

Book III

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It seems I have disclosed myself. I am indeed a trusted officer of the Evil One. I am his instrument, and this trusted instrument has just committed an act of treachery: We are never allowed to reveal who we are.

At present, however, my disclosure still remains unpublished. The author of an unsigned manuscript can, up to a point, remain anonymous. Be it understood, my margin of safety is not large. Nonetheless, the Devil does not find paper congenial (an attitude I will soon proceed to explain.) But first, since his name has been invoked, let me observe the courtesies. When dealing with divinities, one's form of address is crucial. We lesser devils are usually encouraged to speak of him as Our Maestro. Nor does he mind if we

call him the Evil One. These are two terms he often chooses for himself. Sometimes to declare our respect, we will address him as the O.O. (the Omniscient Observer.) Despite his great powers, the Evil One knows all too well that he is not infinite. No more than God is infinite. Like all other beings vast or small, each of these divine antagonists lives nonetheless within parameters. Call them paradoxes, if you wish, but even the Powers suffer constraints on their power. Just as at their own level humans have limitations, so do the gods if on a mighty plane. I will add that hordes of primitive tribes, as well as the Egyptians and the Greeks, were more attuned to the vagaries and boundaries of cosmic power than the later theologians. It was the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims who got it wrong by ascribing infinite amplitude to the divine.

As one small example, I can return to my remark that The Maestro does not enjoy putting up with paper. When possible, we are told to eschew paper. It is derived, after all, from trees (who happen to be God's most loyal, faithful, and trusted servants.)

Paper, therefore, was never a first option for the Maestro. Lately, in these, my latterday American years, I can say that the E.O. is more attuned to

electronics. He has overseen human progress in those technologies far more than the Lord. In any event, if you will take my remarks on trust (inasmuch as I can hardly prove them!) I will emphasize again that despite their admittedly prodigious and near to incommensurable powers, God and the Devil are still obliged to act within their separate finite domains. I have chosen, therefore, to continue to write on paper—my assumption is that there is less likelihood my words will be picked up so quickly by the Evil One. (Even processed paper still contains a faint scent of the love God put into trees.) Since the Lord and the Devil are still as jealous of each other as two beautiful women attracted to the same man, even a blank piece of paper reminds the Maestro much too much of his adversary. So I choose to use it as my form of communication in direct defiance of the Maestro. He, if I may speak of such complexity as "he"—forbids us to communicate with men and women by writing to them or for them. While the Maestro has no desire to use up a portion of his resources by monitoring every last one of our acts—there are too many demons and small devils for that!—he is also not inclined to let us go off on serious ventures he has not approved. He does not keep a constant watch, but then, he does not have to. We dwell in true fear of him.

Years ago, in the period of which I write, I would never have dared anything to do with a written record. My fear would have been absolute. Now, in this time of exceptionally exaggerated streams of communication—floods, indeed!—it is possible to get away with a good deal more.

I can even claim that I have acquired the skill to keep a good many of my thoughts to myself (a discipline worthy of a Yoga and difficult for a devil to acquire.) Girded to that degree, therefore, I feel somewhat more ready to continue this biography, this novel—call it what you will! My assumption is that I will succeed in scrambling my output sufficiently so that the Maestro will not be looking for me. Intelligence work can be understood as a contest between code and the obfuscation of code. Since the E.O. is always engaged in endless, prodigious, and arduous work, I choose to breathe a little on my own. I may even feel free to say more about the make-up of our Two Kingdoms. (I could speak of them as two antagonists, two realms, two conflicting visions of existence, but Two Kingdoms has been the term since Biblical times.) Needless to add, we are always confronting a most formidable army of angels (we call them the Cudgels!) They are in

opposition to our army of devils who are loyal to the E.O., that is, loyal more or less, if I am the prime example!

While these warring forces can hardly be unfamiliar to anyone who has read "Paradise Lost," I would note that many in our kingdom are also well-versed in English classics. I cannot speak for the angels, but devils are obliged to be devoted to good literature, even if most of it is on paper. If this seems in opposition to a few remarks just made, let me say that the Devil does not forbid us to read for ourselves; it is just that he will not have his traffic with any more paper than he must. After all, he needs only to sniff a book and its content has been inhaled. Moreover, he sees literary material as a professional complement to the work we do with humans. Milton, therefore, is high in our arcana of those few poets and novelists whom we do not have to look upon as unforgivably second-rate (because of their sentimental inexactitudes). Milton, after all, did provide a rough outline of the contest between the Two Kingdoms. No matter how inaccurate was his estimate, it did present a pioneer demonstration of how our armies might have confronted each other at the commencement of that great estrangement which occurred when the earliest squadrons of angels first divided into camps so

opposed to each other in their aims concerning the future desired for human beings that the descendants of Adam and Eve now speak in full ignorance of Good and Evil.

One can offer respect, then, to that great blind man, even if his moral topography is seriously out of date. Little devils who serve the E.O. are installed by now in every corner of human existence. Our war is comparable to the immensely complicated Japanese game of Go, (with its grid of nineteen vertical lines crossed by nineteen horizontals, a sum of three hundred and sixty-one intersections onto any one of which a stone can be deposited.) The positions occupied bit by bit with our black stones are forever in danger of being encircled whenever we are not up to surrounding the white stones of the angels. (It is even said that when Go is played by two Japanese Masters of the Ninth Degree, it can take as long to decipher the results of their black and white captures of each other as it does to play the match.)

To bring, therefore, a first explanation of the sinuosities, salients, and recesses of our war, I am obliged to offer my own crude outline of the forces at play in the folds of human society. Of necessity, my early presentation will be simple but I would start by remarking that one must constantly keep in

mind three phases of reality—the divine, the satanic, and the human. Three separate armies in effect. For there are three kingdoms by now, not two. God and His angelic cohort work upon men, women, and children to bring them under His direction. Our E.O. and we, his representatives, look to possess many of these same humans. Through the ancient eras until the Middle Ages, human beings had virtually no active role in this contest. They were no more than our contested subjects, our field of battle. Hence the title: Two Kingdoms. By now, however, we are obliged to take the individual man or woman very much into account. I will even say that many, if not most, humans do their best to be beholden neither to God nor to the Maestro. They are always seeking to be free. (By now, they often remark, "I want to discover who I am!") In the event, we devils look to guide the men and women we have attracted (we call them clients), the Cudgels contest us, and the particular individual usually does his or her best to fight Us off, fight off both of Us, God and Devil alike. Humans have become so vain (through technology, I suspect) that quite a number by now wish, even expect, to be wholly independent of both of us.

This, it can be repeated, is but a first approach to the perversities now embedded in existence. What I have offered is but a bare sketch of the true complexity of apparently simple events. My hope—given the curious temper that has overtaken me lately—is that I will be able to capture something of the real and inner life of Adolf Hitler. (Just why I have so intense a desire, however, is not clear to me.) Let me be ready, then, to explain not only my strengths and yes, my talents for this task, but also my weaknesses. I promise you: No devil is without a profile! Some of us can be as complex as men and women, and, on occasion, as disappointing. We have many powers of which the first is our ability to enter the human mind, but on all too many occasions, such powers become seriously misplaced. It is well to keep in mind that when all is said, angels and devils are still spirits and so do not have the sharp outlines of character that are so agreeable to encounter in a novel. Our physical presence is tenuous and if we serve as familiars to men and women, it is by way of our voice. Especially when we dare to put it on the page.

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It is safe to say that I know a good deal. As I just remarked, I can enter into many a mind; I can recover, if necessary, the concealed, even long-buried memories of any particular client I have picked up on my own, or to whom I have been assigned. This power consumes Time, so much Time. (Time is, indeed, a word I capitalize since for us, as well as for the angels, it is a resource comparable among us to the way Money serves as a matrix for humans.) We are always calculating how much Time we can afford to give each of our clients, and such expenditures increase when we choose to inhabit people's dreams. My need to acquire more insight has to be balanced, then, against the cost of investment required in order to work our will upon a

person. For this reason, the average human who has, at best, limited powers of insight and memory, is not of interest to us. We look to develop in promising clients an ego that will be ready—sometimes at risk—to transgress divine or social laws on the way to carrying off a major endeavor.

Such men and women, are, of course, rare. More often we have to be content with common types. Then, for the most part, we look to make such mediocrities successful. In our Company, provided we are sufficiently patient, that can also produce promotions for oneself. Over many an era, I have had clients whom I was able to develop to the point where they could serve directly in one or another of the Maestro's larger projects. The majority of humans, however, caught in the push-and-pull, the back and forth between their guardian angel and a directing devil like myself, end by producing little that is useful to either Kingdom. On the other hand, I can recall a few most unhappy situations where the guardian angel who was my opposite number retained the spoils.

At one period in the past, as a result of several such losses, my position suffered. For a time, I was assigned clients of petty origin or modest achievements. I encouraged common soldiers, for instance, to injure the

morale of their company by desertion, I served workers and peasants who looked to stir up revolutions, but turned corrupt. I knew a few priests in small towns who got into trouble with little boys, or estate managers who pilfered funds. I served petty barons and counts as they gambled away the last of old holdings, and I might as well list petty suicides, petty thieves, drunken louts, unfaithful wives of the worst sort, ditto their male counterparts, as well as comparable flotsam and typical jetsam. I had a horde of clients, but only a few could offer a new or interesting problem for one's special instincts. I had to serve as proctor for all too many nameless men and women who were born with little and proceeded to less. It could have been cause for despair. Even as recognition from a social summit gives life to a snob, only large projects appealed to me. While I could rarely know whether the Maestro was saving my services for some large if hidden purpose or merely marinating me in various backwaters until I acquired more experience, I did, on occasion, take hope that he had not lost interest. He even remarked once that I might seek high rank again, a post comparable to some of the epic encounters of our Company during the first three centuries of the Church in Rome. All of that might be there for me once more, provided I was ready to pay unremitting

attention to my present wretches, thugs, and drunks. I did, and eventually, I was again promoted. I learned then that the E.O. had selected me to oversee the work of a number of other minor demons who were keeping watch from time to time on a young Austrian client whose developed potentialities might yet prove astounding. Insignificant at present was this person and so was his family, but he had ancestral fault-lines full of the intoxicating stink of our old friend, blood-scandal. So I had observed him closely through the years. By 1908, this lad was jobless in Vienna, and stricken with timidity. He had quit school too early, was an avaricious reader who remained hopelessly superior to what he read (particularly when he could not understand it,) and was, in addition, lazy, prone to temper tantrums, and possessed of an ego as swollen as an infected limb. All the same, he was desperately afraid of virtually all meetings with other human beings. Yes, this boy was an unmitigated mess.

