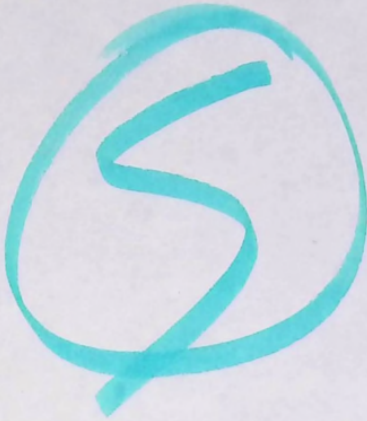




Book IV

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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 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 filled with a colony of bees 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 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. Since Alois' pension in that year may have been the present equivalent of sixty or seventy thousand dollars a year now, it is likely that he rued the new outlay since Der Alte sold him a sufficiency of items (and some not-quite-necessary) that came to the rough equivalent of a thousand dollars today. Alois, fully anticipating that he would pay too much, was weary, nonetheless, of dealing with the old man and so did not press beyond the small success of acquiring 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 usual strength of negotiation.

However, it was at just this point that I was ordered to leave Adi and the other members of the family. That night I embarked for St. Petersburg where I was brought to focus on the needs and dimensions of a 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 might be too complex a matter to discuss at this point. While devils are able to travel in the guise of human beings, that is, we can certainly insinuate ourselves for a period 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 usually employ more rapid means. (But, of that, I will wait to speak.) For now, leave it that I was instructed to go by the quick track and so 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. Once 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 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 overarching demand to satisfy the Maestro) then I had, I confess, become a little too full of the Hitler family's intimacies. 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. All of us knew that, major and minor devils all. Even at the time, I sensed that this could amount to more than any of our recent full-dress efforts to disrupt the larger purposes of the other side. It is true. I swear it. I sensed 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 education) I should know by now (and do!) that not even the best of

readers will put up for long with an author who can leave his narrative long enough to jump into what must seem, at first, an 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 managed to get 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. was now dissatisfied with the formal religions allegedly serving in His name—although He was finally responsible for

them. Yes, their faults were by His clumsy doing—all 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 sects and off-shoots of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and the multitude of pagan beliefs in Africa.

By 1895, a change had also occurred, however, in the viewpoint of our Maestro. Or, so did I presume to perceive. Through the centuries, the O.O. had been a most incisive critic of the follies, disproportions, errors, miscalculations, and sheer blunders of the D.K.; indeed, I had to agree! God, the Creator, having worked His way through the locks, hazards, and blind alleys of evolution, had, by the end, trapped Himself into grievous misjudgments concerning the potentialities of humankind. In contrast, the O.O., for the large part, had kept us reacting to the D.K.'s endeavors, 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 possessing what I may as well term the spirit of the species. One of our more effective

methods over the last two thousand years has certainly been to encourage religiosity of the most formalized, intense, 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 who are 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—proves intrinsically incapable of serving as a tool for the mind. It can find no answers to the contradictions now embedded in human existence. By that means, we have succeeded in tormenting the best minds of mankind for century after century. All-Good and All-Powerful. Indeed! Yes, we had looked to encourage every fundamentalist we could find, Islamist, or Born-Again, 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 certainties!" 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 might be one example) and some most improperly designed. (The dinosaur, the squid, the leech and the mosquito come immediately to mind.)

By the time He raised primates to the level of humans, He 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 a power to decide that would be free, on occasion, of Him. Just so confident was His enthusiasm, His belief in this latest Creation.

Such miscalculation was calamitous. It was equal to raising so powerful a dog that the hound turns on its master. God's finest creation, men and women, given free will, proved unmanageable—they gave every indication that 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 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 now obliged to go back to His old judgments as Jehovah, and He proceeded through His new religions 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 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 beyond what the D.K. intends, and human emotions will be further 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 had been the working intention of our Maestro. And be assured that our activities have not been restricted to churchgoers. Other varieties of human type can also be 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, in this era, approaching the end of the 19th Century, I began to sense that the O.O. was contemplating a revolutionary change in our procedures. Was he now looking to develop a species of faith designed expressly by him rather than by the Dummkopf? Was our Maestro actually prepared to take this vertiginous leap from criticism to Creation?

I could not conceive of what form such a new set of beliefs might involve—I was too mired in my duties—but I will say that the possibility did cause 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 throes of developing 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 catastrophic mass 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, the balance did slip away from Him. The self-righteousness so necessary to survival also produced envy. The self-righteous, unless immensely successful, cannot look with equanimity upon good 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 over the eons of evolution by way of trial and error, 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.

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There is no question that I will yet indicate 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. Somewhat later, I will attempt to outline the more exceptional activities we were to undertake in St. Petersburg and Moscow that 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 will, I expect, be of interest, but, until now, having followed the intimacies of apiculture with close attention, I do not wish to ignore its continuation at this point.

Let me point, however, to a serious difficulty. My knowledge of the various experiences of Alois, Klara, and the children were communicated to me during my absence by the three agents I left behind. (Naturally, given the greater import of the activities in Russia, I had brought my two best assistants along.) That left a problem. Lesser devils are, in many a regard, comparable to lesser humans. This is particularly true of their insensitivity to significant detail.

While I can retain a reasonably close notion of what is transpiring among my clients and their near associates even while relying on the reports of mediocre agents, the work does lose some focus. During my absence, I could not allocate many available energies to thinking about Alois and Company. So, the account of these missing months—October '95 to June '96—must 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 pursue). Otherwise, nothing of great moment did occur until the return of Junior, Alois Hitler, Junior. But that was not until June, by which time I too had returned to them.

My narrative will not suffer then 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 reasonable level of performance. If I am not ready to explain our systems of recruitment 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. 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 lop off a fraction of His stock of recently deceased 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 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, the Maestro was obliged then to use a very large part of his resources for shaping and training the low-grade and highly disturbed material we did receive. It is analogous in difficulty to developing a symphony orchestra out of soldiers cashiered 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.

Forewarned, forearmed. I will now present a small improvement on the summary I received of what went on with Alois 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 in detail concerning Alois' obsessions 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. chooses to call "the markets of sleep," most dreams of 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. Indeed, a plethora of superficial information arrived, more than enough to annoy me. I knew that I was receiving an insufficient portrait. My agents perceived Alois as weak, but I knew they lacked the requisite insight required when dealing with the anxieties 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 more powerful. Nuance is demanded, and that was precisely what my 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 can and will summarize what I received, let me abjure the reader to delay passing judgment. Since the man who became Adolf Hitler emerged from a childhood with this father and mother, it is obvious that we need to ascertain

Klara and Alois' real strengths and, needless to say, their significant weaknesses.

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 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 not to forget to change before going out to the hive-boxes under the oak tree. Somber colors, he knows all too well, will irritate bees, knows that much by old 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, no less, on the exposed flesh of her ample breast. 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. Shoots of fear, bright as rockets, fire off in his stomach.

Nonetheless, Alois, in some part, remains a good peasant. He has not forgotten that after a small or large disaster, one does well to be on the alert for whatever value might still be embedded in the misfortune itself. For example, his medical theses were stimulated by the alleviation of pain in his knees on the following day—bee stings seemed to be good for his rheumatism. 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 offering exactly the stock that he needed, for whatever reason, to get rid of, still, the selling point (to Alois' present shame) was that Italian stock were easy to

handle. They were gentle, Der Alte assured him. And they were incontestably more beautiful, what with their 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! In contrast, the Austrian honey-bee was hairy, it was gray, and it did not gleam like these all-but-gilded Italians he had purchased. 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. Shouldn't he, after all, have waited for the spring? Now, marking time until 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 stuffed with some millions of sperm cells from the five, six, seven, or eight drones she had phallically defenestrated last June), would be in hibernation now. She would not be laying eggs, no, not for another four or five months. Her remaining and inactive hive would be

gathered in a cluster for warmth, waiting for the honey 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, 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 opening the box might so lower the temperature that 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 your new voyagers 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."

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Alois was about ready to recognize the given. If he had stood in the dock before himself as judge, he would have found the defendant guilty. How could retirement prove so enfeebling to a strong man? He had bought the farm on impulse and now, had purchased 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 over the old straw skep! Yet, why so

suddenly had he committed himself to apiculture in the winter? Hadn't that also been done on too quick an impulse? Der Alte had had the consummate nerve to say to him, even as Alois left, "You will soon see how much work I have saved you."

Indeed! What Alois saved in work, he now spent in worry. 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. His two populated boxes now properly installed under the oak tree (no, never beneath the walnut tree for nuts would pelt the ground in late spring and summer, their shells hard as stone, and might 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. Two occupied cities housed in two boxes. Each day he read the temperature of the heat within each box, and did his weighing once a week, keeping up that diary full of data and notes. Part of the real problem, however, 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, undertake 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 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, or the bees could be drawn to it and 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 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 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?

