certainly feeling ^{too)} alive. ~~So, he did not~~ ^{(to} enter the house on his return, ^{Instead, he)} but sat

down ~~on the bench~~ ^{by the hive-boxes} and fished ^{out)} a rubber tube ^{which he} out of his
~~kept in his pocket these days. Then he burped.)~~
 pocket which he had taken with him before leaving for the tavern. (He was

~~not hungry~~ he had had ham and beans plus cucumber salad before going

out, and of course he could still taste the cucumbers ^{in each} whenever he burped,

^{almost agreeable} ~~but that was for lack of more beer~~ ^{despite the cold, he was in} No hurry ^{at all} could he feel sitting by ^{the}

boxes—he had his rubber tube and this he placed ^{one end of it} now against the ^{small} hive

entrance ^{which was open} after removing the plug. Inside, he could hear the inhabitants of

^{his} the little city, and a good many of them seemed to be humming ^{to)} a fine sound,

^{almost a tune,}
 (rich with little swells of contentment, he could just about swear ~~and, of~~)

would they not be content?
Of course, why ~~not~~ when you think of all the food he fed them through the mesh
at the other hole on the top of the Langstroth,
~~aperture on the top~~ hundreds of them, then thousands, ~~all~~ clustered up in

their turn against the fine meshcloth of the wide-mouthed jar, sucking out

honey and water against the pull of the vacuum ~~now at the top of the jar~~

large
~~now that it was bottom-up~~—these thoughts passed like horses on parade,

one at a time, and he tried to count how many bees might be inhabiting the

box by measure of the weight of what they were fed, but he was *too* ~~up~~ illuminated

Some where
to make such calculations, ~~so where~~ between 10,000 bees and 20,000 was

bound to be the answer for each hive, more than a pound of food a day,

felt
every day of this January. It was cold, but he ~~was~~ still warm, and despite

himself, knowing he should not really do it, no, don't disturb the bees, he

then he
knocked on the box anyway, ~~and~~ listened to the changes in sound. Were

Through the tube it
those alerts he heard ~~now~~ [?] ~~it~~ had all gone up in pitch. Curious, these

sounds. Like the strings of a crazy violin. Then quiet again. Soft. Like
~~countless~~
~~hundreds of~~ cats purring while asleep.

He roused himself long enough to go ~~in~~ ^{into the house} and get his shirt and pants off,
then he fell
before falling into bed, and passing off into sleep while still listening in his

mind to ~~the~~ ^{he} chorus of ~~bee~~ ^{heard} sounds he had ~~been listening~~ to just minutes ago,

and as his breath passed over a small ~~ridge of imbalance~~ ^{hesitation} and down into
sleep, he had time for one last thought, it was that
sleep, that he enjoyed those creature-sounds a good deal more than the yips
certainly

and blats and outright caterwauling of an infant, ~~the new one especially~~.

His dreams, however, were not good that night, as foul as stale beer
on a stomach full of misery. He had the notion soon followed by the full
a big and cavernous
belief of ~~the~~ dream that he was now living among his bees, yes, he had

passed away and become a bee, ^{for he was now} a denizen of the hive, ^{and} it was not agreeable. The bees were defecating all over the place, yes, there he was in one ^{filthy and} filthy vision of hell, one of many, suffering like all the other brother-creatures—no, sister-creatures—wasting away with the cramps and contractions of a severe bowel disease, all of them defecating in the cells and the aisles of the Langstroth box.

He looked to rouse himself from the dream. Because this was a dream. This was impossible. Healthy bees did not defecate in their own habitat (except perhaps for ^{the largest} lazy drones) no, he had heard the sound of his bees in their hives, they were honorable, they would fly outside to relieve themselves, they would wait until the weather was warm enough.