I did not dare to ask, but of course I could not, in those years, hide my curiosity from the E.O. any more than my agents were able to conceal their active reactions from me. At this point, the E.O. actually chose to speak directly to my thoughts. He said: "Why have I been so interested in this boy? Can it be that he possesses the largest ambition one could possibly

encounter in a young man who is not already insane? I may propose that you will yet take him on full-time. But, remain at ease! It is still no more than a project. It could certainly fail. He will need endless instruction. His terrors must be allayed by the most reassuring experiences you can arrange for him. And you must guard him from receiving any more crushing defeats to his ego. Already, you have allowed too many. In time, if he develops the greater part of his potential promise, he could, as I say, become your only client. Must I say more? Do pay attention. We are looking at a major project.”

All this was uttered by the E.O. with characteristic irony. Since he usually responded with an unvoiced intimation which was all we needed (in much the way a dog can rise from his sleep and shake himself at his master's silent command), we never knew how serious The Master was when he spoke aloud into our mind's ear. The irony in his voice took away any certainty that he was committed to what he said. Sometimes I felt that this irony came from his own uncertainty, but that was a perilous notion.

In any case, I dared not ask: What if, after all I have given him, I do fail? Many of our projects do. Particularly, major ones, our most outrageous gambles. Our Source—to employ still one more honorific—is not unlike God

in this regard. There are blind alleys in existence, and a good many, I can tell you, are the fault of the Lord who did not design them well. The dinosaurs, for example. If God is the greatest artist, He has also made the most prodigious mistakes.

I was depressed. This new project remained an outrageous gamble. I knew about the hopeless fate of most such exceptional but highly warped clients. Unless an historic epoch developed that could accelerate, even thrust, my assigned protégé into history, he would end as one more failure. At this point in 1908, there seemed no sign of such special conditions arriving. (The First World War and the disasters that fell upon Germany had not yet occurred.) My role, as I saw it, was to continue to be a jockey who guided a horse running against unbelievably long odds. I could foresee further demotions for myself.

All this is not of much interest now. We know, after all, what happened to the horse. And I was the one who rode him (with occasional but crucial help from the Maestro). I rode with Adolf all the way up to glory (and down again—which is half the matter, the other half being why I now propose to tell the tale). I know so much. This knowledge seems to exist as a

separate force within me, separate and independent of Our Maestro, a force, indeed, so intense that—as we know!—I have broken the first rule of our cohort. Moreover, obliged by the logical demand of my tale to initiate my reader into hitherto guarded revelations concerning Time, I have even told how Adolf was conceived, and how the Evil One under those extraordinary nocturnal circumstances chose to stand in for Gabriel.

The reader may recall that I was not actually in that bed at the time. Not literally. Nor did I have to be. Nonetheless, in stating that I participated in that particular carnality—that apocalyptic carnality!—I was telling the truth fully as much as I was purveying a lie. For even as we now assume to our logical confusion that light is both a wave and a particle, so do we devils live at once in the lie and with the truth, side by side.

The explanation—provided one is ready to follow!—is considerably less difficult than, let us say, Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. Spirits exist in a relation to Time that is not analogous to human perception of that same mysterious word. Our ability to ingest the experiences of lower demons enables higher devils to pass through periods of Time that human beings can recognize by way of linear chronology. But, I, as a higher devil, did not have

to be present on the night Adolf was conceived. Nonetheless, I was able to take in later the exact experience of what happened. Another devil (of lower rank) had been present in Alois' bed on that occasion. By order of the E.O., this devil had entered the act. I must say that this is always an option for any of us. We can enter into any and all cohabitation. On rare occasions, and this was one of them, a demon can even call for the presence of the E.O. So can the angels look to their Master. Since the resources of God and the Devil are—I must repeat, believe it if you will!—not infinite, such insertion must not be merely desirable or entertaining, but purposeful to the highest degree! The devil who had actually been present that night transmitted the experience to me somewhat later with a completeness of odor and carnal detail that can be termed absolute. It is fair then to say that it happened to me. For all practical purposes, I had been there. (Among us, to be given an exact recollection is equal to being present.) So, I also knew from the irrevocable intensity of the occasion that the E.O. had also been present, had joined with his petty agent for one instant (even as Jehovah had been with Gabriel during that other exceptional and history-altering event.)

While I was not going to be exclusively attached to Adolf Hitler for many years, the E.O. had, as I have indicated, placed him in my Overview. It is equal to saying that the devils who worked with little Adolf were there to pass their experiences on to me. His life and modest deeds as a boy were conveyed to me daily. Then, as the day approached when I would look to take whole possession of him, so did my concentration upon the sense-offerings of the minor devils in my domain take on more prominence until I was at last as steeped in the life of the boy and young man as if I had been alone with him over all the years of his childhood and adolescence. For this reason, I am ready to write about his life with an immediacy no biographer could attempt. Ditto for what I can relate about Klara, Fanni, Anna Glassl, Alois, Sr., Johann Nepomuk, Johanna, and any others.

Now, this profound if most mysterious urge to share my insights with men and women I do not even know has to be part of the same strange force that is behind what seems to be my incontestable readiness to betray the E.O. Indeed, I may have begun to understand why I am doing it. Profound experience communicated to no one else will scourge the soul. I, who have lived so long in the belief that I am no more and no less than a spirit—a

presence void of soul—may have to face a serious disruption of my understanding of my condition. Somewhere within, I sense the remnants of something much like a soul in myself, comparable, perhaps, to nerves still attached to an amputated limb—nerves which all but insist on promising the body that this limb can grow again. Such is the force of the thought in me that something of this sort may be present.

I have to recognize I am offering too much for so early a moment in our biographical endeavor. It will take all of a book that I may never be able to finish for you, dear reader, who is not at all in my likeness, and not my brother, to begin to absorb this confession. If you are disturbed, so, to a degree, am I. The present is with me again, the precise period of these years now that I live in an America I can barely comprehend. If I am a presence who consists of no more at this instant than the all-but-retired spirit of a devil who is without a serious assignment, I also sense that I must keep to the premise that an account of the life of my most important client will help, yes, will help to re-establish my footing on some long-lost terrain where I can begin to search for the remaining oddments of what may once have been my soul.

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Given the dominance of the technological world in the new century, one major mission at this point is to convince most well-educated world citizens that there is no such entity as the Devil, and not a hell of a lot of evidence that God exists. Certainly, we look to quash any stirrings on the modern intellectual horizon that sees a war between two opposed spirit orders. Rather, the New Technological World requires the universe to be subject to reason. God, taken alone, as a solitary mystery, may prove acceptable to some scientists, high officials, bureaucrats and corporate managers, and God is always subject to a wallow of adoration by full-service idiots who see Him as all-good, all-powerful, all One. But never posit a

Devil. Not in these times. There can be but one mystery, not two! (Indeed, we are given orders not to capitalize the Devil's possessives, only His! God's.)

There need be no surprise, then, that the general understanding of Adolf Hitler's personality is dim. He is, after all, a third mystery, the most mysterious human being of the century, a man, when all is said, who was all-too-human, if, it will be agreed, the average man or woman does possess large funds of the inhumane. Nonetheless, over the years, I grew able to comprehend his psyche better than my own. How can I not take pride in this? As a specimen of humanity, he was close to unmeasurable, and developed without question into the wild beast of the century, this all-too-modest-looking client who in the beginning I belittled as "little Adolf," yes, I knew him when we still referred to the young man who grew out of the boy as "little Adolf with the big ideas."

I can state that as a newborn he was a most typical Klara Poelzl product. That is, he was close to desperately unhealthy. Indeed, he terrified Klara every time a drop of snot oozed out of his nose or a bubble of sputum popped up from his infant lips.

It is probably true that she was ready to die if he did not live. Devils are sound at anticipating motive (the more sordid, the better—Anality Rex!), but our predictive attempts fade at the borders of mortality. Man proposes, the Devil imposes, and the Lord disposes, is not accurate in every instance, but we are obliged to recognize that God has the final power to decide where and when a human being will die. Take the extreme example of an airplane that has just gone down. Let us say we are responsible for the malfunction (a process that is not routine to accomplish.) Nonetheless, we do not have the power to destroy everyone on board. It is our Adversary (God) who determines the result. In most such cases, He will have to accept what we have succeeded in bringing off. It is too costly for God to countermand us. Do not assume that it demands no exceptional effort for Him to save a few people trapped on that edge of extinction—airplane crashes involve so many factors! Indeed, He could not even save His Son, (as we are never tired of reminding our clients!) but there are occasions when a death we looked to create does not occur. From time to time, even in extreme difficulties, God still disposes.

Be it understood, then, that the question comes down again to the vulgar matter of expenditure. A most useful rule of thumb—for human endeavor as well—is that all wars are ultimately determined by who can bear the cost. Even as we devils are never all-powerful because He is our Adversary, so He, too, in turn, is never all-powerful. Besides, it can be prodigiously expensive for Him to war with us. To keep this understanding alive—that He is not All-Powerful—the E.O. demands that we try not to speak of the Lord as God, but as the D.K. (What D.K. means, I fully intend to explain before long.)

Rather, allow me now to take up Klara and her condition as she became a mother for the fourth time.

The attention she gave to Adolf's early days would have been seen as hysteria in any woman who had less cause for concern, but then, Klara was living at the edge of an abyss. Recollections of her first illicit joining with Alois travelled on to the penetratingly corrupt smell of the sickroom as Gustav, Ida, and Otto were lost one by one in the same few months of the same year. She had prayed devoutly to God to save them. He had chosen to ignore her. As she saw it, that rebuke could only confirm the wretched evil of

her condition. So she looked to go back to her feelings on the day she first met Alois. His visit in Spital came when she was sixteen, and she had never seen a man who disturbed her so directly, so physically—she fell back a full step on their meeting at the door. She might as well have received a blow to the stomach.

Yet she had also admired Alois, immensely, and at once. Her mother had an expression on her face Klara had not seen before. For one instant, there in full pride and longing, Johanna had seemed beautiful. On the next moment, Klara knew the same feeling, but with a closeness to her mother that was a good deal more than their animal sense of sharing the same bed-rags of existence, no, it was as if she inhabited her mother's heart in the blink of an eye, and then felt the full force of the pang that followed. In truth, Klara had had a visitation from us. One fine joy we devils can know occurs in the instant we invest our spirit into a man or woman who might yet be a client. Johanna was not much of a devil (only for an hour in the straw with Alois could one say that she had been more or less invested) but it was different for Klara. She was able to feel all of her mother's old desire at the exact moment

she saw Alois. If one may speak of a pang of joy, she felt indeed just such a bolt.