Had he gotten into all this merely to be occupied 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 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 these bees would know by the color—precisely which hive-box they

belonged to. By the color, of course. Not red, not orange—those colors were unrecognizable by bees, how strange, he remarked to Klara, considering the number of red flowers they entered every summer day.

Still, he was enjoying working with his hands for the duration of the carpentry 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." All the same, it was a prejudicial 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 own natural virtues and powers. But in that case, why was he supposed to be proud of German blood? He was an Austrian, proud of an Emperor who could live with the immense and sometimes idiotic problems of keeping the Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, 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 Mad King Ludwig II. Crazy Bavarians and those Prussians with a ramrod up their ass, speak of good German blood? Yet, he said to himself, "All the same, I know what it means," and he pondered what it might signify to say to himself that he knew something when, in fact, he didn't, not quite. Except in some way he certainly did.

This, he decided, was a question to be taken up in the bar at Fischlham. Was one's true loyalty to one's culture (which ultimately, Alois decided, might be equal to one's language) or was it to one's nation? Could it be as simple as saying that to be German was to have German blood?

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

Before long, he was back in the tavern. Just about every day. There was one pleasure he could not relinquish. The dolts, full of their superiority

(that they had been stuck in one place for life!) were coming nonetheless to see Alois as an expert on apiculture. Maybe he still had a lot to learn but he did 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, he now presented as his own wisdom. Honesty and modesty were excellent virtues but were best employed when dealing with superiors and experts. An inferior mind wanted nothing more than to feel they with wise men when they were drinking. Being more available to the locals than Der Alte, Alois had, for practical purposes, had become the local bee expert. One farmer even walked over one Sunday afternoon for advice on how to get started. Alois overwhelmed him with the subtleties and difficulties of feeding a hive through the winter.

"You cannot open the lid of the Langstroth," he said, "so how do you get the mixture to them? Every other day, you must feed them, and this mixture is precise, the honey is diluted, one part honey to one part water, but this must be honey from your own bees—that means you must be able to trust the man who gives you the honey for winter feedings when you purchase his bees. Trust is essential."

Even as they were both nodding their heads with something of the same reverence with which Klara would genuflect before a cross, Alois was asking himself if he could really trust the honey he had received from Der Alte. What a laugh for that grandiose doctor and piss-bum if all of Alois' bees were dead of disease by springtime. But Alois could dispose of such anxieties by assigning rule-of-thumb ratios to them. (He would expect that

Der Alte was 80% trustworthy. After all, it would hurt him too if Alois' bees went kaput.)

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

"Ah," said Alois, "there is a technique. You open a very small plug on the top of the box and you lay the feeder over the top of that. It's a special feeder! A five liter jar with a cover of the finest mesh over the mouth. Into it, you have placed water that has been heated but not boiled, and you stir in the sugar until 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 may be better. More expensive, but easier. You do not have to trust the source. Perfectly simple. A different ratio, however. Three parts of sugar to two of water."

Alois was feeling something of himself again, yes, the fine fellow he had been before his retirement. "The trick," he said, "is to master the technique of the special feeder. Because you not only put in the liquid nourishment, and cover the mouth of the jar with the mesh, but you must have a small pump built into the jar to create a vacuum since you will be holding the vessel upside-down over the bung hole above the brood waiting to be fed. Do you follow? The vacuum in the jar keeps the sugar-water from pouring out, but the bees can absorb the liquid through the tiny spaces

in the cloth mesh. I feed over one liter of sugar-water or honey-and-water to them once a day, and after every feeding I wash the jar in boiled water.

Cleanliness is an absolute demand in that matter."

All the while he was expounding these matters, and offering procedures for calculating the amount of sugar or honey needed for each box over the course of a month, he was sensing the commencement of new anxieties. Was there to be a direct penalty for such bluffing? Alois did not fool himself. Being a great expert was a bad bluff. By the time his visitor had left, Alois was out in the cold again, staring at his two double boxes (honey-box above brood box) and wondering if disease would strike these colonies before winter had finished.

He spent the night reading his books and had dreams of living in one of his boxes, himself a bee. Would it turn into a matter of clustering together in deepest and darkest obscurity? How could they 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? 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 thousand facets in each eye, had a kind of seventh sense that could penetrate into the caverns and catacombs and labyrinths of darkness.

By the end of the dream, Alois was in a nightmare. His bees multiplied in the darkness of the hive and then they became so many that they could no longer bear their confines. They fled from the box and flew

away, so far away, they could not be found and then 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 in June? He felt for Klara in the dark, and his hand came across her belly. She was so big now, and yet her new one wasn't due until January. Would he yet 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 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 owner the country store in Fischlham where once a week, on Saturday, se and Angela would buy a few foodstuffs they did not raise in their garden and a roast of meat—no livestock as yet for them at Hafeld, not with Alois swallowed up in his bees. Klara liked Mr. Rosetnmeier, and had even tried to talk to him about the future sale of their honey. Alois had told her not to make any deals 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 Rostenmeier, and she would be the in-between, even 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 transaction, she hardly knew why.

Now Alois would go to Der Alte. She knew that. "I thought," she said in the darkness, while he patted the giant-to-be in her belly, "that you didn't like him at all, yes, I remember you said you would have to smell him."

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

"Yes, yes, yes," said Klara, "but you told me you don't trust Der Alte. Yes?" She was close to almost hysterical at being torn out of agreeable 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."

"You feel embarrassed by your commitment to him," he told her.

"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.

Devaque - here is 5/6/oct.
 1 day earlier than 5/7/oct
 Check this earlier day
 to make sure that
 it is no conflicting
 changes.

Book IV

-1-

Done

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 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 (with a colony of bees 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 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. Since Alois' pension in that year may have been the present equivalent of sixty or seventy thousand dollars a year now, it is likely that he rued the new outlay since Der Alte sold him a sufficiency of items (and some not-quite-necessary) that came to the rough equivalent of a thousand dollars today. Alois, fully anticipating that he would pay too much, was weary, nonetheless, of dealing with the old man and so did not press beyond the small success of acquiring 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 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 of Austria.) Three of my agents were deputized to remain and I embarked for St. Petersburg where I was brought to focus on the needs and dimensions of a 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, at this point, too complex a matter to discuss. While devils are able to travel in the guise of human beings, that is, we can certainly insinuate ourselves for a period 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 more rapid means. (But, of that, I will wait to speak.) For now, leave it that I was instructed to go by the quick track and begin my orientation into the late Nineteenth Century Russian soul—belly, vices, beliefs, harmonies and inner disharmonies—by morning of the next day. Once 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 day-to-day variations in the 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. 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 too full of the Hitler family's intimacies. While they were the focus of my interest in that region, 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. All of us knew that, major and minor spirits all. Even at the time, I sensed that this could amount to more than any of our recent full-dress efforts to disrupt the larger purposes arrayed on the other side. It is true. I swear it. I could feel 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 education) I should know by now (and do!) that not even the best of readers will put up for long with an author who can leave his narrative long enough to jump into what must seem, at first, an 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 managed to get 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 dissatisfied with the formal religions allegedly serving in His name—although He was finally responsible for them. Yes! Their faults were by His clumsy doing—all the unhappy structures of the Catholics and the Protestants, the Greek Orthodox, the Orthodox Jews, the Reformed Jews, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. (I do not speak of the sects of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, but those were religions developed by humans rather than God.)

In any event, come 1895, a change had also occurred in the viewpoint of our Maestro. Or, so did I presume to perceive. Through the centuries, the O.O. had been a most incisive critic of the follies, disproportions, errors, miscalculations, and sheer blunders of the D.K.; indeed, I had to agree! God, the Creator, having worked His way through the locks, hazards, and blind alleys of evolution, had, by the end, trapped Himself into grievous misjudgments concerning the potentialities of humankind. In contrast, the O.O., for his large part, had kept us reacting to the D.K.'s endeavors, and had 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, what I may as well term the spirit of the species. One of our more effective methods over the last two thousand years has certainly been to encourage religiosity of the most 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 humans. You can find fine folk everywhere who are 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—proves intrinsically incapable of serving as a tool for the mind. It can find no answers to the contradictions now embedded in human existence. By that means, we have succeeded in tormenting the best minds of mankind for century after century. All-Good and All-Powerful. Indeed! Yes, we had looked to encourage every fundamentalist we could find, Islamist, or Born-Again, 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 certainties!" 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 might be one example) and some most improperly designed. (The dinosaur, the squid, the leech, the horse-fly, and the mosquito come immediately to mind.)