And now he was awake, ^{but} still agitated by his dream. There had been
a long ^{spell} ~~spell~~ of cold, ~~too cold~~ too cold for bees to dare to go out into the early

February air, and Alois lay there and ^{felt painfully aware} ~~had to think~~ of all the excrement

building up in his bees over all these months, how could they possibly hold

it? How awful it must be. And he tried ^{once more} ~~again~~ to recall the sounds of the

hive. Had he been amiss to assume ^{he had heard} ~~there had been~~ contentment among

them? These were bees. Could he begin to detect the difference between

happiness and panic, stability and near-madness? No, he told himself, he

did know—those bees had not been suffering, he was sure they sounded ^{content} ~~at~~

~~right~~.

It was warm in the morning, the first warm morning of early

February, a thaw, and as Alois came out of the house, the bees were

everywhere in the air, hundreds of them, thousands—who could count?

They were leaving their droppings ~~in a circle~~ all over the place, fifty and

then a hundred feet out and away from their box, ^{such} ~~each~~ a curious caca

smelling like ripe bananas, and so visible on the snow, this huge circle of

white with ^{its} innumerable yellow spots, ^{new} Klara's laundry out on the line was

also part of it, ~~plus~~ so many of Paula's diapers. It was an immense

defecation. Alois stepped it off. Yes, you could still find yellow spots ^{in the snow} one

hundred paces away from the bench with the hive box.

Klara was as furious as she dared to be. ^{later} ~~All~~ the clean laundry now

stained. "You never alerted me to be careful," she said to her husband.

"I am sorry," he said, "that you will have all this work ^{to do} again. But ^{how can one apologize?} ~~what can one do?~~ It is, after all, an act from your God."

She walked away. ~~One more impossibility~~^{and breath} for Klara to swallow. A half hour later, water boiling in two huge pots, she ~~collected the outraged~~^{took the sorted} garments ~~and set out to do them again.~~^{off the line}

Alois could not really tell himself that he felt sorry. He was so happy for the bees. What delight they had shown as they flew about. Since it was a Saturday, Adi was about and Alois, on impulse, decided to introduce him to some real talk ~~about a few real subjects.~~

"Everybody shits," he told the boy. "Everything shits, all things living. You ~~learn how to get rid of shit or it will live with you. It will ruin~~^{ruin} you. Understand? You have to keep yourself clean, do you hear? Look at these bees. They are wonderful. Wunderbar They hold it in all winter so

they won't dirty the hive. ^{we can} You be the same. We are good people. We keep everything ~~clean~~ and spotless where we live.

"But, my father," said little Adolf, "what about Edmund?"

"What about him?"

"He still does it in his pants."

"That is your mother's concern, not yours."

Later in the day, Adi remembered when Alois, Junior, had stuck a dab of excrement right on his nose, and the recollection brought forth the oddest cry from his throat, so humiliated, so full of glee, that he was churning with discomfort and wanted to urinate. ^{Adi} He could not get over his excitement at the cleansing flight. Those bees had been so happy. Were they dancing in the wind? There had been so much ^{caca} excrement in them, and now they were

light. They were free. He couldn't help it. He couldn't stop his giggles.

His mother ^{had been} ~~was~~ so full of fury at what had happened to ^{the} ~~her~~ laundry.

Now he remembered what Angela had whispered to him one morning

on the way to school. "^{Your mother has} ~~The women have~~ a saying," she said. 'Kinder,

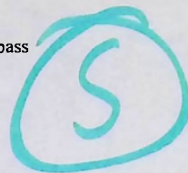
Kucher, Kirche.'" He nodded. He had heard it already.

"There is more to it," she said. "Just ask your mother. Klara told it to

^{in secret} ~~me~~ 'Kinder, Kucher, Kirche und Kacke.' You understand?"

In the midst of his giggling, Adi realized that he would really like to

visit Der Alte. If only it did not also make him so ~~afraid~~ ^{uneasy},



hive is exposed to the sun, you must get me to rescue it, to move it to the shade. Otherwise, the bees will become agitated, yes, almost to the point of insanity. They will feel trapped and in the course of such a disturbance, buzzing around inside the box with no room to fly, they will use up all the air inside, yes, they will consume too much oxygen, and then the temperature in the hive will proceed to rise. If it gets over twenty degrees above the heat on the hottest day of summer, even the wax of the cells in the combs will melt. The cells will collapse. The colony will perish."