We need not, however, journey again along the back and forth of Klara's passion for Alois, nor return to the depths of her piety. By the time Adolf was born, she would wash her mouth every morning with laundry soap, a natural act given her mate's predilection (especially in late pregnancy) for putting her head onto the Hound and keeping it right there, one big hand on her neck.

No surprise then if her love was for the baby. So soon as Adolf gave some real indication of living—after two weeks he could smile with delight at the approach of her face—she began to believe that God might be kind to her this time, that He could even be ready to forgive. Would He be ready to spare this child? Was His Wrath lessened? Had He even given her an angel? Such is the nature of pious hope! Next she believed a dream where an angel told her to have nothing to do with her husband. Not in bed! Such is the nature of pious obligation.

Alois soon had to face the possibility that a will of iron, when forged by prayer, and girded about with more prayer, can be quite as powerful in a

woman as is a developed muscle in a man. At first, he could not believe that her refusal to let him touch her was not a whim nor a new species of drawn-out enticement. “You women go back and forth like a kitten chasing its tail,” he told her in exasperation. Then, deciding this rebellion was to be mercilessly crushed, he seized her buttocks with one hand and a breast with the other.

She bit him on the wrist hard enough to draw blood. Whereupon he cuffed her, leaving Klara with a bruised eye he was obliged to beg her to conceal. (What a nasty scandal if she decided to go out and face all those women of Braunau who lived by the view from their window!) So she could not go out. For a week, his hand bandaged, he did the shopping after work—no tavern ale for those nights. After which, her discoloration no longer visible, he gave up what he considered to be his irrevocable rights and continued to sleep in a lump on his side of the bed.

Since this state was to be maintained for close to three years, it will certainly be worth returning to Alois and the solutions he found to lift such a matrimonial siege. But, for now, we stay close to Klara. An intensity of

emotion is always attractive to demons and devils, even as farmers dream of black soil for future crops.

It need hardly be underlined that the death of Otto, Gustav and Ida, proved useful to us even if we had not been the ones to effect it. Obviously, it intensified Klara's love for Adolf past any usual measure of large maternal love. When he began to cry out whenever she kissed his lips, she even came to understand that it was the odor of lye on her mouth. But since Alois was now driven to his side of the bed, there was no longer a need to wash her mouth in the morning. Therefore, she could kiss Adolf with full content even as he gurgled obligingly.

It hardly required the insight of the E.O. to know that this could prove useful later. Excessive mother-love is almost as promising to us as a void of mother-love. We were keyed to look within the experiences of our clients for excess of every kind, good or bad, loving or hateful. Every exaggeration of honest sentiment can contribute to our aims.

If the E.O. and the D.K. generally pay little attention to most men and women—our warring interests end most often as a stalemate concerning the average person—it is no small matter for us to select a child early. It can be

tempting. A large investment is possible before the Lord (whom, to remind you, we call the D.K.) or His Cudgels becomes aware of our infiltration. Early choice is then a high-stakes gamble, but the E.O. will make such a decision by a reliable rule of thumb. An incestuous procreation followed by swarms of mother-love has to offer fertile possibilities. When here, as we know, the event is fortified by the presence of the E.O. at the conception, there is every reason to expect that the child will offer amazing possibilities. If it lives. We lose so many. All too often, the D.K. spots them and, heartlessly—I will say this about Him!—yes, the D.K. removes them heartlessly! This can happen no matter the cost to Himself. The cost to Himself! A curious calculation is present. The D.K. is not insensitive to the hopes of those who surround the child. The early death of an exceptional child can demoralize families dreadfully. Even when the D.K. knows, therefore, that a given individual was subsumed by us, He hesitates. He does not like collateral damage. Besides, He can always look to steal the boy or girl back from us.

So the D.K. is respectful of mother-love that is all-embracing. It can come as no surprise then that many artists, gargoyles, ogres, geniuses, killers,

and an occasional savior live to maturity because God chose not to dispose of them. The first element of mutual recognition in the struggle between the D.K. and the E.O. is probably the understanding that no single splendid human quality can ever prevail by itself, unaltered by us or Him. Even the noblest, most self-sacrificing and generous mother can produce a monster provided we get there first. We are always on the alert for candidates who are loved outrageously in early childhood. All the same, as I have warned, this is not a game where one can begin to speculate on what might be the end result during any of the early stages. That is why investing in the newborn can be such an unbalanced gamble.

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By the time he was a year old, Klara called the boy Adi. It was never Adolf or Dolfi. (Dolfi was much too close to Teufel for comfort.) “Look,” she would say to her stepchildren, “look, Alois, look, Angela, isn’t he an angel, a little god?” Since the baby had a round face, big round eyes as blue as hers, and a small mouth, and therefore looked to them like any other baby, they nodded with easy obedience. She was a good stepmother and that was all right with Alois, Jr. and also with Angela since they had heard from Alois, Sr. that their own mother, Fanni, had been crazy.

Klara did not plan to speak with such open enthusiasm to her stepchildren about their new half-brother, but she could not help herself. The

beatitude was in her eyes. Adoration welled forth with every indication Adi gave that, yes, he would still be there tomorrow, he would live.

She was certain she would keep him alive. Breast-feeding gave her the most virtuous sense of certainty. She was putting her own strength into him. Her nipple was never far from his mouth. Minor devils, flying over Braunau at night, would report that her prayers were more heartfelt than any of the other young mothers there. Devils, obviously, have minimal attachment to the sentimental, let alone the heartfelt, but one or two were bothered by Klara, yes, even haunted if but a touch. Her prayer was so pure: “Oh, Lord, take my life if it will help to save his.” Other women, being more practical, complained to the D.K. about what was missing in their days. The most greedy and stupid were always looking to own a better house, more money, or a surprisingly good lover, “yes, if you permit it, Lord,”—there was rarely a sweet for which they did not pine. Klara, by contrast, looked to give nourishment and long life to the child. Her breast, count on it, was always in his mouth.

While the E.O. was in general not sympathetic to breast-feeding since the aftermath of its absence often stimulated an ugly energy in future clients,

his attitude was tolerant in cases of first-degree incest. For such situations, he wanted the mother to be close to the child. All the better for us! (A monster can be most effective when it also has stores of love with which to charm people.)

Other advantages can be obtained by us through excretory dramas. While a dirty butt on a baby, if found daily, always sends us a signal—the mother is, yes, a potential client for us—the opposite can also be useful. Klara is an example. She always kept a clean house. Her rooms at the Pommer Inn were now as spotless as any home with several fine servants. The furnishings gleamed. So, too, did Adi's pip-squeak of an anus have its glow. It was kept as immaculate as a small glistening opal, and of that, too, did the E.O. approve—an incestuary must always be kept aware of the importance of his or her own excrement, a Diktat that was never quite explained to us although it does offer some hint of explanation merely by being stated. (We know that every rule, no matter how generally effective, is there to be reversed in special cases.) Sometimes I would even think that the

E.O. measured our ability to just this nuance—were we ready for the special case, even if it came to no more than a little asshole that was forever being polished?

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Not long after Adolf was born, Alois decided to leave the Pommer Inn. This move amounted to his twelfth change of address in Braunau over fourteen years. But, Alois had good words for the Pommer: "It has elegance. I don't know that I would use such a word for anything else in this little city." He had a dozen such remarks to enliven a hundred situations of small talk. "Women are like geese," he liked to say. "You can recognize them from behind." Heavy tavern laughter would follow even if none of them could explain what was so particular about the rear end of a goose. Or, when speaking to fellow professionals: "To pick out a smuggler is easy. Either they look like the wretches they are or they are too good to be true. They

dress too well, they speak too well, and the amateurs always work very hard at looking you in the eye.”

When asked, however, why he had moved from the Pommer Inn after a residence that had lasted for four years, he would shrug. “I like to move,” he would say. The truth was that he had used up the waitresses, chambermaids and cooks at the Pommer who were not too old or too ugly, and he could have added (and did to one or two friends), “when a woman goes dry on you, change your house. That can put a little oil in her juices.” He could even have given the real reason—no matter where he lived, a restlessness came upon him sooner or later that proved intolerable.

On the day when the Hitler family left the Pommer Inn, he had, however, a most uncharacteristic thought. It was that fate could yet choose him for high position. I will remark that his idea of high position was to become Chief Customs Official some day in the provincial capital of Linz. Indeed, fate was yet to give him exactly that post. Never superstitious (except when he was) Alois decided that the move from the Pommer Inn to a rented house on Linzerstrasse was a good augure. He and Klara both agreed that they needed more room, and now they had it. Of course, there were no

females in the attic, but he could manage with that. He had nosed out a woman who lived on his route home from the tavern. He had to pay for the privilege by giving her a gift time to time, but then the rent on Linzerstrasse was low. It was a dreary house.

All the while, he fought against falling in love with his wife. She infuriated him. If ants were like bees and had a Queen for whom they labored, then Klara was Queen of the ants, for she commanded his skin to crawl, his crotch to itch, and his heart to toll in his chest—all of this coming from no more than the presence of Klara on her half of the divided bed. He would keep thinking of how she had looked on the night of her wedding. She had worn a dark silk dress, rose-colored with a white collar—that much white she allowed herself as a bride—and on her white forehead, she had teased some charming curls. At her breast was pinned the one piece of jewelry she possessed, a small green cluster of glass grapes looking real enough to mislead a man into reaching for one. (Or just about!) And then there were her eyes—no mistake! He had to fight against falling in love with a woman who kept the cleanest house in Braunau just for him and for three kids—two of them not even her own!—a woman always as polite to him in public as to

an emperor, a woman who never complained about what she had and didn't have nor nagged him about finances, a woman who still had only one good dress, the one worn at her wedding party, and yet if he laid a finger on her, she would have bitten it off. He wondered if the difference in their age was what it was about. Better than marrying her, he should have put her in a nunnery. Yet his skin itched at the thought of how she would not let him near.

Drinking at the tavern, he would look to regain some pride. His dislike of the Church had by now become a conversational instrument. Yes, he could say a few things about it. He would occasionally page through an anti-clerical volume he had found in an antique bookshop in Braunau; indeed, the store owner, Hans Lycidias Leipziger, would meet him on many an evening for beer. While the bookseller kept himself at a scholarly level above more mundane Customs Officers' discussions by offering no more than a nod of his head from time to time, his wise presence, his shaven chin and shaven upper lip, his full mutton chops, his peephole spectacles, his half-bald head of burgeoning white hair, offered a slight but legitimizing resemblance to Arthur Schopenhauer and this gave support to Herr Leipziger's smallest assent, just

enough to carry the other Customs Officers around the more bruising turns of Alois' argument. While they were hardly to be counted as church-goers, "No good man wants to be neutered," most were ready to admit, still they were officials, and could hardly feel at ease when a prestigious institution was mocked, let alone the Holy Roman Church.