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

Such miscalculation was calamitous. It was equal to raising so powerful a beast that the hound turns on its master. God's finest creation,

men and women, given free will, proved unmanageable—they gave every indication that 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 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 now felt obliged to go back to His old judgments as Jehovah, and proceeded through His new development of religion 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 return back 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 beyond what the D.K. intends, and human emotions will be further

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 been the working intention of our Maestro. And be assured that our activities have not been restricted to churchgoers. Other varieties of human type can also be 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. My point is that as humankind was approaching the end of the 19th Century, the O.O. was contemplating a fundamental change in our procedures. I was now inclined to believe that he was looking to develop a species of faith designed expressly by him rather than by the Dummkopf. Did that mean that our Maestro was actually prepared to take a vertiginous leap from criticism to Creation?

I could not conceive of what form such a new set of beliefs might require from us—I was too mired in my duties—but I will say that the possibility did cause 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 throes of developing this—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 catastrophic mass 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 slip away from Him. Human self-righteousness so necessary to survival also produced envy. The self-righteous, unless immensely successful, cannot look with equanimity upon good 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 over the eons of evolution by way of trial and error, 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.

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There is no question that I will yet indicate 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. Somewhat later, I will attempt to outline the more exceptional activities we undertook in St. Petersburg and Moscow that were to 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, I expect,

of some future importance, but having followed the intimacies of apiculture with close attention, I do not wish to ignore its continuation at this point.

Let me point, however, to a serious difficulty. My knowledge of the various experiences of Alois, Klara, and the children were communicated to me during my absence by the three agents I left behind. (Naturally, given the greater import of our mission in Russia, I had brought my best assistants along.) That left me with a problem. Lesser devils are, in many a regard, comparable to lesser humans. This is particularly true of their insensitivity to significant detail.

While I can retain a reasonably close notion of what is transpiring among my clients and their near associates even while relying on the reports of mediocre agents, the work does lose its tone. During my absence, I could not allocate many energies to thinking about Alois & Co. So, the account of these missing months—October '95 to June '96—must 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 to a degree). Otherwise, nothing of great moment

did occur until the return of Junior, Alois Hitler, Junior. But that was not until June, by which time I too had returned.

My narrative will not suffer 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 reasonable level of performance. If I am not ready to explain our systems of recruitment in obtaining 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 Evil One personally on the alert for superior humans who might be ready to serve us, 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 off a fraction of His stock of recently deceased 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 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, the Maestro was obliged then to use a very large part of his resources for shaping and training the low-grade and highly disturbed material we did receive. It is analogous in difficulty to developing a symphony orchestra from soldiers cashiered out of 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.

Forewarned, forearmed. I will now present my small improvement on the summary I received of what went on with Alois, his bees, his wife, and his children 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 in detail concerning Alois' obsessions concerning this 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. chooses to call "the markets of sleep," most dreams of 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, a plethora of superficial information arrived, more than enough to annoy me. I knew that I was receiving an insufficient portrait. My agents perceived Alois as weak, but they lacked the requisite insight required when dealing with the anxieties 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 more powerful. Nuance is demanded, and that was precisely what my lower level of agents was 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 what I received, let me abjure the reader to delay passing judgment. We must not forget that the boy who later became Adolf Hitler emerged from a childhood with this father and mother. So, it has to be

obvious that we ascertain Klara and Alois' real strengths and, needless to say, their significant weaknesses.

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

His first concern (which I find 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 not to forget to change before going out to the hive-boxes under the oak tree. Somber colors, he knows all too well, do irritate bees, knows that by old 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, no less, on the exposed flesh of her ample breast. 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. Shoots of fear, bright as rockets, fire off in his stomach.

Nonetheless, Alois, in some part, remains a good peasant. He has not forgotten that after a small or large disaster, one does well to stay on the alert for whatever value might still be embedded in the misfortune itself. For example, his interesting medical theses were stimulated by the alleviation of pain in his knees on the following day—bee stings seemed to be good for his rheumatism. 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 selling exactly the stock that he needed, for whatever reason, to get rid of, still, the telling point (to Alois' present shame) was that Italian stock was more easy to handle. They were gentle, Der Alte assured him. And they were

incontestably more beautiful, what with their 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 Austrian honey-bee was hairy, it was gray, and it did not 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. Shouldn't he, after all, have waited for the spring? Now, marking time until 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 stuffed with some millions of sperm cells from the five, six, seven, or eight drones she had phallically defenestrated last June), would be in virtual hibernation now. She would not be laying eggs, no, not for another four or five months. Her remaining and inactive hive would be gathered in a cluster for warmth, waiting for the honey 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, 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 box might so lower the temperature that your 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 your little people 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."

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Alois was about ready to recognize the given. If he had stood in the dock before himself as judge, he would have found the defendant guilty. How could retirement prove so enfeebling to a strong man? He had bought the farm on impulse and now, had purchased 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 over the old straw skep! Yet, why so suddenly had he committed himself to apiculture in the winter? Hadn't that also been done on too quick an impulse? Der Alte had had the consummate

nerve to say to him, even as Alois left, "You will soon see how much work I have saved you."

Indeed! What Alois saved in work, he now spent in worry. He was still under sixty, damn it, not yet sixty, by a year and more, but he felt such a sense of inner weariness before these future responsibilities. His two populated boxes now set properly under the oak tree (no, never beneath the walnut tree for nuts would pelt the ground in late spring and summer with shells hard as stone, and might panic a few 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. Two occupied cities housed in two boxes. Each day he read the temperature of the heat within each box, and did his weighing once a week, keeping up that diary full of data and notes. Part of the real problem, however, was that he did not have enough work, just enough to leave him with a slew of worries. All through the dark months while feeding his winter bees (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, undertake 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 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, for the bees could be drawn to it and might 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 each night, negative or positive on the subject of keeping a winter hive. 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 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 occupied with 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 exteriors 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 these bees would know by the color—precisely which hive-box they belonged to. By the color, of course. Not red, not orange—those

colors were unrecognizable by bees, how strange, he remarked to Klara, considering the number of red flowers they entered every summer day.

Still, he enjoyed working with his hands for the duration of the carpentry. His worries eased. For a week. His chest even puffed up again with an old truism. "Good German blood understands," said Alois to himself, "that blessings do not come from God, but from hard work. That idea is as safe as a sound house." Still, it was an unfair remark. Why not say, "Good Austrian blood?"

This concern stayed with him, like a minor sore that does not heal. He was obsessed with a question. Did blood possess natural virtues and powers? Why should the saying speak of German blood? Is that what he had? He was an Austrian, after all. He had an Emperor who could live with the huge, idiotic problems of keeping the Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, Poles, Jews, Serbs, even the gypsies, living together under the Hapsburg empire. Germans couldn't do that. Always fighting with each other. Without Bismarck, they would still be nothing. Petty principalities. Always squabbling. Mad King Ludwig I, then comes Mad King Ludwig II, both crazy Bavarians. 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." But what did it signify to say to himself that he knew something when—get to the 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 a boy who was once a peasant.

He might take up the question in the bar at Fischlham. Where was one's true loyalty? Was it to one's culture? (This, ultimately, might be equal to the language one spoke.) Or was it allegiance to one's nation? Could it be as simple as saying that to speak German from birth was equal to making 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. By November, he had even found himself drinking there 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 do all the carpentry, paint the exterior of the hive boxes, even build a framework on which to hang some netting near the hives so that the birds would stay away in the spring. He even debated whether to visit Der Alte, but recollections of the odor in the hut kept him away. The

smell of urine was nothing to put up. For that matter, Alois felt all too close to leaking in his own pants.

Before long, he was back in the tavern. Just about every day. One pleasure he did find there that he could not relinquish. The dolts had to see Alois as an expert on apiculture. Maybe he had a lot to learn, but he was not ready to show that to them. Every bit of advice Der Alte had offered, plus whatever he had picked up of late in his reading, was now presented as his own wisdom. Alois would be the first to say that honesty and modesty were excellent virtues, but they were best employed when dealing with superiors. An inferior mind, however, wanted to feel he was in the company of a wise man when drinking. Since he was more available to the locals than Der Alte, he could see how, for practical purposes, he had become the local expert on the cultivation of bees. A farmer even walked over one Sunday afternoon to seek his advice on how to get started. Alois proceeded to overwhelm him with the details of feeding a hive through the winter.

"Given the cold weather, you must not 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, and this mixture is precise, the honey

has to be properly diluted, one part honey absolutely equal to one part water, and this must be honey that comes from your own stock last summer. That means you must be able to trust the man who gives you the honey for these winter feedings when you purchase his stock. Trust is essential."

Even as both were nodding their heads with something of the same reverence Klara would exhibit before a cross in church, Alois had to ask himself whether he could really trust the honey received from Der Alte. What a laughingstock he would be to that grandiose piss-bum if both of Alois' hives were dead of disease by springtime. Of course, Alois did not really believe such anxiety. He could dispose of it by assigning rule-of-thumb percentages to such worries. Der Alte, he would expect, had to be 80% trustworthy. At the least! After all, it would hurt his reputation too if Alois' venture went kaput.