He had heard all this on the drive home from Der Alte's house after the first meeting. It was dark by then in the woods and the boy listened to his father with an unhappy sense of all the creatures in the wood whom he could not see, but they would hear, and he vowed that when summer came,

he would never allow a hive-box to sit in the sun, no, he wouldn't, but Alois, Junior would be back by then and he would not be good. He would leave a box in the sun.

Der Alte, alerted to their visit, was ready with a spoonful of honey, and the taste left the boy with such a glow that what with the weight in his stoach and the excitement in his heart, he was almost ill.

All this quieted, however, for Der Alte and his father had a long conversation about the marketing of honey, and there was some dispute on a price which Adi could hardly follow, nor did he care to. He was disappointed that Der Alte, once he had offered the honey, did not seem to be interested in him.

Adi was mistaken. After business was done, the old man could not stop talking to Alois, and to Adi as well, about the mysteries of bees—one had to contemplate it—the further and further mysteries to be found in contemplating the existence of these tiny creatures with their honey and their near to immortal sting.

Yes, Der Alte was off on a conversational discourse, rich, not interruptable, and fascinating, despite himself, to Alois, who would retain enough of the metaphor to expound on it himself tomorrow night at Fischhaus. Something grandiose to offer the dolts! Adi, in his turn, was—no other word is accurate—Adi was spellbound. Words he could not understand altogether were of less importance than those he could, and besides, the sound of words he did not know was more than rich in some

kind of meaning, as if his mother, in the good old days, before Edmund had been born, was rubbing oil into his back even as his pain seemed to leave his flesh by way of her palms and fingertips. How he listened!

"Can we," asked Der Alte, "ever pay enough attention to a work of creation so full of genius in asseveration with wise measure and wisdom and the everlasting quintessential power to surprise us, these little devils come to us from the Good Lord's science, yes, His divine and curious aesthetis—so enigmatic, so supernatural. Our bees are a coronation of nature's wisdom in the most bizarre and unexpected form, the very reification—if you will permit me the word—of God's secret rites, His investiture in wonder and awe."

Der Alte went on and on. How he could go on! His endless references to God's ballet, God's gymnastics, yes! God's gymnastics, God's intuition of the paradoxes of Creation. He was like many of the devils I had known. They were always ready to praise God aloud, but I did not enjoy Der Alte's hyperbole. It was too large, too soulful, too suggestive of private regrets at the depth of his commitment to us.

In any event, he went on so long that Alois was again repelled. That too much time elapsed without hearing the sound of his own voice was certainly at the core of his irritation, but he did not know if he liked the look in his son's eye. His blue eyes, like Klara's, were always so large and so alive, but there was reverence in them now.

"Why don't you take us into the other room you have here and show him your little viewing box," Alois was finally able to interject.

It was obvious that Der Alte would prefer not to, but Adi spoke up.

"Oh, please, sir," he cried out, "I have never seen the inside of the bees' home. They have been with us back at the house, for so long—" he tried to count quickly—"for seven, no, I think it is eight weeks, and I have not seen even one of them. I don't want to wait until summer, please."

"Spring," said Der Alte but he shrugged. "All right," he said, "but be prepared. They will not look like what I have been talking about."

They didn't. In the other room of the hut, with a small stove, a sink, a hand-pump above the sink, and a pail beneath for the run-off, was also a kitchen table and at one end was sitting a narrow box, perhaps two feet long

and one foot wide, which would soon reveal itself once the black curtains on eac side were drawn. It was constructed of two glass walls between which resided the vertical frame, visible on both sides, with endless small cells, no larger in diameter and depth than Adi's smallest fingernail. Were these the cells his father would talk about?

Adi was as disappointed as if he had been struck in the solar plexus.