Not Alois. He felt no fear in declaring that he had no fear. "If there is a Providence larger than Franz Josef's power to provide for us, I have not encountered it."

"Alois, not everything comes up to a man with a printed sign," said the officer closest to him in rank.

"Yes, it is all a mystery. Mystery, mystery, mystery, and the Church keeps the keys, they are the caretakers, yah?"

The others laughed uneasily. But Alois was thinking of Klara and how her piety left a hot rock in his stomach. He would grind this rock to powder. "In the Middle Ages," he said, "do you know? The whores, they were more respectable than the nuns. They even had a Guild. For themselves alone! I have read about a convent in Franconia so stinking bad the Pope had to

investigate. Why? Because the Franconia Whores' Guild complained about the illegal competition they were receiving from the Franconia nuns."

"Come now," said two drinkers at once.

"True. It is true. Absolutely true. Hans Leipziger here can show you the text." Leipziger nodded slowly, reflectively. He was a little too drunk to be certain on which side his authority should fall. "Yes," said Alois, "the Pope says, 'Send a monsignor to look into it.' What does this good monsignor report? Yah? Half the nuns are pregnant. This is the sober fact history must live with. So, the Pope takes a real look at the monasteries. Orgies. Orgies of homosexuals." He said it with such force that he had time to take a long swallow from his tankard.

"That, of course," said Alois, once fresh breath had also been ingested, "need not surprise us. To this day, half of the priesthood are mamma's boys. We know that."

"No, we don't," muttered one of the younger officers. "My brother is a priest."

"In that case, I tip my hat to him," said Alois, "if he is your brother, he is different. But that was then. And I assure you: The priests who were real

men did worse. You ever hear this saying of the Pope? From the same Pope. He said, 'No priest needs to marry so long as the peasant has a wife.'"

The unspoken rule of his voice was that they be ready to applaud with laughter. So, they laughed. "It was exactly like that," he said. "The poor merchant has one wife, the priest has ten, and the Bishop cannot enter heaven—too many wives to bring along."

"Which Bishop?"

"The Bishop of Linz, don't you know?"

Alois had not forgotten the Bishop of Linz who, six years ago, had refused his application to marry Klara. In order to defray the expenses of translating his letter into Latin, Alois had been forced to declare that he was a pauper. Six years ago. It still rankled.

On the walk home, his mood was foul. He had decided that the days of enjoying open tirades against the Church might be coming to a close. He was fifty-four years old, and for many years, had never worried about his position in life. He had known he could and would rise in the ranks open to him, but no higher.

Now, however, his stomach was unsettled. From a respected friend in the Finance Watch, he had been told that in Vienna there was talk of a promotion for Alois Hitler up to Chief Customs Officer at Passau. Given his lack of respectable education, this would be a true rise in rank, a most innovative promotion. “However, you have to watch yourself, Alois,” the friend had said. “This is still a year away. Keep a good name if you want to be moved to Passau.”

He had always seen himself as exceptional, afraid of no one (except for certain superiors in uniform), possessed of a genuine magnetism for women (how many men could say that much for themselves?) and up from the ranks. Moreover, he had never been timid about public opinion. Nobody he knew could say as much. He was no coward in that department.

But now this respected friend who had an ear to the upper councils of the Finance-Watch was saying, “Watch out for the townspeople in Braunau.”

This was a worry to travel right into him. Because Alois could not decide whether to trust his friend. The man was a practical joker. In fact, he was the same one who had once told him: “The townspeople of Braunau are nothing. You can put your thumb to your nose at them.” Alois had indeed

put together a good many habits around that remark, but the truth was he had said too much, tonight, absolutely, if there was any ground to this exciting rumor concerning Passau. Most unsettling! He was learning how much ambition he had, a real ambition which he had never admitted to himself. He couldn't. It would have been like a river breaking through a levee. But now he could recognize that a flood-water was waiting. If he wanted to stay afloat, he had to stop pissing on the Church.

Yes, in this sense, his wife, a cold tit to him and a jug of warm milk to the baby—what a guzzler! never off of the tit, but, get by all that!—she was a useful wife. Good for the children, good cook, very good with the Church. Or would be if he could keep himself from frowning every time she went to Mass.

Now, he, personally, was not going to be caught at a High Mass except for State occasions, holidays. He did not wish to live with a new itching attack, no, he did not see the confessional box for himself. His skin prickled. A serious official of the Crown like himself having to bare his soul (and some of the private stuff below the belt!) no, not to one more priest. Let them find their nourishment elsewhere for tonight's masturbation.

Women, however, should be seen in church. It was time to accept that fact. The people in Braunau must be able to say that his wife never missed a Mass.

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Within the Company, we look upon ambition in men and women as a force to put at our disposal. While we accept the likelihood that most human emotions can originate from God, even as He gave necessary instincts to the animals, nonetheless, we are always ready to convert such strong emotions. Of no state is this more true than ambition. Plus, its weak sister, avarice. Avarice is simple to deal with—it is, after all, nothing but pure greed. Ambition, however, is more related to the Originating Vision. That is why the D.K., who so often puts serious restraints upon human behavior, is ready on occasion to encourage ambition. I would suppose His goal is for all men and women to possess the potential to fulfill some part of His Vision. To that

degree, God would also prosper in the cosmos. (The E.O. is forever hinting to us that there are other gods, quite equal to ours, out among the stars, and they all have extreme and separate notions of what existence might yet become. At that level, the E.O. remarks, the D.K. is no more than one entrepreneur among many!)

He was speaking, of course, of cosmic ambition. Let me address myself, however, to the human variety. As the E.O. is never loathe to tell us, a human who suffers from too much ambition is paying the price all too often for the Creator's characteristic lack of anticipation. The D.K., wishing His Vision to be effective, had endowed the human will with independent strength. In doing so, He had been obliged to open the door to us as well. Whereupon, we captured a horde of clients whose free will led them to us. Their ambition was looking for allies. It may be sacrilege to some, but I would propose that God miscalculated. Ambition is not only the most powerful of the emotions but the most unstable. It cannot bear defeat with signal grace. Not often! So, defeat can draw a man or woman to us. So many of the most ambitious are ready to blame God for a run of bad luck.

Personal ambition, therefore, awakens our interest. The D.K., a prodigious optimist, had not foreseen that the men and women who could best promulgate His Vision by the intensity of their ambition would have to be saints. Of course, few human beings have any desire to develop to that point. I will be blunt. The D.K. made miscalculations that proved grievous for Him. He overrated the amount of good feeling in the very human nature He had originated. Whereas our E.O. has always known the extent of perversity to be found there.

Consider the case with Alois. Many people guard their ambition as the most secret part of their emotions (guarded even from their open thoughts). For so soon as ambition begins to burn brightly in the mind, it is ready, if necessary, to shred a good many long-held convictions about the high level of one's honor. So soon as ambition reveals the extent of its pride, it can prove disorienting. All too often it becomes a blind intensity.

No surprise then if Alois was not the only one in the Hitler family to suffer this disruption. Ambition is a true germ, highly infectious. If Klara now had a child who was actually giving a few signs of staying alive, this was due, as we have remarked, to her belief in the life of her milk. Her

breasts were suffused with joy, the most generous joy she had ever known. So, Klara now wanted everything for Adi. And to such a degree, that she was even ready to contemplate forgiving her husband a bit—enough maybe to allow him to cross the middle of the bed.

Their second courtship began. She was still breast-feeding Adolf. So, there was no question of a pregnancy. What inspired the return of some little carnal interest was her growing appreciation of Alois. He had built strong foundations, after all, for the good future of Adolf. Even as her husband had risen from the mud of Strones and Spital to the honor of a high uniform in the service of Franz Josef, she, in turn, might begin to measure the heights to which Adolf could ascend should his ability to go beyond his origins prove equal to the vigor and upward progress of his father.

For that, however, he would need this father to love him. Once, in her gentlest voice, she had said to Alois, “Sometimes I wonder why you never hold Adi.”

“It will just make the other two jealous,” he answered. “Jealous kids are not to be trusted with babies.”

“Alois and Angela hold him all the time,” she said. “They are not jealous. They like him.”

“Let us keep it that way. Maybe they are happy I do not hold him.”

“Sometimes I am afraid he is not very important to you,” she dared to say.

She had gone one step beyond where she had thought to go. Bad enough for him that he had only half a bed, but now she was looking to scold him? “Important to me?” he said. “That I can answer. He is not important to me. Not yet. I want to see if he will live.”

She did not weep often, but here she burst into tears. The worst had happened, and she felt weak before him again. She was not free of loving him.

At that moment, the dog began to bark. Alois had bought a mongrel boxer for a few gulden from a farmer he knew. Since they were living in a house, rather than at an inn, the purchase could be considered protection worth the cost. But the dog, whom he named Luther, proved disappointing. While Luther worshipped Alois and quivered before his master at every shift of tone, he did not seem otherwise alert. Moreover, he had nervous habits.

Even as Alois shouted at him to stop howling, poor Luther would urinate on the floor.

Afterward, Alois might have his regrets. The dog, after all, did adore him. First, however, he whipped him. Even as Luther tried to crawl away, the poor bottom of the beast became soaked in his own outpourings. All the while, he was yelping in full terror. The uproar woke the children. Alois, Jr. came out first, then Angela, and Adi at the last, not yet two years old, but agile enough to get out of his low bed and totter into the midst of this. Klara leaped up to seize him. She was ready for the worst, she hardly knew what—that the child would step into the urine, that he would weep for her breast, that Alois might strike them both—she had seen the look in her husband's eye when Adi became too greedy on her tit. None of this happened, however. To the contrary, the child looked with solemn interest at the whimpering dog, then at the flailing hand of the father, and his blue eyes had a gleam she had seen before, a look of remarkable intensity for one so small. She had seen it on his face when suckling him. He would stare at her with an expression equal to the one on Alois' face at rare times, the tender expression of a lover overwhelmed for a moment by the implicit equality of flesh to flesh, soul

upon soul. Deep is the communion of being able to speak without a sound being uttered. At such instants, she felt as if this child was closer to her and knew more about her than anyone else ever.

Now, as Adolf stared at the wet dog and then at the over-flushed face of the father, there was no tenderness in this look, but much comprehension.