"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 the top of the box and you lay the feeder over that. It is a special feeder! A five liter jar with a cover of the finest mesh fastened

over the mouth. Expensive mesh! Into the jar, you have placed water that has been heated but not boiled, and then you stir in the sugar until that 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 be better. Easier. You do not have to trust the source. Perfectly simple. Use a different ratio, however. Three parts of sugar to two of water."

Alois was beginning to feel like the fine fellow he had once been, yes, before his retirement. "The trick," he said, "is to master the technique of this special feeder. Because you not only put in the liquid nourishment, and cover the mouth of the jar with the fine 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 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. Then, after every feeding I wash the jar in boiled water. Cleanliness is an absolute demand."

All the while that my agents were expounding these expositions to me, I was grown more and more testy. How boring were 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 box over the course of a month. What they were missing was the commencement of new anxieties in him. By the time his visitor, thoroughly disheartened, had said goodbye—he was not likely to be competition come June—Alois was out in the cold again, wondering if disease would strike his colonies before winter was done.

He spent the night reading his books but his anxieties remained that night. He had dreams of living in one of his boxes, himself a bee. Was he part of a cluster living in deepest and darkest obscurity? How could 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? A thousand? Even the experts seemed to disagree. He decided that if humans

could speak of a sixth sense, perhaps these bees with their multitude of facets in each eye, had a seventh sense that could penetrate into the caverns and catacombs and labyrinths of darkness.

By the end, Alois had raised this dream to the level of a nightmare. (Now I could find more interest in what my agents were sending me.) Alois' hive now multiplied in the darkness and became so many that the cluster could no longer bear its confines. The bees escaped from the box and flew away, so far away, they could not be found. They had 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 June? He felt for Klara in the dark, and his hand came across her belly. She was so big now, yet the new one wasn't due until January. Would he be a giant of a fellow. The new one 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 in the middle of this darkness. Before he had said more than a few words, she was wide awake, unhappy, embarrassed, 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 of the country store in Fischlham where once a week, on Saturday, she and Angela would buy a few foodstuffs they did not raise in their garden plus 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. Rostenmeier, and had begun to talk to him about the future sale of their honey. Alois had told her not to make any deals, not yet. 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 Herr Rostenmeier, and she would be the in-between, and bring a little money back to the house and hand it over to Alois. Her fingers tingled each time she thought of such a direct transaction.

But now Alois would go to Der Alte. She knew that. "I thought," she said in the darkness, even as he patted her belly, "that you didn't like that man at all, yes, I remember you said you would have to smell him."

"He will be good to consult," Alois said shortly. The tendrils of the nightmare were still with him.

"Yes, yes, yes," said Klara, "but you told me you don't trust Der Alte. Yes?" She was close to becoming hysterical. To be torn out of an agreeable sleep for this! "Yes, you say you don't trust him, and yet you choose this Der Alte over an honest man like Herr Rostenmeier?"

"Klara, this is all because you feel embarrassed by some commitment to him," he told her. "Maybe you had a little too much talk with him already. Something you haven't mentioned, maybe. A real commitment. You and him without speaking to me first."

"No," she said, "not at all. 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.

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So Alois went back to Der Alte after all. There were just too many worries with these bees. 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 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 the boy and the old man ought to see each other again.

This time, Adi was paying careful attention to the route. Like his school, it was only a mile away. There would be nothing to walking it by himself. But he must remember 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, his breath on this cold morning coming forth full of vapor. He knew he would not tell his father that he planned to visit Der Alte on his own.

"Yes," he kept saying to himself, "in the daytime I will not be afraid to walk by myself. In the night, maybe yes. There are too many spirits in the woods. In the dark, they are mean because of the cold." And the colder he felt in the midst of this excitement, the more he longed for summer when the bees would be flying in and out his father's two hive boxes. And then he remembered some frightening words from his father. "We 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 move the box to the shade. Otherwise, it will be too hot, and out bees will become agitated, yes,

to the point of insanity. They will feel trapped, you see. Do you realize? In the course of such a disturbance, buzzing inside the box, they will use up all the air inside available in such tight quarters, yes, they will consume too much oxygen, and then the temperature in the hive will rise. If it goes twenty degrees higher than the temperature on a very hot day of summer, even the wax of the cells in the combs will melt. The cells will collapse. The larvae will perish."

He had heard all this on the first drive home from Der Alte's house. It had been dark by then in the woods and the boy had listened to his father with an unhappy sense of all these creatures in the wood whom he could not see. But they would hear what was said, and Adi vowed that when summer came, he would not be the one to allow a hive-box to sit in the sun, no, but Alois, Junior would be back by then and Alois, Junior was not so 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 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, after offering the tablespoon of honey, no longer seemed interested in him.

We can be certain that Adi was mistaken. After business was done, the old man could not stop talking to Alois, (but to Adi as well) about the mysteries of bees and the subtleties of their keeping. "Yes," said 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 to Alois as well. (For he would retain enough of such speech to expound on it himself tomorrow night at Fischlhaus. Yes, there would be something grandiose to offer the dolts! All by way of the piss-bum! Adi, in his turn, was—no other word is accurate—Adi was spellbound. Words he could not quite understand took flight nonetheless into his mind because of their sounds and became as rich in meaning, as if his mother, in the good old days before Edmund had been born, was still

rubbing oil into his back while his pain eased out of his flesh by way of her palms and fingertips. How he listened!

"Can we," asked Der Alte, "ever pay enough attention to this work of Creation itself? Ach, it is so full of genius, it is such an asseveration of wise measure and wisdom, yes, absolutely, for it possesses the everlasting quintessential power to surprise us. Think of it! These little devils come to us from the Good Lord's science, from His divine and curious aesthetic—so enigmatic, so supernatural. Our bees are a coronation 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. He could go on! His endless references to God's ballet, God's gymnastics, exactly! God's gymnastics, God's intuition of the paradoxes of Creation. Der Alte was like many of our clients. They were always ready to praise God aloud. I, however, but I did not enjoy the hyperbole that Der Alte could offer. 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, once more, repelled. That too much time had elapsed without the exercise of his own voice was certainly at the core of his irritation. Moreover, he did not know if he liked the look in his son's eye. Those blue eyes, like Klara's, were always so large and so alive, so expressive. But there was reverence in them now.

"Why don't you take us into the other room, and show us your little viewing box," Alois, at last, was 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 to wait until summer? Please."

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

They were not. In the other room of the hut, bare but for 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 a narrow box, perhaps two feet long and one foot high. Over each end of the long sides was a

black curtain. When drawn back, the box consisted of no more than two glass walls not two inches apart and between them resided a 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 unbrn larva or store the honey?

Adi was as disappointed as if he had received a poke in the solar plexus. It all looked so dull yet so chaotic, nothing but a cluster of pullulating little things, hardly bigger than dark pills in a bottle, and they kept climbing in and out and over each other, startled by the light, a poor helpless gang, congested, over-stuffed, over-crammed, jam-packed, feverish, teeming, just an assembly of what looked to be squashy little creatures almost as ugly as roaches. Their wings were all folded. Adi had not been so disappointed since he had first seen Edmund's tiny homuncular face on Klara's breast.

Now, these bees did not look that much alive even if they could move. They might as well have been beans stirring in a pot, except they were more alive than that. They looked nervous at being exposed yet still so sluggish. What a terrible way to live! They must miss the sun, the boy

thought. He had been thinking of them all these months since summer, recalling them as flashes of light in the garden, but now they were stupefied, and just pushed against each other. 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 that word and knew 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 those words were there to read under those pictures. Tombs. He chose to sigh in preference to bursting into tears. Could 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 their lives span the extremities of existence—they offer the sweetest substance to come to us from nature, and yet have enough of them upon you in an attack, and you can prepare for the end. They are able to sting you to death. Now, here, they do no more than root about in a morass, yet in summer, you will see them dance in the air, as wonderful and as beautiful as drops of dew in the earliest sunlight of morning, pirouetting

in the air, and so fearless as they enter into the golden petals of the flowers waiting for them. The real beauty in these matters is to extricate all that is potential from what appears to be meaningless. One has to find the value that lies buried in chaos."

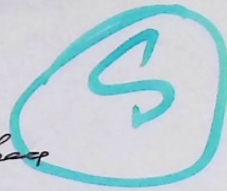
"Hear, hear," said Alois despite himself. No matter the ^{smelly} ~~awful~~ aspects of this awful man, Der Alte did have a manner one was obliged, despite one's revulsion, to admire. Like a great ^{smelly} ~~old~~ actor. He had never ^{encountered an associate} ~~met an old man~~ so eloquent as Der Alte.

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 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 the inside of yourself.

"Come and visit me," the old man succeeded in whispering to him before Alois gave the signal to leave.