(did not look interesting, and then it was)
At first glance, it ~~was all so dab~~, and then it was dull, but chaotic, a cluster
(but since they were no larger)
of endlessly pullulating little things, hardly bigger than pills in a bottle, and
it was
~~and dull to watch. They~~
they kept climbing in and out and over each other, startled by the light, a

poor helpless gang of congested, jam-packed, over-stuffed, over-crammed, brimming, feverish, rioting, pullulating teming assembly of what looked to

be squashy little creatures. Adi had not been so disappointed since he had first seen Edmund's wizened homoncular little face on Klara's breast.

It was a leaden and deadening surprise. They did not look that much alive although they did move. They could have been beans stirring in a pot. They were alive. They looked nervous at being exposed but still so sluggish. What a terrible way to live! They must miss the sun, the boy thought. He had been thinking of them all the months since summer, recalling them as flashes of light in the garden, and now they were stupefied. Were they very cold? They pushed against each other all the time. Were the ones inside the cluster crying out in ways he could not hear? Adi had never seen tomb but he had read the word and others like "bier" and "pit" and "sepulcher," "grave" and "vault" and "pit," he had looked at

indistinct photographs in some of his father's war books, and now he chose to sigh in preference to bursting into tears. Could those bees breathe? What an awful way to live.

"At this moment," said Der Alte, "they are the poorest of the poor. I know you see them as no better than slugs in the slime of their own exudate, but that is because they live at the extremities of existence—they offer the sweetest substance to come to us from nature, and yet with enough of them upon you, prepare for the end. They can sting you to death. Here they sleep and root about in a morass, but in summer, you will see them gain, as wonderful and as beautiful as drops of dew before us in the earliest sunlight of morning, dancing in the air, too rapid and too alive for us to perceive precisely how they look and so fearless as they enter into the ^{golden} petals into the

tree where the two Langstroth boxes had been set up. There he remained for a considerable time, growing more and more chilled as the minutes elapsed. Yet, he stayed, and having placed himself between the two boxes, he kept each of his arms embracing the back of each box. He was praying for the continued life of the bees.

As can be expected, this was of no small interest to me. Since we did have entrance into Adi's thoughts—he was undeniably one of ours—I queried my agents again and again to dwell on what they could glean (if but a little more) from the tag-ends of the boy's thoughts. The more I received, the more valuable it appeared. He had heard his father complain that the screen protecting the hive entrance, a small hole, had nonetheless been torn away. It was not impossible that a mouse had entered the hive. Alois, having decided that this was unlikely—the hole was not large enough—but Adi was convinced a mouse had gotten in. Since his father had repaired the screen weeks ago, Adi no longer knew as he sat between the boxes which one it might be, so he had to set a hand on each.

Now, being Christmas Eve, the boy was full of his mother's oncoming celebration of the birth of what Klara told him was not only the Son of God "but the nicest human being ever on earth. The loveliest, the sweetest. And if you love Him, He will love you."

Adi had become certain then that this was the night to breathe the night air, no matter how cold. For the Son of God must be in the wind on a night so special as this. And that would provide the strength he would need. For he wished to summon into himself all the power that would be necessary to kill the mouse with his thoughts.

I was more than fascinated by this desire. I knew the limitations of my agents well enough to be confident that they had not been the inspiration for such a thought, no, not when there was that kind of determination present. This had come from Adi. It was his alone, and therefore a most encouraging sign. If I had been present, I would have fortified his sense of power, amplified it (within some necessary bounds), so that the boy would be ready to believe that he could save lives by possessing the power to destroy other kinds of lives. That is one of the rarest of the aptitudes that we are able to implant in our clients, but it does demand a series of small but concerted art-works, exquisitely focused dream-etchings, if you will, and rare methods close to arcane.

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In any event, I was not ready to brood over a lost opportunity. More than enough was here to occupy me in St. Petersburg, and I, along with my assistants, was undergoing some considerable punishment as the price of my activities. Be it said that I had never encountered a group of Cudgels so brutal as the Russian crew. Over the last few centuries, they had developed an exceptional capability to stave off the many demons we succeeded in planting within Greek Orthodox ranks. In consequence, these Cudgels—rough as Russian monks—were not only powerfully motivated, but in command of frightening zeal. How ready they were to defend the coronation of the young czar-to-be, Nicholas the Second.