Klara felt an odd panic as if she must now startle the little boy into weeping so that she could give him her breast and thereby remove him from the room. And, she succeeded. Adi burst into a rage as she took him up, bore him away, and force-fed him. Indeed, armed with his first tooth, he nipped her enough for Klara to cry out, whereupon he stopped bawling long enough to give a deep and hearty chuckle.

From the room she had just quit, she could hear Alois bellowing.

“That dog can’t even shit right,” he cried out of his own pain at the awful turn the evening had taken. Luther was bleeding at the mouth from blows he had received full-face on his muzzle, but in turn, Alois’ palm had a small but ugly laceration from raking one fierce slap across a broken incisor among Luther’s sad front teeth.

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It will be noted that I write about my people much like any reasonably good novelist. By turns, I am ready to observe them sardonically, objectively, ironically, sympathetically, judgmentally, even compassionately. Nor am I often sinister. This should not come as a surprise. Why should I be required to lower my style to the level of a casual reader's notion of how a devil should present himself?

From the onset of our service, the Evil One has instructed us to make humankind our study. We do the E.O. honor every time we appreciate a man or woman in full. The Maestro has always encouraged us to feel close to what is godly in people as well as to the spoils that may be there later for us. To comprehend the nobler facets of humankind, precisely those that can prove

inimical to us down the road, is important. If we had religious Orders in the Company, I would be a Jesuit. Indeed, I share a fundamental understanding with Jesuits as, for certain, does the E.O. I am always ready to acquire a sympathetic comprehension of all that in essence will prove to be our final adversary—I see it as my duty to be ready, indeed, to know more about godly sentiments than all but the most gifted of the angels.

That is why the E.O. encourages us to speak of God as the D.K. (At least those of us who work in German-speaking lands. In America, it is the D.A.—dumb ass! In England, the B.F.—bloody fool! For France, A.S.—L'Ame Simple. In Italian, G.C.—gran cornutto! For Spanish—G.P.—grande payaso.) So D.K. stands for Dummkopf. It is not that we look upon God as directly retarded (not so!). Moreover, we know from experience (and lost battles) that the Cudgels can, on occasion, be as bright and incisive as ourselves. The root to employing such a term as Dummkopf comes, I think, from the E.O.'s desire to wean us from what has been our greatest weakness—the admiration we often feel unwillingly before the Almighty. As the E.O. never allows us to forget, God may be powerful, but He is not All

Mighty. Hardly so! We, after all, are also here! If the D.K. is the Creator, we are His most profound critics. Often, we are successful.

So successful, indeed, that the E.O. looks to rearrange the balance. If the Angels had succeeded in bringing all too many men and women to believe that our Source is the Evil One, (until we are obliged to live without any real opportunity to protest this canard), then our best recourse, as the E.O. suggested, is to take pride in his initials. Or, try to. Which we do. When I write E.O., or speak of the Evil One, it is with full knowledge of the richness of the concept. He has given us so much, our subtle master who disdains to capitalize any reference to his presence other than in the use of his various names—the E.O., the O.O., (the Omniscient Observer!), the Source, and the Maestro. “Leave all that excessive reverence to those God-worshippers who are always on their knees,” he tells us. “We have work to do, and it is tricky. I recommend that you keep thinking of Him as the Dummkopf. For, indeed, given what He could have been, that is what He is. We are brighter by far. And, of late, we are more creative. Remember: It is our universe to gain. It is His to lose. Keep calling Him the Dummkopf.”

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The outpouring of the urine, the shit, and the blood of Luther became the first in a series of episodes remarkable for their powers of transmogrification—that is to say, dramatic and thoroughgoing metamorphosis.

So, for example, Adolf's bowel movements now began to dominate the pitch of life in the house on Linzerstrasse. Before the episode with Luther took place, Klara had certainly been alert, no matter how often Adi soiled his wrapping cloths, to keep the child clean, indeed, the act, as I have remarked, became a dalliance between mother and boy. She wiped him so carefully that his eyes gleamed with transmogrificational delight. He discovered that Heaven was in his anus right there with the cramps. All the while, his mother

subtly, tenderly, delicately (and with unwitting demonic finesse) expunged the soil, wet or dry, from his rosebud, (which was, of course, Klara's secret name for her dear baby's incomparably dear little hole—die Rosenknospe.) She was so proud of its pink sheen that she could not even suppress her joy when her step-children were watching. Indeed, unlike other good mothers in Braunau, she barely bothered to teach Angela how to substitute for her. In truth, she preferred to be alone while taking such personal care of Adolf. Those were the best of times. To her credit, she was wholly superior to any unhappy elements in the procedure. His stool, (which could on occasion be as rank as any other colicky child) did not occasion her disgust. It was disturbing if the outpouring were sick in smell, or worse, gave a hint of the empty cavern that lurks in the odor of grave illness, but her breath stayed calm when the stink was rich enough to overpower anyone else. She even wanted the stench to be strong. The stronger, the better. A sign of health! Such was her love for Adi.

It sparkled between them. His eyes danced as she dredged his cheeks with feather-smooth wipes of the rag, and her eyes were full of love, so full that his little penis certainly stood erect. She, in turn, would giggle and coax

it back (most properly) while they both laughed. For it jumped up again. Whereupon she kissed the tip, (once), and then blushed. Be assured! She did not allow her mind to suggest that the act might be subject to Confession. No, never with such innocent joy.

All this changed after the episode with Luther.

She lived again in high fear of Alois. Now, it seemed as if Adi's swaddling cloths were always in danger of bagging open. What if Alois should come upon a full plop on the floor? Once, stepping out of the parlor for a minute to start a dish in the kitchen, she returned to see the child playing with his spoil—he had already plastered his upper lip and chin. She gasped at the thought of Alois coming through the door.

So, training began. It was like trying to teach a bright but willful dog. In the beginning, Adi might even tug at her skirt, or take her to the closet that held the chamberpot and cry out for her to remove his cloth. After which, complimenting him for his prowess, they would go, two spirits in one, through the wiping. For such intelligence she offered full praise. His eyes would glow.

Now, she became ambitious. She wanted Adi to learn how to unsnap the safety pins that held his cloth, and indeed he was able to. Day by day, one success followed another, until one morning, he pricked his finger. After that mishap, he would not go near the pins again. She lost patience that he had come so near and now refused to continue. Finally, she scolded him, and that was certainly the first time he had heard such a tone in her voice. He rebelled. Knowing how important he was to her, his response was keen—he felt the same kind of clarity with which he had watched Alois beat Luther. At that moment, Adi had been illumined by new knowledge. He did not measure the difference between a dog and a man, not yet, for Luther was as much a person to him as his father, but he could see the instant result: the dog had collapsed into abject terror but still loved his master.

So would Klara love him, he decided, even when he would not obey her. Taken out of his cloth and allowed to run naked from the waist down, he began (never when his father was at home) to shit on the floor. Sometimes he would do it right next to the chamber pot, which brought Klara so close to screaming that Adi could all but hear every sound she did not utter, and felt in

consequence masterful. He had no fear of Klara even when she came close to striking him.

He went too far. One day when she was in the midst of waxing her kitchen floor, he spread excrement on the upholstered arm of the parlor couch, studied it, knew by a new tumult in his chest—so curious in sensation—that this was different. Risk was present. All the same, he would show it to her. He did.

This time she did not scream, she stood stock-still. She sensed that he had done it on purpose, and so she did not say a word, merely cleaned the sofa by which time he had an attack of diarrhea and the floor was dirty again. He began to laugh and to bawl, but she did no more than sigh and clean him soundlessly in a listless loveless fashion. This made such an impression on him that he awoke in the middle of the night and went to her bedroom. Alois had been called to Passau for preliminary interviews and the house had not seen him for a week, but just before midnight he came home. Since the boy had formed the habit of going often to his mother's bed whenever Klara was alone, he was surprised, even as he cracked the door, to hear a little gasping, and wheezing, and then the bull-roar of Alois' voice. It came in spasms.

Beneath it and above it were his mother's cries, soft, and full of the oddest torture. Those cries spoke of joy soon to come, so soon to come, yes, just beyond reach, yes, now, almost! No, not yet! Through the half-open door (kept open particularly for her to hear him should he cry) he saw a sight his mind would not take in, not at once. Something looked like eight arms and legs and two people, yes, two, but one of them was upside down. He could make out Alois' bald head and side-whiskers pressed between his mother's legs. Then, without a word his father had turned around and was sitting on her face.

Adolf walked away as silently as he had entered, but he knew, there was no doubt—his mother had betrayed him. Just then he heard a final set of cries, a sobbing full of wonder, and he turned back and peered into the room, seeing what he could by the moonlight in the window, and his father was belaboring Klara with all of his body, his big belly slapping on her. But she was grunting like a dog. And full of contentment! “You beast, you are an ugly man, you are an animal, you!” and then again, “You, yes, you, yah, yah, yah.” There was no question. She was happy. Ja!

He would never forgive her. That much the two-year-old knew. All her love had been for him. Now, his father was behind her, and on top of her back.

This time Adolf went all the way back to his room. He could, however, still hear them. In the bed next to him, Alois, Jr. and Angela were giggling. "Goosey, goosey," they kept saying.

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He began to bawl for his milk not thirty minutes after Klara had sunk into the best sleep she had known for years.

Must one suppose that because a child's deepest feelings have a half-life of thirty minutes, they are not profound? Because of that betrayal, he would never love his mother as much again. Yet, his feelings were heightened. There was pain in his love now, and an anger that revealed itself by nipping at her breast with his new teeth. Indeed, for a few days, he felt close to Luther, and when drowsy, could sleep beside the dog through an afternoon. Truth, he saw the hound as a brother, and the love affair went on until Adolf began to take too much advantage of the beast, punching him in

the belly, trying to poke into his eyes, and sometimes, when standing, loosing a kick to the ribs. The dog began at last to growl at his approach and Adolf in turn would whine and run to Klara. There was a period when this made her so distraught that all delight in breast-feeding was gone. The teeth had done it. The days of weaning were at hand.

In those private councils of her mind that would never be available to her child, her stepchildren, her husband, nor even to the confessional box, she had come to the conclusion that she must have another child. If this came in part from the old fear, even now, that Adolf might not live, she also feared that she would never love him as much again, no, not as once she had, and so maybe there should be another child. Besides, she was entering a new time in her marriage. She looked forward to Alois approaching their bed when he was in a most friendly mood. For on such evenings—after all these years!—desire came alive again, desire was there!—down in the marrow, yes, deep!

We may remember that the last time we encountered Alois, he had been burying his nose and lips in Klara's vulva, his tongue as long and demonic as a devil's phallus. (Be it said: we are not without our contributions to these copulatory arts!) Alois was certainly full of us for that

little while. Never before had he given himself so completely to that osculatory exercise, and yet he had become good at it, and so quickly, that no explanation is possible unless we are given credit as well. (We do have the power to give transient gifts to men and women even when we are not looking to turn them into full-service clients.)