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I do not know for certain how powerful an influence the exceptional speech by Der Alte (so full of verbal felicities and outright rodomontade) could have had on Adi—at no moment up to this point had I so regretted not being present 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 the rest of the house was asleep, bundled himself into his warmest clothing, and had gone out to sit on the bench under the oak

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double space

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, ~~there~~ ^{hept} 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~~.

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 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, ~~on~~ ^{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

Faked by Dwayne Fri, 5/7/04

"but the nicest human being ever on earth. The loveliest, the sweetest.

And if you love Him, He will love you."

Adi had ^{become then that} been certain (this was ~~then~~) the night to breathe the night air, no matter how cold. For the ~~essence of the~~ Son of God ^{must} would be in the wind on a night so special as this. And that would provide the strength he ^{would} needed. 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} such an 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, ^(when there was) not ~~with~~ that kind of determination ^{present} behind the thought. This had come from Adi. It was his alone, and therefore a most encouraging sign. If I had been present, I would have ^{his} fortified ~~that~~ 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} ~~his~~ ^{the} (power to destroy other kinds of lives. That is one of the rarest of the aptitudes ^{we are able to} ~~that we can~~ implant in our clients, ^{but it does} and it demands a series of small but concerted art-works, exquisitely focused dream-etchings, if you will, ^{rare} and ~~other~~ methods close to arcane.

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

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 a} grown

many exceptional capability to stave

concerted at staying off the many demons we succeeded in planting within

the Greek Orthodox ranks. In consequence, these Russian Cudgels were the rough as Russian monks

~~harshest of veterans. Many of them were~~ not only powerfully motivated,

^{in command} but possessed of frightening zeal. They were ^{How they were} altogether ready to defend the

coronation of the young czar-to-be, Nicholas the Second.

When occasionally, the Maestro consulted me, I presented a notion that in

they actually would be adopted later. It proposed that our chances of disrupting the coronation were minimal, *whereas* *distraction* but a powerful side measure.

~~before, or preferably,~~ after the event could accomplish much.

As a presentation, it could be termed ^{presumptuous} nothing less than cheeky since I had hardly any ^{real knowledge} confident sense of what the O.O. was holding in mind for the future, ^{still, I had been wise} but I had also known enough to speak my mind, ^{does not like} since (the Maestro has no desire 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 ^{mis perceptions} unfocused reality before us by comparing the ~~lies and evasions~~ you present. The putative errors ~~stand out~~. 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} little joy. The much-anticipated strongman of the future did not arrive, but, ^{instead} indeed, a little girl. ^{So,} Now, all the ~~new~~ ruckus and disorder of ~~Klara's~~ baby-feeding at night and baby yowling in the daytime, was for ^{naught} what? ^{when all the time} (For a girl, when he had been counting on a powerhouse of a son for his old age instead of ~~the~~ ^{just} three boys he ^{he could hardly} now had to try to boast about, a wild one, a mamma's boy, and a crybaby

snout, 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} a baby's throwback of milk). ~~So, he celebrated even as he complained.~~ There were now six human beings in his home. Late in spring there would be seven when Junior ^{would come back from} ~~no quiet one was he~~ ^{came} ~~home,~~ ^{Strones,} yes, the louder the tumult of voices in ^{this} ~~the~~ bar, the more he was ready to complain of the noise at home.

Indeed, the ~~steady~~ tavern clamor was enough to give us pause. Let men drink in a crowded room and ^{so} 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~~ ^{all else,}

These are hardly the best working conditions for us, ~~but~~ ^{offer} openings, ^{however,} ~~do~~ present themselves, particularly when these good drinkers are alone again and on their way home. Give ^{offer} me a drunk staggering along on a narrow forest road, and I will ~~certainly~~ be ready for him. Sometimes, disgusted, we ^{slam} ~~shove~~ 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 ~~them~~^{her} between the shoulder blades, and it was not their own rage, not at all.

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~~On his return~~ ^{weaving to a degree} ~~on his return~~
 Alois may have been ~~all but staggering~~ from drink, yet he was most
 certainly feeling too alive to enter the house, ~~on his return~~. Instead, he sat
~~down~~ ^{he had been keeping} by the hive-boxes and fished out a rubber tube which he kept in his
 pocket these days. Then he burped. He had had ~~ham and beans~~ ^{sauerkraut and potatoes} plus
 cucumber salad ^{some hours ago} ~~before going out~~, and of course he could still taste the ~~those~~
 cucumbers in each burp, ~~but~~ that was almost agreeable. Despite the cold, he
 was in no hurry, ~~sitting by the boxes~~. He had his rubber tube and he placed
 one end of it now against the ~~small hive entrance~~ ^{wall of the hive, and so could} which was open after
~~removing the plug~~ ^{the throwing of}. Inside, he could hear the inhabitants of his 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 ^{to that} (Of
 course, why would they not be content [?] when you think ^{with} of all the food he fed
 them through the mesh ~~at the other hole on the top of the Langstroth,~~
~~hundreds, then thousands,~~ ^{of his bees, all} clustered up in their turn against the fine
 meshcloth of the wide-mouthed jar, ^{there to} sucking out honey and water against the
 pull of the vacuum. ^{He sweated a little in the absorption of his own drink} these large thoughts passed like horses on parade, one
 at a time, ~~and~~ he tried to count how many bees might be inhabiting the box ^{right}
^{now} ~~he could do such a calculation.~~ ^{had been} ~~He had kept a count~~
~~by measure of the weight of what they were fed,~~ but he was too illumined to
 make such calculations. ^(right now) ~~Somewhere between 10,000 bees and 20,000,~~ ^{call it somewhere around} was
^{that was} ~~bound to be the answer for each hive,~~ ^{what with each reservoir} more than a pound of food a day,
 every day of this January. It was cold, but he felt warm, ~~and~~ 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} changes in sound.
 Were those alerts, [?] he heard? ~~Through the tube,~~ ^{it} had all gone up in pitch.
 Curious, ~~these sounds.~~ ^{near to} 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 ~~off~~ into sleep while still *living with* ~~listening in his mind~~ to the chorus he had heard just minutes ago, and as his ~~breath~~ *his* passed over a small hesitation and ~~he~~ *down* went ~~down~~ into sleep, *having* ~~he~~ had time for one last thought—it was that he certainly enjoyed ~~these~~ *these little* creature-sounds a good deal more than the yips and blats and ~~outright~~ caterwauling of an infant.

His dreams, however, were not good that night, *they turned* as foul as stale beer *on stomach* ~~on a stomach full of misery~~. ~~He had the notion soon followed by the full~~ *He entered a large* belief of a big and cavernous ~~dream that he was now~~ *interior a real way* living among his bees, ~~yes, he had passed away and become a bee. So he was now a denizen of the~~ *yes,* ~~hive.~~ It was not agreeable. ~~The bees were defecating all over the place,~~ *one of many* ~~and there he was, in one foul and filthy vision of hell, one of many,~~ *and* suffering like all the other brother-creatures—no, sister-creatures—wasting away *in* with the ~~cramps and~~ *all over* contractions of a severe bowel disease, all of them defecating ~~in~~ the cells and ~~the~~ *what a foul and* aisles of the Langstroth box. *A filthy vision.*

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 ^{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 to do their duty.~~
 And ^{now} he was awake, ^{and} still agitated by ^{the} ~~his~~ dream. There had
 been a long spell of cold, too cold for bees to dare to go out into ^{this} ~~the~~ early
 February air. ^{As} ~~and~~ Alois lay there ^{he} ~~and~~ felt painfully aware of all the
 excrement building up ^{in his bees} over all these ^{months} ~~months~~. How could they
 possibly hold it? How awful it must be. And he tried ^{once again} to recall
 the sounds of the hive. Had he ^{really} ~~been~~ amiss to assume he had heard
^{coming to him from their midst?} ~~contentment among them?~~ ^{really} (These were bees. Could he begin to detect the
 difference between happiness and panic, ^{calm} ~~stability~~ and near-madness? ~~No~~, ^{Yes}
 he told himself, he did know—~~these bees had not been suffering~~, he was
 sure they ^{were} ~~sounded~~ 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} ~~box~~, such a curious caca smelling like

ripe bananas, and so visible on the snow, this huge circle of white ^{dotted with} ~~with its~~
^{Innumerable yellow spots.} ~~innumerable~~ yellow spots now. Klara's laundry out on the line was also ^{part} ~~part~~
 of it, so many of Paula's diapers. It was ^{an} ~~an~~ immense defecation. Alois
 stepped it off. Yes, you could ^{even} ~~still~~ find yellow spots in the snow one
 hundred paces away from ^{the bench with} ~~the~~ the hive box.