When the Maestro consulted me—as did occur occasionally—I presented a notion that in time he would actually adopt later. It proposed that our chances of disrupting the coronation were minimal, whereas a powerful distraction after the event could accomplish much.

As a presentation, it could be termed nothing less than presumptuous since I had hardly any real knowledge of what the O.O. was holding in mind for the future. Still, I had been wise enough to speak my mind. (The Maestro does not like to put up with lack of opinion among subordinates.) "It is much better to be wrong," he would tell us, "than to be stultifying. I can always come closer to estimating the nature of the reality before us by

comparing the misperceptions you present. All of that is much more useful to me than a solemn silence for fear of being wrong."

Enough. It is easy to see that these matters in Russia were temporarily, at least, of more concern to me than the small events of Hafeld.

All the same, whether I was interested or not, Klara gave birth on January 21 to the new infant. For Alois, there was small joy. The much-anticipated strongman of the future did not arrive, but, instead, a little girl. So, all the ruckus and disorder of baby-feeding at night and baby yowling in the daytime, was for naught when all the while he had been counting on a powerhouse of a son for his old age instead of three boys he could hardly boast about, a wild one, a mamma's boy, and a crybaby snot, yes, Alois was unready to celebrate, but he did—at the tavern in Fischlham night after night for quite a few nights (although the beer began to smell as sour as the baby's throwback of milk). There were now six human beings in his home. Late in spring there would be seven when Junior would come back from Strones, yes, the louder the tumult of voices in the bar, the more he was ready to complain of the noise at home.

Indeed, the tavern clamor was enough to give us pause. Let men drink in a crowded room and solidarity rises among them, an ability to soar

on zephyrs of alcohol, a brotherly defiance against the demands of angels and demons, a certainty that they are men and equal to all else.

These are hardly the best working conditions for us. Openings, however, do present themselves, particularly when these good drinkers are alone again and on their way home. Offer me a drunk staggering along on a narrow forest road, and I will be ready for him. Sometimes, disgusted, we even slam them to the ground. They usually take it personally, their lament is characteristic. "Somebody shoved me," they often cry out. Nobody believes them, but they know better. Wrath had struck between the shoulder blades, and it was not their own rage, not at all.

Alois may have been weaving to a degree from drink, yet, on his return, he was most certainly feeling too alive to enter the house. Instead, he sat by the hive-boxes and fished out a rubber tube he had been keeping in his pocket these days. Then he burped. He had had sauerbraten and potatoes plus cucumber salad some hours ago, and could still taste those cucumbers in each burp. But that was agreeable. Despite the cold, he was in no hurry. He had his rubber tube and he placed one end of it now against the wall of the hive, and so could hear the thrumming of the inhabitants of his little city, a fine sound, almost a tune, rich with little swells of contentment. He could just about swear to that. Of course, why would they not be content? Hundreds, then thousands of his bees, all clustered up in their turn against the fine meshcloth of the wide-mouthed jar, there to suck out honey-and-water against the pull of the vacuum. He swayed a little in the absorption of his curiosity and large thoughts passed like horses on parade, one at a time. He tried to count how many bees might be inhabiting the box right now. He could do such a calculation. He had kept a record of the weight of what they had been fed, but he was too illumined to make such calculations right now. Call it somewhere around 20,000. That was bound to be the answer for each hive, more than a pound of food a day, every day of this January. It was cold, but he felt warm. Despite himself,

knowing he should not really do it, no, don't disturb the bees, he knocked on the box anyway. Then, through the tube, he listened to the shift in sound. Were those alerts? It had all gone up in pitch. Like the strings of a crazy violin. Then near to quiet again. Soft. Like countless cats. All purring while asleep.

He roused himself long enough to go into the house and get his shirt and pants off. Then he fell into bed, passing into sleep still living with the chorus he had heard just minutes ago. His breath passed over a small hesitation and down he went into sleep, having time for one last thought—it was that he certainly enjoyed these little creature-sounds a good deal more than the yips and caterwauling of an infant.