In the morning, Alois could not believe he had done it. All that! To lower himself to such an extent! In bald fact, and to make her pay for such bottoming on his part, he had, we must recall, clumped his buttocks once more over her nose and mouth—precisely the frightful sight that drove Adolf back to his bed and caused him to bawl for milk not a half-hour later.

Yet Alois in a most unexpected manner, also felt tender towards Klara in the morning. This unexpected gentleness in concert with the astonishing pleasure he had given her by way of his tongue, a joy whose unexpected preciosities had conducted her up to, yes, occult regions, had also left her ready enough to forgive the rotten part. (Indeed, his heavy behind actually smelled better than Adi's.)

As a devil, I am obliged to live intimately with excrement in all its forms, physical and mental. I know the emotional waste of ugly and

disappointing events, the sour indwelling poison of unjust punishment, the corrosion of impotent thoughts, and, of course, the literal aspects of caca itself. It is true. As devils, we live in shit, we work with shit, we prosper from it (as I may yet attempt to explain). It is natural for us, therefore, to comprehend a marriage through the eye of the cloaca—and I will add—that is not the worst way. For parenthood is not only the mansion but the outhouse of marriage. As St. Odon of Cluny stated so unforgettably (in a remark worthy of the best of devils: inter faeces et urinam nascimur—between shit and piss are we born), so the proper study of marriage resides not only in partnership, congeniality, boredom, predictable habit, daily annoyance, verbal scuffles, and daily despair, but in the guts and smear of it all—the comradely knowledge of all the forbidden tastes, smells, bodily places. Indeed, if all that were absent, the sacrament would have less foundation. On caca, is marriage based. So I would assert. You are free to attach my opinion to my spiritual empowerment. I am a devil, after all, and we look for the lowest common denominator in any and all truth. Small wonder if the condign properties of waste are part of our province.

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Alois' promotion came through. The Finance-Watch named him to the post of Chief Customs Officer at Passau, and Klara had the confirmation of knowing she was married to a man of achievement.

On the other hand, they could hardly rent their house in Braunau at such quick notice. But Alois had to work in Passau now, and that was a full day of travel apart. So, there were periods, often for weeks at a time, when Alois lived away from the family. In consequence, Adolf could loll in the big bed with his mother.

The child's joy was profound. If it was grievous that Klara had to put him aside whenever Alois come home, so did he also learn that such

happiness could be recovered. For after a day or two, Alois would be off again to Passau.

This lasted for a year. Even when the family eventually moved to Passau, the new position required Alois to oversee other towns. He was, therefore, absent at night as much as he was home, permitting Adolf to sleep right up against the nocturnal warmth of his mother in the big dark bed. There were nights when he almost loved her as completely as he once had, and she could take pride in him again.

Working in Passau satisfied Alois' vanity at first, but soon proved to be a curious burden to his confidence. Braunau, after all, had been a less important station. Trade with Germany was limited, and for the most part, the smugglers they encountered were petty individuals. The roads to Munich or to Vienna which crossed the frontier at that point were of secondary importance. The tourists were rarely well-to-do. Nothing spectacular to catch a good customs-man's eye. Most of the product was agricultural; weighings were tedious. While Braunau was situated nicely on the river Inn, most of its architecture was humdrum, and there was not much substance to the view. Braunau had few dark secrets.

Passau had more presence as a city. It was also German. By agreement, Austrian customs operated here on the German side of the Danube, and the buildings at the river bank afforded rich historical legends. Passau had once been ruled by a Prince-Bishop. It had medieval towers, it had castles, and some of its churches dated back to the onset of the Middle Ages; others were high Renaissance. Passau's walls spoke of grandeur, dedicated duty, ancient crimes, torture chambers, by-gone glory, and—much to the point for Alois—criminal smugglers with imagination enough to be more of a match for him.

But he also felt a subtle discomfort in the new position. If he had always considered his uniformed bearing to be a full warning to malefactors, a conclusion he could fortify for himself before every mirror, he also knew that this depended on the rigor of the professional manner he had developed over many years. On duty, he could present a personality of the heaviest official calm guaranteed to provide no easy peace to the traveler before him. His weighty approach clearly declared that a man able to manifest such confidence must have set an incorruptible seal on himself. That was the way. Let travellers know that you are not the man with whom to play games. He

had studied many an upper-class customs officer—those with university learning, some with livid, invaluable dueling scars. They were the ones to model oneself after.

Taking up his command in Passau left him feeling, however, less settled. While he made few outright errors, his tone became, at times, too harsh. Rudeness toward inferiors was reasonable only when the cutting edge of the criticism was accurate. One's subordinates learned correct procedure best under the sting of a fine whip well-applied. Occasionally, however, some trifle would provoke him unduly. Once he went into a tirade because an underling addressed him as "Herr Official" rather than "Herr Senior Official Hitler." He could sense that his new Passau contingent of juniors, more sophisticated and better educated than the younger officers at Braunau, might be growing critical of him. Now and again, looking down from his post at the rush of the Danube below the Customs' bridge, tears would come to his eyes. He would find himself thinking of Braunau, and of the two women buried in the region, dear carnal-spirited Franzeska, yes, and for an instant he would also mourn Anna Glassl. No beauty, but she had known what to do under the sheets.

He smoked all the time. His nickname, not known to him, was The Chimney. (The German is good enough to offer here: Der Rauchföng!) “And what is the mood of our Chimney today?” one young officer might ask another as he came on duty. Alois knew these juniors were resentful that he did not allow them to smoke during their shifts—nonetheless, he insisted. The very injustice of it would enforce his authority. His years had told him. A good officer must be fair for the most part, yet ready to employ certain small inequalities. Done judiciously, it was most effective with inferiors. It reduced them one necessary notch.

Now that Klara and the children had joined him in Passau, he became more severe with his offspring. Alois, Jr. and Angela soon learned not to speak to him unless they were asked a direct question. If Alois, Jr. was outside, the father would put two fingers to his lips and whistle. It was identical to the call he used to summon Luther. In turn, Alois, Jr., fresh-cheeked, strong, stocky, and with a face like his father’s, had driven Klara and Angela into hysterics one afternoon by picking up one of Adi’s monumental turds that baby brother had chosen to deposit on the parlor rug. When stepmother and sister began to scream at the sight of it in his hand,

young Alois chose to run after them, his eyes wild with mischief. Soon, Klara and Angela were crying out in terror at the monstrosity of the act. Then, Adi joined in their chorus. He screamed with the rest even as he also galloped right after Alois, Jr., until his big brother, tiring of the sport, tore off an inch of the stuff, whirled around and planted it on the tip of Adolf's nose.

That evening Klara told Alois, Senior. The beating which ensued was comparable to the attack on Luther. Alois, Junior, could just about crawl off to school next day. Profound, after that, was the discipline in the house. When Alois came home from his duties, the children dared at most to whisper. Klara, unwilling to upset him, and full of remorse for having told her husband, was also quiet. Supper was eaten in silence. The smell of Alois' breath, rich with meat and sour from beer, mingled with the aroma of red cabbage.

He would take, then, to the armchair, select one of his long-stem pipes, tamp his tobacco into the bowl with all the authority that could reside in the thumb of a man of official importance, and proceed to overpower the fireplace with his own smoke. Alois, Jr. and Angela went to their room once permission was given. But, Adi was called forward.

His father would cup the three-year-old's head in his hand, and then, with a divided grin—fifty percent affection, fifty percent meanness of spirit—would blow smoke into Adolf's face. The boy would cough, and the father would chuckle.

As soon as Alois let go of his head, Adolf would smile and run off to the water closet. There, he would throw up. Sometimes, head bent over the pail, the three-year-old would remember the sounds of Alois making love to Klara, and such groans and sobs were there with him in the lurches of his esophagus. He kept asking himself why his mother never complained about the smoke.

She did not dare. She sensed that the greatest provocation to her husband would be to comment on the clouds that rose from his pipe.

Moreover, Adolf had given her new cause for fear. Cleaning his bottom one day (and she did not make this large discovery until he was three—such were her curious proprieties) she came to notice that he had only one testicle.

A town doctor reassured her that this medical phenomenon was not exceptionally uncommon. Such boys often grew up to be men with large

families—"The good God, dear lady, gave more than enough, and then doubled it."

"So he will not be different from others when he goes to school?"

"Some boys in that condition, such a minor condition, are sometimes highly active. That is all."

Kind words could not soothe Klara. The missing testicle was one more stain on the Poelzl family. Her sister Johanna was not only a hunchback but, according to Alois, half-mad and an idiot. And then there was a first cousin—a true imbecile. Not to speak of all of Klara's dead brothers, dead sisters, and her own dead children. There was not enough, she decided, of Alois' strong constitution in Adolf, no, none of the strength Alois had so obviously passed on to Alois, Junior. This was also her fault. She had loved her husband on the night that Adolf had been conceived, but only on that night, and in a way—was it unholy?—such a night!

But now—could it be too late?—she would say that she loved her husband again. She came to this conclusion slowly, step by step, over many months, but on one fine night in June, a year and a half after his transfer to Passau, she felt a new rush of respect for him. For just that afternoon—he

had learned that in another six months, he would be transferred to Linz, the capital of the province, there to serve as Chief Customs Officer. It was the most important assignment you could find in all the Service between Salzburg and Vienna.

On that night, they conceived. Perhaps there was never an hour when she loved Alois more simply, or realized she wanted a second son so much. Little Adi with his one testicle, had put a small but year-long horror into her soul. She did not dare to think any longer that Adi might live a long life. On the contrary, they needed another child. The new one, she decided, must belong to Alois as much as to herself.

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Edmund was born on March 24, 1894, a few weeks before Adolf would be five. Klara had told him that he would soon have a brother or—if God so desired—a sister, and Adolf was ready either way. He looked forward to playing with the baby on arrival. He expected to meet a child half his age, at least as measured by size, a living creature ready to speak, but in any event, certainly able to listen. On the approach to Klara's bed, when he saw no more than a cloth bundle on her breast with a face inside it as wizened as an old apple, he was aghast.

Having been sent the night before to a neighbor's house where he went through the discomfort of sleeping on a small bed between Angela and Alois,

Jr. (who kept pinching each other over his intervening body) he knew that changes were coming. This perception turned into his first large sorrow when, next day, as he rushed to his mother's bed, the midwife put out a hand as large as his face and said, "Stay back. Don't hurt the baby."