Klara was ^{as} ~~as~~ furious ^{as} ~~as~~ she dared to be. ^{Survivor as} ~~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} ~~could not really~~ tell himself that he felt sorry. He was ^{too} ~~so~~ happy
 for the bees. What delight they had shown as they flew about. Since it wa 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
^{That is as it should be. However you must learn} ~~living. Learn~~ how to get rid of shit or it will ^{shit at} ~~harm~~ you. Understand? You
^{must} ~~have to~~ 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 had been so full ~~of fury at what had happened to the laundry.~~
his mother so angry,

Now he remembered what Angela had whispered to him one morning, ~~on the way to school.~~ "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,"*

TO Be Faxed
Tuesday
5/11

Book IV

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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 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 (with a colony of bees 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 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. Since Alois' pension in that year may have been the present equivalent of sixty or seventy thousand dollars a year now, it is likely that he rued the new outlay since Der Alte sold him a sufficiency of items (and some not-quite-necessary) that came to the rough equivalent of a thousand dollars today. Alois, fully anticipating that he would pay too much, was weary, nonetheless, of dealing with the old man and so did not press beyond the small success of acquiring 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 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 of Austria.) Three of my agents were deputized to remain and I embarked for St. Petersburg where I was brought to focus on the needs and dimensions of a 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, at this point, too complex a matter to discuss. While devils are able to travel in the guise of human beings, that is, we can certainly insinuate ourselves for a period 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 more rapid means. (But, of that, I will wait to speak.) For now, leave it that I was instructed to go by the quick track and begin my orientation into the late Nineteenth Century Russian soul—belly, vices, beliefs, harmonies and inner disharmonies—by morning of the next day. Once 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 day-to-day variations in the 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. 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 too full of the Hitler family's intimacies. While they were the focus of my interest in that region, 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. All of us knew that, major and minor spirits all. Even at the time, I sensed that this could amount to more than any of our recent full-dress efforts to disrupt the larger purposes arrayed on the other side. It is true. I swear it. I could feel 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 education) I should know by now (and do!) that not even the best of readers will put up for long with an author who can leave his narrative long enough to jump into what must seem, at first, an 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 managed to get 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 dissatisfied with the formal religions allegedly serving in His name—although He was finally responsible for them. Yes! Their faults were by His clumsy doing—all the unhappy structures of the Catholics and the Protestants, the Greek Orthodox, the Orthodox Jews, the Reformed Jews, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. (I do not speak of the sects of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, but those were religions developed by humans rather than God.)

In any event, come 1895, a change had also occurred in the viewpoint of our Maestro. Or, so did I presume to perceive. Through the centuries, the O.O. had been a most incisive critic of the follies, disproportions, errors, miscalculations, and sheer blunders of the D.K.; indeed, I had to agree! God, the Creator, having worked His way through the locks, hazards, and blind alleys of evolution, had, by the end, trapped Himself into grievous misjudgments concerning the potentialities of humankind. In contrast, the O.O., for his large part, had kept us reacting to the D.K.'s endeavors, and had 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, what I may as well term the spirit of the species. One of our more effective methods over the last two thousand years has certainly been to encourage religiosity of the most 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 humans. You can find fine folk everywhere who are 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—proves intrinsically incapable of serving as a tool for the mind. It can find no answers to the contradictions now embedded in human existence. By that means, we have succeeded in tormenting the best minds of mankind for century after century. All-Good and All-Powerful. Indeed! Yes, we had looked to encourage every fundamentalist we could find, Islamist, or Born-Again, 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 certainties!" 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 might be one example) and some most improperly designed. (The dinosaur, the squid, the leech, the horse-fly, and the mosquito come immediately to mind.)

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

Such miscalculation was calamitous. It was equal to raising ^a ~~so~~ powerful a beast that the hound ^{who} turns on its master. God's finest creation,

men and women, given free will, proved unmanageable—they gave every indication that 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 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 now felt obliged to go back to His old judgments as Jehovah, and proceeded through His new development of religion 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 return back 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 beyond what the D.K. intends, and human emotions will be further

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 been the working intention of our Maestro. And be assured that our activities have not been restricted to churchgoers. Other varieties of human type can also be 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. My point is that as humankind was approaching the end of the 19th Century, the O.O. was contemplating a fundamental change in our procedures. I was now inclined to believe that he was looking to develop a species of faith designed expressly by him rather than by the Dummkopf. Did that mean that our Maestro was actually prepared to take a vertiginous leap from criticism to Creation?

I could not conceive of what form such a new set of beliefs might require from us—I was too mired in my duties—but I will say that the possibility did cause 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 ~~mis~~^{poorly}begotten 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 throes of developing this—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 catastrophic mass 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 slip away from Him. Human self-righteousness so necessary to survival also produced envy. The self-righteous, unless immensely successful, cannot look with equanimity upon good 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 over the eons of evolution by way of trial and error, 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.

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There is no question that I will yet indicate 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. Somewhat later, I will attempt to outline the more exceptional activities we undertook in St. Petersburg and Moscow that were to 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, I expect,

of some future importance, but having followed the intimacies of apiculture with close attention, I do not wish to ignore its continuation at this point.

Let me point, however, to a serious difficulty. My knowledge of the various experiences of Alois, Klara, and the children were communicated to me during my absence by the three agents I left behind. (Naturally, given the greater import of our mission in Russia, I had brought my best assistants along.) That left me with a problem. Lesser devils are, in many a regard, comparable to lesser humans. This is particularly true of their insensitivity to significant detail.

While I can retain a reasonably close notion of what is transpiring among my clients and their near associates even while relying on the reports of mediocre agents, the work does lose its tone. During my absence, I could not allocate many energies to thinking about Alois & Co. So, the account of these missing months—October '95 to June '96—must 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 to a degree). Otherwise, nothing of great moment

did occur until the return of Junior, Alois Hitler, Junior. But that was not until June, by which time I too had returned.

My narrative will not suffer 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 reasonable level of performance. If I am not ready to explain our systems of recruitment in obtaining 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 Evil One personally on the alert for superior humans who might be ready to serve us, 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 off a fraction of His stock of recently deceased 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 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, the Maestro was obliged then to use a very large part of his resources for shaping and training the low-grade and highly disturbed material we did receive. It is analogous in difficulty to developing a symphony orchestra from soldiers cashiered out of 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.

Forewarned, forearmed. I will now present my small improvement on the summary I received of what went on with Alois, his bees, his wife, and his children 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 in detail concerning Alois' obsessions concerning this 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. chooses to call "the markets of sleep," most dreams of 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, a plethora of superficial information arrived,

more than enough to annoy me. I knew that I was receiving an insufficient portrait. My agents perceived Alois as weak, but they lacked the requisite insight required when dealing with the anxieties 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 more powerful. Nuance is demanded, and that was precisely what my lower level of agents was 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 what I received, let me abjure the reader to delay passing judgment. We must not forget that the boy who later became Adolf Hitler emerged from a childhood with this father and mother. So, it has to be obvious that we ascertain Klara and Alois' real strengths and, needless to say, their significant weaknesses.

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

His first concern (which I find 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 not to forget to change before going out to the hive-boxes under the oak tree. Sombre colors, he knows all too well, do irritate bees, knows that by ^(his own) ~~old~~ 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, no less, on the exposed flesh of her ample breast. 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. Shoots of fear, bright as rockets, fire off in his stomach.

Nonetheless, Alois, in some part, remains a good peasant. He has not forgotten that after a small or large disaster, one does well to stay on the alert for whatever value might still be embedded in the misfortune itself. For example, his interesting medical theses were stimulated by the alleviation of pain in his knees on the following day—bee stings seemed to be good for his rheumatism. 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 selling exactly the stock that he needed, for whatever reason, to get rid of, still, the telling point (to Alois' present shame) was that Italian stock was more easy to handle. They were gentle, Der Alte assured him. And they were incontestably more beautiful, what with their 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 Austrian honey-bee was hairy, it was gray, and it did not 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. Shouldn't he, after all, have waited for the spring? Now, marking time until 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 stuffed with some millions of sperm cells from the five, six, seven, or eight drones she had phallically defenestrated last June), would be in virtual hibernation now. She would not be laying eggs, no, not for another four or five months. Her remaining and inactive hive would be gathered in a cluster for warmth, waiting for the honey 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, 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 box might so lower the temperature that your 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 your little people 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."

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Alois was about ready to recognize the given. If he had stood in the dock before himself as judge, he would have found the defendant guilty. How could retirement prove so enfeebling to a strong man? He had bought the farm on impulse and now, had purchased 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 over the old straw skep! Yet, why so suddenly had he committed himself to apiculture in the winter? Hadn't that also been done on too quick an impulse? Der Alte had had the consummate

nerve to say to him, even as Alois left, "You will soon see how much work I have saved you."