His dreams, however, were not good that night. They turned as foul as stale beer on stomach-misery. He entered a large and cavernous interior and was living among his bees. It was not agreeable. Bees were defecating all over the place, and there he was, one of many, suffering like all the other brother-creatures—no, sister-creatures—wasting away in contractions of a severe bowel disease, all of them defecating all over the cells and aisles of the Langstroth box—what a foul and filthy vision.

He looked to rouse himself. Because this was a dream. Healthy bees did not defecate in their own habitat (except perhaps for the worst and

laziest of the drones) no, he had heard the sound of his bees in their hives, and they were honorable. They would fly outside to relieve themselves. They would wait until the weather was warm enough for them to go out of the hive and do their duty.

Now he was awake, and still agitated by the dream. There had been a long spell of cold, too cold for bees to dare to go out into this early February air. As Alois lay there he felt painfully aware of all the excrement building up over all these months in his bees. How could they hold it? And he once again tried to recall the sounds of the hive. Had he really heard contentment coming to him from their midst? These were bees. Could he really detect the difference between happiness and panic, calm and near-madness? Yes, he told himself, he did know—he was sure they were content.

It was warm in the morning, the first warm morning of early February, a thaw, and as Alois came out of the house, the bees were everywhere in the air, hundreds of them, thousands—who could count? They were leaving their droppings all over the place, fifty and then a hundred feet out and away from their hive-box, such a curious caca smelling like ripe bananas, and so visible on the snow, this huge circle of white dotted with its yellow spots now. Innumerable yellow spots. Klara's laundry out on the line was also part of it—so many of Paula's diapers. An

immense defecation. Alois stepped it off. Yes, you could even find yellow spots in the snow one hundred paces away from the hive box.

Klara was furious, as furious as she dared to be. All her clean laundry now stained. "You never alerted me to be careful," she said to her husband.

"I am sorry," he said, "that you will have all this work to do again. But how can one apologize? It is, after all, an act we have received from your God."

She walked away. A half hour later, water boiling in two huge pots, she took the soiled garments off the line and set out to do them again.

Alois was not about to tell himself that he felt sorry. He was too happy for the bees. What delight they had shown as they flew about. Since it was a Saturday, Adi was about and Alois, on impulse, decided to introduce him to the sound of some real talk.

"Everybody shits," he told the boy. "Everything shits, all things living. That is as it should be. However, you must learn how to get rid of shit or it will shit on you. Understand? You must keep yourself clean, do you hear? Look at these bees. They are wonderful. They hold it in all winter so they won't dirty the hive. We can be the same. We are good people. We keep everything spotless where we live.

"But, my father," said little Adolf, "what about Edmund?"

"What about him?"

"He still does it in his pants."

"That is your mother's concern, not yours."

Later in the day, Adi remembered when Alois, Junior, had stuck a dab of excrement right on his nose, and the recollection brought forth the oddest cry from his throat, so humiliated, so full of glee, that he was churning with discomfort. Adi could not get over his excitement at the cleansing flight. Those bees had been so happy. Were they dancing in the wind? There had been so much caca in them, and now they were light. They were free. He couldn't help it. He couldn't stop his giggles. It had all made his mother so angry.

Now he remembered what Angela had whispered to him one morning. "Your mother has a saying," she said. "Kinder, Kucher, Kirche." He nodded. He had heard it already. "Come on," he said, "we are late for school."

"There is more to it," she said. "Klara told it to me in secret. 'Kinder, Kucher, Kirche und Kacke.' You understand?"

In the midst of giggling at the recollection, Adi realized that he would like to visit Der Alte. He wanted to, so much. If only it did not also leave him feeling so uneasy.

The next day, Sunday, was warm again, and once more the bees were out. Adi was feeling more than an impulse to see if he could find the way over that forest road with its turns. Yes, much more than an impulse. It was as if something as sure as a rope was pulling on him.