Klara made it worse. She put a hand on his head which was so passing in its touch that he could feel no love. Tears came to his eyes.

"Ah, the poor little one," said the midwife and led him out of the room. "In a few days," she said, "you can get nearer to the baby."

"Will he talk to me?"

"Oh, you will be the first to understand him." With that, she laughed and returned to the bed where his mother lay.

For weeks, he could hardly get near enough to talk to Klara. Yet it had been just a few weeks ago, no more, when he would have the same conversation each morning with his mother.

"Mommie," Adi would ask, "are you the most beautiful woman in the world?"

She would tease his hair. "What do you think?"

“I think you are the most beautiful.”

She would hug him to her breast. The feeling those breasts held for him was not what it used to be, but she would pretend it was. Not a year had passed since she had stopped feeding him. Now, he would gorge on the cream puffs she often prepared for dessert, indeed, he would wolf them down at such a rate that Alois, Junior, would complain audibly if Klara was present, or, in her absence, would crack a knuckle across his head. Klara, prey to new uneasiness at how little attention she gave to Adi these days, would defend his right to the cream puffs. “He is so little,” she would say, “he needs them more than you.”

After the birth, Klara was often too fatigued to cook. The temporary servant made cream puffs that tasted like sour milk. Klara, in her turn, was feeding Edmund all the time. So it seemed to Adolf. He experienced a new sorrow that blended with the sad undertone of the church bells in Passau, so many bells, so frequent. In his ears, it all sounded as if she was forever feeding Edmund.

Now, when he tried to ask if she was the most beautiful woman in the world, she would laugh unhappily. “Oh, I am a tired woman,” she would say, “I am not beautiful, Dolfchen. But your sister Angela will be.”

Adi did not agree. Angela was undependable. Angela was always ready to pinch him for no good reason. She was nice, at times, but treacherous. “No, you are more beautiful than Angela,” he would say, and his mother would shake her head.

Meanwhile, much of the time, his father was in Linz. One week after Edmund’s birth, Alois took up new and full-time duties there. Since Linz was fifty miles east of Passau, the distance kept Alois from returning to his household more than twice a month. The weight of his strong voice was not often present now to quiver through the boy’s body. And the house was empty during the day. Angela and Alois, Junior were away at school. Adi would be alone with his mother and the infant, but Klara still did not have much time for him. And at night, he no longer could be certain where he would sleep. Often, Alois, Jr., would take over his cot, and Adi would have to move to Angela’s bed. She would tickle his body everywhere. Sometimes she would tell him that he did not smell good. “So, Adi, your breath is

rotten,” she would say. Often, he would put a blanket on the floor to escape her.

He was also afraid to go outside. The wild yells that boys made while playing in the field back of the house were fearsome. He spent his time looking at the illustrations in a book his father had bought about the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. He would like to be a brave soldier. Could he be? He asked himself. He was so afraid!

One afternoon, after school and much at Klara's bidding, Alois, Jr. pulled Adolf out of the house, and led him to the field behind the house where not a dozen small boys were playing at war.

Alois, Jr. studied the group for a minute, then selected the leader of one army, a big stout five-year-old. “This is my brother,” Alois told him, “and if you let anyone on the other side hit Adolf, you will hear from me.” He punched the boy on the arm hard enough to leave a memory, and departed.

When Adolf came home that evening, Alois, Jr. took him aside. “From now on,” he said, “I eat the cream puffs first. As many as I want. If you cry to your mother, mamma’s boy, I will not protect you on the field.”

“I won’t cry,” said Adi, holding his breath as tightly as if he were clinging to a rope.

Next day, he went to the game by himself. He was more afraid of Alois, Jr.’s derision than of any blows he might take in the battle.

Actually, there had been little enough punishment on the first day. The fat boy was quick to use his own body to shield Adi from every attack. Besides, it did not take long to grasp the basic principle. The game was simple. Divided into two teams, the boys took turns chasing each other. It was really not a war. More like tag since once caught, you were dead, but then, each melee lasted only a few minutes. After which, the boys, close to breathless, would count the losses, take a breath, and start again. Given the clamor of the charge across the field, somebody would usually get knocked down. Once, when his leader was waylaid by two boys from the other team, it even happened to Adolf. A rude shove to the shoulder and he was slammed on the ground. Earth drove up his nose.

He did not cry. It took an absolute effort of will. But his will did not permit him to make a sound. One minute later, he had to negotiate with himself once again in order to keep from weeping. That was because no one

had noticed his new-found stoicism. His feelings were as bruised as the scrape on his cheek, the outrage to his stuffed-up nostrils.

He managed to get through the battles that followed. He had discovered that he was quick and could usually dart away whenever an enemy soldier tried to touch him. To his delight, he even tagged one enemy soldier in the next raid.

On the next day, his face was in the dirt again. Action was everywhere. It was hard to dodge the rush.

He hated being knocked down. The fat boy was rueful about it every time it happened and begged him not to tell his brother. Adi had the pleasure of patting him on the back. No cause for alarm, he announced, not a word would he say.

That night he could hardly sleep. He felt that not only did he know more already than they did, but in time to come, the fat boy, Klaus, would be his lieutenant, while he, himself, as captain, would make the rules.

To accomplish such an aim, he came up with a more interesting set of moves. War should be trickery. War was not two armies running at each

other all the time—war was maneuver! He did not know the word as yet, but he had certainly arrived at the concept. (And without our assistance.)

To his new mates he now proposed that they move from the flat field to a hill in the next meadow. Each army was to group on opposite slopes. That way, they would not be visible to each other until one team or the other crossed the summit.

Once he had convinced the boys of this change, he brought in an amendment. Given, for example, a total of six boys to a side, each army could now divide its forces into four soldiers and two—a two-pronged attack. If four men met only two on the other side, those two were automatically captured. No tagging was necessary. (He still detested being knocked down.) If, on the other hand, four attackers met four defenders, then the attackers lost. Still, no tagging.

More improvements were soon on the way. He could see that his innovations dampened the fire of the occasion. When the flank that had four boys came over the hill to meet four defenders, the encounter became no more than a flat-out surrender. So, tagging, to his dislike, had to be reinstated. This brought on a new debate, for he insisted that the captain on

each side must not be captured. The leader must not even be touched. With preternatural eloquence, he made his major point. "The highest officer must always be respected."

To gain this point, he had to pick up allies one by one. (It did not hurt that stout, sturdy Klaus was always by his side.) In time, Adi prevailed. He was a little amazed at how well he could deal with these matters.

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In the course of young Adolf's first war games, I was instructed to take a more direct interest in his development.

Be it understood that a serious investiture of any man or woman is never routine. Each case is unique. The average person assumes that one can lose one's soul to the devil in an instant. The premise is not only false but the product of endless propaganda by dedicated and often mediocre ministers who work for the Cudgels. State it directly: This is brainwashing! The real situation is that we do not appropriate people through Satanic entrapment, then keep them forever as our vassals. To use a particularly crude and contemporary American example, Avis versus Hertz, or Burger King against

McDonald's, is closer to the mark. So soon as we seek to invest our powers in a client, the Cudgels usually appear. Sole possession rarely occurs. Ploys and gambits proceed on their separate and conflicting course for years. Rarely do our demons or the angels of the Dummkopf realize a significant victory. Indeed, after a series of such battles, the odd soul actually captured in toto by us or by the Cudgels bears more resemblance to a battered wretch than to a prize. (Insane people are often the victims of such sustained contests.)

The process is full of paradox. For example, those potential clients that we find most difficult to approach are often possessed of the greatest potential. Conversely, those individuals who are easy for us to pick up usually prove of no great service. It does not take much to traduce a drunk or an addict. We polish what is left of their charm, which helps to consume a little more of the compassion of their families, especially if the mother, father, or any of the siblings wish to retain a sense of charity. In effect, we injure their God-loving hearts! But that is easy work. Such gains are small. Ultimate ends are not served. We aim, after all, to conduct human nature

completely away from the Vision of the D.K. The eventual project—yet for me to name!—is to advance the vision of the Evil One.

There is, however, another factor in every contest which I am bound to explain. It concerns the separate economies of Divine energy and Satanic energy. They differ considerably.

I can allow that even in the higher cadres of devils and angels, we hardly know who has more Time to give to a contest that is focused on one man or woman. I suspect that in direct competitions, the Dummkopf still has more resources. (He is also vastly more spendthrift.) On most evenings, for example, He disburses untold bonanzas of effort to His sunsets (which—it must be admitted—do bolster human morale across the board!) but His gifts are not always that pertinent to His direct aims. The E.O. has often remarked that the D.K. is analogous to a spoiled wealthy lady who only wishes to hear fine remarks about her good taste and beauty, whereas we devils have to be obsessed with head-on budgetary demands. For certain, the E.O. is forever obliging us to forecast the expenditures of Time involved to secure a new client. Such prognostication can be onerous, especially if one is wrong. To spend years on a promising fellow who eventually resists us is not only a

budgetary blemish upon our individual record, but a general loss for the project. Prevail!, the E.O. is always reminding us. So we try to exhibit more acumen than the Cudgels when choosing our targets.

Over the millennia, our E.O. has evolved principles from which he rarely diverges. We do not have to be reminded to take cognizance of every fornication that gets us off to a good start.

Our targets are obvious. Rarely do we fail to attend the joinings of rich and powerful people (so full of infidelity!). As has been noted, we do not ignore the occasional wretched couple whose rites include incest. Other copulations, however, particularly those attended by angels, present a more demanding task—it is never routine to slip through their blockade! It seems—I speak here for myself—as if the E.O. has never been able to accept his failure to be present in the hour when Jesus Christ was conceived. The result, to put it in the familial sense, is that our Source soon discovered that he had a half-brother whose powers were at least comparable to his own.

Fortunately for us, Jesus proved to be a typical Son. (The private record we are furnished by the E.O. informs us that He was much at odds with His Father.) Jehovah, indeed, was often incensed by the rebelliousness

of this good son. But let me keep to the point. The prevailing fact of our existence as devils and demons is that we are obliged to live within a limited budget. You can well believe that our projects are chosen, therefore, with discretion.

For example, the E.O. does not ask us except in special instances to show much interest in the early development of children. "In the first years of life," the E.O. will remind us, "there are too many mishaps with children." Sometimes we keep no more than a short record of those families who interest us. "Over the first few years," our Maestro will also remark, "a child is caught between the need for love and the development of the will. Those two inclinations are so naturally at odds with each other that we can rely on sufficient inner confusion in the subject to enable us to approach later."