Indeed! What Alois saved in work, he now spent in worry. He was still under sixty, damn it, not yet sixty, by a year and more, but he felt such a sense of inner weariness before these future responsibilities. His two populated boxes now set properly under the oak tree (no, never beneath the walnut tree for nuts would pelt the ground in late spring and summer with shells hard as stone, and might panic a few 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. Two occupied cities housed in two boxes. Each day he read the temperature of the heat within each box, and did his weighing once a week, keeping up that diary full of data and notes. Part of the real problem, however, was that he did not have enough work, just enough to leave him with a slew of worries. All through the dark months while feeding his winter bees (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, undertake 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 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, for the bees could be drawn to it and might 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 each night, negative or positive on the subject of keeping a winter hive. 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 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 occupied with 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 exteriors 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 these bees would know by the color—precisely which hive-box they belonged to. By the color, of course. Not red, not orange—those

colors were unrecognizable by bees, how strange, he remarked to Klara, considering the number of red flowers they entered every summer day.

Still, he enjoyed working with his hands for the duration of the carpentry. His worries eased. For a week. His chest even puffed up again with an old truism. "Good German blood understands," said Alois to himself, "that blessings do not come from God, but from hard work. That idea is as safe as a sound house." Still, it was an unfair remark. Why not say, "Good Austrian blood?"

This concern stayed with him, like a minor sore that does not heal. He was obsessed with a question. Did blood possess natural virtues and powers? Why should the saying speak of German blood? Is that what he had? He was an Austrian, after all. He had an Emperor who could live with the huge, idiotic problems of keeping the Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, Poles, Jews, Serbs, even the gypsies, living together under the Hapsburg empire. Germans couldn't do that. Always fighting with each other. Without Bismarck, they would still be nothing. Petty principalities. Always squabbling. Mad King Ludwig I, then comes Mad King Ludwig II, both crazy Bavarians. 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." But what did it signify to say to himself that he knew something when—get to the 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 a boy who was once a peasant.

He might take up the question in the bar at Fischlham. Where was one's true loyalty? Was it to one's culture? (This, ultimately, might be equal to the language one spoke.) Or was it allegiance to one's nation? Could it be as simple as saying that to speak German from birth was equal to making 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. By November, he had even found himself drinking there 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 do all the carpentry, paint the exterior of the hive boxes, even build a framework on which to hang some netting near the hives so that the birds would stay away in the spring. He even debated whether to visit Der Alte, but recollections of the odor in the hut kept him away. The

smell of urine was nothing to put up. For that matter, Alois felt all too close to leaking in his own pants.

Before long, he was back in the tavern. Just about every day. One pleasure he did find there that he could not relinquish. The dolts had to see Alois as an expert on apiculture. Maybe he had a lot to learn, but he was not ready to show that to them. Every bit of advice Der Alte had offered, plus whatever he had picked up of late in his reading, was now presented as his own wisdom. Alois would be the first to say that honesty and modesty were excellent virtues, but they were best employed when dealing with superiors. An inferior mind, however, wanted to feel he was in the company of a wise man when drinking. Since he was more available to the locals than Der Alte, he could see how, for practical purposes, he had become the local expert on the cultivation of bees. A farmer even walked over one Sunday afternoon to seek his advice on how to get started. Alois proceeded to overwhelm him with the details of feeding a hive through the winter.

"Given the cold weather, you must not 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, and this mixture is precise, the honey

has to be properly diluted, one part honey absolutely equal to one part water, and this must be honey that comes from your own stock last summer. That means you must be able to trust the man who gives you the honey for these winter feedings when you purchase his stock. Trust is essential."

Even as both were nodding their heads with something of the same reverence Klara would exhibit before a cross in church, Alois had to ask himself whether he could really trust the honey received from Der Alte. What a laughingstock he would be to that grandiose piss-bum if both of Alois' hives were dead of disease by springtime. Of course, Alois did not really believe such anxiety. He could dispose of it by assigning rule-of-thumb percentages to such worries. Der Alte, he would expect, had to be 80% trustworthy. At the least! After all, it would hurt his reputation ~~ed~~ if Alois' venture went kaput.

"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 the top of the box and you lay the feeder over that. It is a special feeder! A five liter jar with a cover of the finest mesh fastened

over the mouth. Expensive mesh! Into the jar, you have placed water that has been heated but not boiled, and then you stir in the sugar until that 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 be better. Easier. You do not have to trust the source. Perfectly simple. Use a different ratio, however. Three parts of sugar to two of water."

Alois was beginning to feel like the fine fellow he had once been, yes, before his retirement. "The trick," he said, "is to master the technique of this special feeder. Because you not only put in the liquid nourishment, and cover the mouth of the jar with the fine 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 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. Then, after every feeding I wash the jar in boiled water. Cleanliness is an absolute demand."

All the while that my agents were expounding these expositions to me, I was grown more and more testy. How boring were 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 box over the course of a month. What they were missing was the commencement of new anxieties in him. By the time his visitor, thoroughly disheartened, had said goodbye—he was not likely to be competition come June—Alois was out in the cold again, wondering if disease would strike his colonies before winter was done.

He spent the night reading his books but his anxieties remained that night. He had dreams of living in one of his boxes, himself a bee. Was he part of a cluster living in deepest and darkest obscurity? How could these bees guide themselves in that world, so stygian, so bereft of light? ^{Could} ~~Were~~ their antennae ^{be} of aid? How many facets were there to a bee's eyes? A thousand? Even the experts seemed to disagree. He decided that if humans

could speak of a sixth sense, perhaps these bees with their multitude of facets in each eye, had a seventh sense that could penetrate into the caverns and catacombs ^{the} ~~and~~ labyrinths of darkness.

By the end, Alois had raised this dream to the level of a nightmare. (Now I could find more interest in what my agents were sending me.) Alois' hive ~~now~~ ^{the bees were now} multiplied in the darkness and ~~became~~ ^{became} so many that the cluster could no longer bear its confines. The ~~bees~~ ^{hive} escaped from the box and flew away, so far away, they could not be found. They had 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 June? He felt for Klara in the dark, and his hand came across her belly. She was so big now, yet the new one wasn't due until January. Would he be a giant of a fellow? [?] The new one 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 in the middle of this darkness. Before he had said more than a few words, she was wide awake, unhappy, embarrassed, 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 of the country store in Fischlham where once a week, on Saturday, she and Angela would buy a few foodstuffs they did not raise in their garden plus 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. Rostenmeier, and had begun to talk to him about the future sale of their honey. Alois had told her not to make any deals, not yet. 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 Herr Rostenmeier, and she would be the in-between, and bring a little money back to the house and hand it over to Alois. Her fingers tingled each time she thought of such a direct transaction.

But now Alois would go to Der Alte. She knew that. "I thought," she said in the darkness, even as he patted her belly, "that you didn't like that man at all, yes, I remember you said you would have to smell him."

"He will be good to consult," Alois said shortly. The tendrils of the nightmare were still with him.

"Yes, yes, yes," said Klara, "but you told me you don't trust Der Alte. Yes?" She was close to becoming hysterical. To be torn out of an agreeable sleep for this! "Yes, you say you don't trust him, and yet you choose this Der Alte over an honest man like Herr Rostenmeier?"

"Klara, this is all because you feel embarrassed by some commitment to him," he told her. "Maybe you had a little too much talk with ^{Herr Rostenmeier} ~~him~~ already. Something you haven't mentioned, maybe. A real commitment. You and him without speaking to me first."

"No," she said, "not at all. 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.

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So Alois went back to Der Alte after all. There were just too many worries with these bees. He was a realist, he told himself, he was used to

After only one bad odors. *← that was always true* ~~One~~ had to deal with the devil, ~~nicht war?~~ (My devils snickered as they informed me of this.)

Alois paid ^ahis visit on the next Sunday and, once again, took Adi with him. He could hardly have said why, *although* ~~but~~ I could have told him. Devils,

in a given direction even
~~(when so instructed)~~ I can nudge a man or woman ~~even~~ when he is not a client.
when that person is not a client
 For whatever reason, I sensed that the O.O. ~~despite a multitude of other~~

was still paying, concerns, had given enough attention to Hafeld to ^{suggest that the} pass on his desire to us ~~boy and Der Alte were~~ that the boy and the old man ought to see each other again.

This time, Adi was paying careful attention to the route. Like his-
 school, ^{I not even} it was ^{only} a mile away. ^{He would be able to get there by} There would be nothing to walking it by
 himself. ^{provided he kept in mind} ~~But he~~ must remember (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,
 his breath on this cold morning coming forth full of vapor. He knew he
 would not tell his father that he planned to visit Der Alte on his own.

"Yes," he kept saying to himself, "in the daytime I will not be afraid
 to walk by myself. In the night, maybe yes. There are too many spirits in
 the woods. In the dark, they are mean because of the cold." And the colder
 he felt in the midst of this excitement, the more he longed for summer when
 the bees would be flying in and out his father's two hive boxes. And then he
 remembered some frightening words from his father. "We 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 move the box to the
 shade. Otherwise, it will be too hot, and out bees will become agitated, yes,

to the point of insanity. They will feel trapped, you see. Do you realize? In the course of such a disturbance, buzzing inside the box, they will use up all the air inside available in such tight quarters, yes, they will consume too much oxygen, and then the temperature in the hive will rise. If it goes twenty degrees higher than the temperature on a very hot day of summer, even the wax of the cells in the combs will melt. The cells will collapse. The larvae will perish."

He had heard all this on the first drive home from Der Alte's house. It had been dark by then in the woods and the boy had listened to his father with an unhappy sense of all these creatures in the wood whom he could not see. But they would hear what was said, and Adi vowed that when summer came, he would not be the one to allow a hive-box to sit in the sun, no, but Alois, Junior would be back by then and Alois, Junior was not so 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 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, after offering the tablespoon of honey, no longer seemed interested in him.

We can be certain that Adi was mistaken. After business was done, the old man could not stop talking to Alois, (but to Adi as well) about the mysteries of bees and the subtleties of their keeping. "Yes," said 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 to Alois as well. (For he would retain enough of such speech to expound on it himself tomorrow night at Fischlhaus. Yes, there would be something grandiose to offer the dolts! All by way of the piss-burn! Adi, in his turn, was—no other word is accurate—Adi was spellbound. Words he could not quite understand took flight nonetheless into his mind because of their sounds and became as rich in meaning, as if his mother, in the good old days before Edmund had been born, was still

rubbing oil into his back while his pain eased out of his flesh by way of her palms and fingertips. How he listened!

"Can we," asked Der Alte, "ever pay enough attention to this work of Creation itself? Ach, it is so full of genius, it is such an asseveration of wise measure and wisdom, yes, absolutely, for it possesses the everlasting quintessential power to surprise us. Think of it! These little devils come to us from the Good Lord's science, from His divine and curious aesthetic—so enigmatic, so supernatural. Our bees are a coronation 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. He could go on! His endless references to God's ballet, God's gymnastics, ~~exactly!~~ God's gymnastics, God's intuition of the paradoxes of Creation. Der Alte was like many of our clients. They were always ready to praise God aloud. I, however, ~~but I~~ did not enjoy the hyperbole that Der Alte could offer. 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 ^{for} so long that Alois was, once more, repelled. ^{That} Too much time had elapsed without the exercise of his own voice ^{that} was certainly at the core of his irritation. Moreover, he did not know if he liked the look in his son's eye. Those blue eyes, like Klara's, were always so large and so alive, so expressive. But there was reverence in them now.

"Why don't you take us into the other room, and show us your little viewing box," Alois, at last, was able to interject, ^{such a suggestion} ^{— even as Alois had expected —}

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 to wait until summer? Please."

"Spring," said Der Alte but he shrugged. "All right," he said, "but be prepared. They will not ^{be} ~~look~~ be so near to what I have been talking about."

They were not. In the other room of the hut, bare but for 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 a narrow box, perhaps two feet long and one foot high. Over ^{face} each ~~end~~ of the long sides was a

black curtain. When drawn back, the box consisted of no more than two glass walls not two inches apart and between them resided a 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 unbrn larva or store the honey?

Adi was as disappointed as if he had received a poke in the solar plexus. It all looked so dull yet so chaotic, nothing but a cluster of pullulating little things, hardly ^{larger} ~~bigger~~ than dark pills in a bottle, and they kept climbing in and out and over each other, startled by the light, a poor helpless gang, congested, over-stuffed, over-crammed, jam-packed, feverish, teeming, just an assembly of what looked to be squashy ~~little~~ ^{just about} creatures ~~almost~~ as ugly as roaches. (Their wings were ~~all~~ folded) Adi had not been so disappointed since he had first seen Edmund's tiny homuncular face on Klara's breast.

Now, these bees did not look that much alive even if they could move. They might as well have been beans stirring in a pot, except they were more alive than that. They looked nervous at being exposed yet still so sluggish. What a terrible way to live! They must miss the sun, the boy

thought. He had been thinking of them all these months since summer, recalling them as flashes of light in the garden, but now they were stupefied, and just pushed against each other. 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 that word and knew 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 those words were there to read under those pictures. Tombs. He chose to sigh in preference to bursting into tears. Could 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 their lives span the extremities of existence—they offer the sweetest substance to come to us from nature, ^{but I R} and yet have enough of them ^{sting} upon you in an attack, ^{your} and you can prepare for the end. They are able ^{too much} of their venom can bring ^{they are no} to sting you to death. Now, ^{more than a} here, they do no more than root about in a morass, yet in summer, you will see them dance in the air, as wonderful and as beautiful, as drops of dew in the earliest sunlight of morning, pirouetting

^{bees} in the air, ^{how they strut as} and so fearless, as they enter into the golden petals of the flowers — ^{blooms} ~~that are~~ waiting for them. The real beauty in these matters is to extricate all that is potential from what appears to be meaningless. One has to ^{search for} find the value that ^{is} ~~lies~~ buried in chaos."

"Hear, hear," said Alois, ^{It was uttered} ~~despite~~ himself. No matter the ^{dream} ~~awful~~ aspects of this awful man, Der Alte did have a manner one was obliged, despite one's revulsion, to admire ^{him, he was like, "E"} ~~Like~~ a great, smelly old actor. He had never met an old man so 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 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 the inside of yourself.

"Come and visit me," the old man succeeded in whispering to him before Alois gave the signal to leave.

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I do not know for certain how powerful an influence the exceptional speech by Der Alte (so full of verbal felicities and outright rodomontade) could have had on Adi—at no moment up to this point had I so regretted not being present 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 the rest of the house was asleep, bundled himself into his warmest clothing, and had gone out to sit on the bench under the oak

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 ^{gotten in} ~~entered~~ the hive. Alois, having decided that this was unlikely—the hole was not large enough—but Adi was convinced a mouse had ^{entered the sanctum,} ~~gotten in.~~ Since his father had repaired the screen weeks ago, ~~Since~~ ^{Ergo, he} Adi no longer knew as he sat between the boxes which one it might be, ~~so he had to~~ set a hand on each. ^{Since it was} 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 ^{needed} 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 ^{this species} 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 ^{certain} lives by possessing the power to ^{be able to} destroy other kinds of lives. That is one of the rarest of the aptitudes ^{that} we are able to implant ^{such a force} in our clients, but it does ^{call for} demand a series of small but concerted art-works, exquisitely focused dream-etchings, if you will, and ^{special} rare methods close to arcane.

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

In any event, I was not ready ^{in such straits as} ~~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 ^{as} ~~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 ^{would} ~~did~~ occur occasionally—I presented a notion that ^{in time he would} ~~in time he would~~ actually ^{adopt} ~~adopt~~ later. It proposed that our chances of disrupting the coronation were minimal, whereas a powerful distraction after the event could accomplish ^{more} ~~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 ^{looking to bring} ~~holding in mind~~ ^{off here.} ~~for the future.~~ Still, I had been wise enough to speak my mind. (The Maestro does not like to put up with ^{a poverty} ~~lack~~ of opinion among ^{his} ~~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~~ ^{out of the} 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 ^{now} ~~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 ^{any} ~~the~~
^{infant's}
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
^{Spital}
~~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 ^{inroads} ~~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 ^{the} ~~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
^{most}
~~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.

-7-

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 ~~boiled~~ 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~~ ^{while} 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 ^{gross} 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. ^{They sound up} 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, ~~and passed~~ ^{hearing a} ~~passing into sleep~~ still living with the

of strange sounds. ~~Then this~~
chorus he had heard just minutes ago. His breath passed over a small
hesitation and down he went into sleep, ^{with} having time for one last thought—it
was that he certainly enjoyed these little creature-sounds ^{- hums} a good deal more
than the ~~tips and~~ caterwauling of an infant.

His dreams, however, were not good that night, ^{and soon} They turned as foul
as stale beer on stomach-misery. He entered a large and cavernous interior
^{where he} and was living among his bees. It was not agreeable. ^{the} 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 ^{narrow} 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~~ ^{their sound was} 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~~^{colony,}. How could they hold it ~~it?~~^{in?} And ~~he~~^{he} once again ~~tried~~^{he} to recall the sounds of the hive. Had he really heard contentment coming ~~to him~~^{from} 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 ~~the~~^{the two} ~~hive-box~~^{hive boxes,}, such a curious caca smelling like ripe bananas, and so visible on the snow, this ~~huge circle~~^{field} of white dotted with ~~is~~^{A huge circle} yellow spots now. Innumerable yellow spots. Klara's laundry out on the line was also part of it ~~as were~~^{as were} 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 boxes,

Klara was furious, as furious as she dared to be. All her clean laundry now stained. "You never ^{told} 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 ^{begin to} 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 ^{5p1395}
^{He remained in boredom, 5p1395}
 nodded. He had heard it already. "Come on," he said, "we are late for
 school." ~~5p1395~~

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

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