Except for the most unusual cases, therefore, we exercise no intervention until the age of seven. (Until well into the nineteenth century, an extraordinary child was always in danger of being carried off abruptly by one grievous disease or another.) Any devil seeking to invest earlier in a particular boy or girl, must argue his case.

Once a child has turned seven, it becomes easier to decide. But it is still not promising. The E.O. looks upon the next five or six years as the Age of Clods. "They are now encountering the world in its basic form—the school years. Nearly all of them rush toward habit, routine, and stupidity as the most immediate forms of protective insulation. These are the years when the average human ego takes shape in all of its readiness to lie, misremember, distort and forget—all in order to keep the young ego in some readiness to support the ongoing project, oneself."

Our hunt commences more often with adolescence. Here, we are at the first lively stage of intervention. Often the best energies of the D.K. are there for us to subvert since He is invariably ready to invest resources in very young men and women who hardly know what to do with their sudden inrush of increased will and appetite. Dramatic distortions of His Intentions are now open to us.

I have proceeded this far into explaining our processes of selection to emphasize how uncommon was the special attention being given to this particular five-year-old. That his name was Adolf Hitler was, after all, of no importance yet.

All the same, I had attended (by proxy) his conception, and it had remained a matter of course for me to review the work of my minor devils who were watching his family's activities. Our jargon for this kind of surveillance was milk-runs, an expression we employed long before it was adopted by U.S. Air Force pilots in the Second World War. Any one of our minor devils could pass by a house in the hours before dawn, and by way of the small and large storms, inertias, and joys that had transpired in the family since the last visit, we could ingest a fund of new information. It required no exceptional expenditure unless the abode was seriously protected by guardian angels. In a more normal condition, one swept by the house and relayed the findings to appropriate superiors. While humans slept, we did our work. (As did the angels. Yes, those forces of Light also worked in the Dark!)

I had been supplied then with a close history of the Hitler family for all the years since Adolf had been born, knew it in such detail as was imparted to me by the separate devils who kept track of our numerous projects in that region of Austria. If what my agents offered was virtually as modest as the narrative I have presented, it had, until now, sufficed. In reviewing Adolf's early years, I confess that at the time I saw no large promise in the boy. He

was outrageously in need of love and damnably vulnerable. The odds were that he would perish early, or creep through life with a mutilated ego. At least, so I would have judged if the E.O. had not been present at his conception. Such a reason was enough. Even on the busiest nights, the Hitler family was included on every milk-run.

This routine of careful but passive observation was overturned altogether for me on the day that Alois, Jr. dragged Adi off to the boys' game of war. The E.O. intervened. I received a direct message: "Take closer care of him now. Stiffen his spine. We will lose many of his future potentialities if we don't take steps."

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As is true of all reasonably disciplined armies, there is no room for rebellion when given a direct order. I did what I was told. I stiffened the boy's spine. Indeed, I will make the claim that I accomplished this with some finesse. For I did not inject special funds of energy into his courage or his will; rather, I gave him just enough to carry out the job himself. He had been the one, after all, who chose not to weep when his face was in the dirt, and afterward, he displayed his own cunning in finding ways to avoid physical punishment. It had been enough that I was (so to speak) at his side. We too served in effect as guardian angels. (For prime clients, only!)

I was aware again of the superior insight of the E.O. Adi showed a few signs that he might be worth the work. The child had powerful instincts,

and was as much superior to an average five-year-old as a young race-horse is to a run-of-the-mill pony. I enjoyed working with him, therefore, and that was just as well since the order had come during a period when I could not afford new inroads on my budget. Improving a child's courage usually demands the use of precious stores, precisely those funds of love and force we have managed to steal from His Cudgels. Courage is His preserve and if the D.K. were not such a wastrel, and we not so adept, our chances would be paltry. Of necessity, we have become skilled at impersonating angels. Even an adult, feeling our infusion of love, tends to believe it is bona-fide, that he or she is the recipient of Grace. (I suspect Kierkegaard had just that in mind when he suggested people ought to be wary of feeling too saintly, since they could then be working for Satan.)

I speak of this because we devils are human to this degree—a fine return on our investment puts us in the best of moods. So I came to enjoy being with Adi as he proceeded to improve the little game of war that was being played by these five-year-olds in Passau in the spring and summer of 1894. Indeed, the change in my sentiments was as rapid for me as for the child. (Secretly, we do cherish our power to bestow gifts upon a putative

client.) We must. Often the only way to capture a child so young is, as I have indicated, to spend some of our limited stores of love to seal the conquest. A risky business. All too often, a child's shifting inclinations can waste our efforts. Our youngest clients alter themselves on their own, or resist us, or, worse, the Cudgels move in.

To forestall this event, I was there night after night during this period to instruct Adi while he slept. Indeed, he delighted me (the rarest of pleasures for a devil!) by the development of his activities during the day. To repeat—he was no ordinary five-year-old, no, he had an exceptional capacity to tinker with his game of war. Rarely did he fail to improve it.

He soon saw, and I believe this came as much from his perception as mine, that outposts were necessary. It was wrong to send soldiers over the hill without fore-knowledge of what opposite force they might encounter. So, a scout from each army had to attempt to work his way up close enough to the summit to obtain a covert look at the dispositions of the other side. Following in logical sequence came another change in the rules—an advancing army had to be free to move its forces from flank to flank, even as it climbed the hill. Ditto for the defenders. The defense could also shift their

outposts. Of course, this called for larger forces on each side, but Adi was soon able to convince his regulars that more boys should be invited in from nearby streets and fields. They, the originals, having been here first, could take promotion in rank. Let me offer one of his speeches to his troops.

“Why do we love our game?” he would ask. “Is it because we need to know more about war? Yes. Because, my friends, when we are big, we will want to be heroes. Is that not true? Klaus, do you want to be a hero?”

“That is what I want.”

“Of course. It is what we want. All of us. But to do this we must learn more. So, we need more soldiers. On both sides. How are we to accomplish this?

“I will tell you. It is by bringing in all who are willing to join us. Then, we who are here can be given high rank. We who command must be very high in rank. Not just a captain, or a major, but a general.

“Klaus here, will be my colonel.”

Those words are close to what I remember. While I have certainly endowed him with an eloquence no five-year-old could muster, I have to admit that some of the good turns of speech that came out of him seemed to

be neither his words, nor mine! Could they have been inspired by some agent of the D.K., unknown to me, who was also present? Was he being helped by both sides at once? What a large investment to put into this little Adi!

Before long, his—I will indeed say his boys—were engaged each afternoon in hour-long battles. There were startling shifts of tactics and endless alterations of the rules. The numbers increased to fifteen and twenty a side.

Word came from the E.O. "Enough for now. Let us see how much of this endures after the move."

This was not uncharacteristic of our Maestro. We had to be ready to accept any and every quick change of direction. In this case, it was the situation of the family that would be altered. Alois had decided to move Klara, Angela, Alois Junior, Adi, and the baby Edmund, up from Passau to dwell nearer to him in Linz.

I am obliged, therefore to apologize twice to the reader. Once, for bringing so abrupt a termination to Adi's young war games, and again because interest was thereby aroused for the boy. Good readers are the most

unprotected of humans—their sympathy moves in advance of their judgment. Some may have felt uneasy, therefore, to discover that they were enjoying these first successes of the child Adolf Hitler. Be assured. To read about the skills or triumphs of any protagonist will elicit happiness in just about all who follow the story, especially if there is a suggestion of the sentimental, or even better, the magical. (Those are two useful tools for any author who desires to arouse quick emotions in the reader.) That is why—count on it!—popular writers come looking for us all the time. We love them. They are such dupes. Popular writers think they are working both for God and their own prosperous selves. We never disabuse them. We want them to steep their readers in baths of misperception. The profit comes to us. Misperception of reality serves as compound interest for us.

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This time, Alois had a serious reason for moving. He was going to retire and buy a farm. In the last year of his Customs work, he began to look about and by February of 1895, he bought what might be the right property in a town called Hafeld, thirty miles from Linz. In April, Klara and the children moved from Passau to this newly-chosen abode, a rural retreat. Even the closest school was in the nearest hamlet, Fischlham, a mile away, and there, in the Fall, Adi would enter the first grade. Meanwhile, over the next few months Klara and the young ones would live on the farm while Alois completed his service in Linz.

Of course, the oncoming retirement could not come without opening a few cracks in a most impressive edifice. I speak of Alois' ego. It was its own

kind of monument, quite impressive, yes, when we consider the meager materials out of which he had been able to erect it. Through his adult years, he had managed to keep an unspoken sense of himself as a man of serious achievement. It had become a species of meditative nectar which he would allow on occasion to seep into his sweetest thoughts.

By his final year at Linz, some rudiments of this concept—"a man of importance"—were even satisfied. The title, Chief Customs Officer, tickled a marrow of real satisfaction. If only he had enjoyed working at this post, it might have been enough, but the problems with personnel he encountered at Passau were now magnified. Linz was a center of attention for the Finance-Watch. Since it was the capital of a most important province, Upper-Austria, Customs was stocked, therefore, with young, ambitious, and relatively sophisticated junior officers who were never at a loss to show their subtle contempt for the failings of senior officials. Most of these young men could take for granted their future attainment of high office. Having come from well-to-do families, this confidence was all but palpable. That had to leave Alois a little out of joint. He was getting on. For the first time in all the years that he had been wearing a uniform, he did not always strike the passing eye

as an immaculate official. (That now demanded too many pains!) Nor was he as severely punctual as once he had been. Sometimes, at the point of issuing disciplinary reprimands, he would hesitate long enough to contemplate the possible repercussions.

For just such a reason, he eased up on smoking restrictions. He no longer enjoyed facing into the inheld wrath of younger officers. In consequence, he enjoyed his own tobacco less. He began to feel as if his associates were looking for him to retire. He had put in, after all, near to forty years of service. He was eligible. While he could continue for another twelve-month and even another, he did not deem it wise. Small, steady inroads on his vanity kept moving him toward a smaller dream. What if he chose to become a gentleman farmer? That would not be so bad, no, not out there in the autumn sun of his career. What the hell! Born a peasant, he could end as a well-to-do fellow who had gone back to the earth again.

He had money enough. He could buy a decent farm outright. He would have his pension, and his savings—he and Klara had certainly exhibited thrift. Besides, he had in hand the sum and interest of the larger part of three wives' dowries. It could be said that the first two had brought

real money to the union. If Anna Glassl had succeeded in recovering, through law, half of her large dowry due to their separation, still, the half left was not small. Franzceska, while hardly up to that measure, was nonetheless the child of a prosperous farmer. Even old Johann Poelzl, Klara's father, had come up with some florin.

On the other hand, Alois understood money only too well. He knew not all coin was equal. Deep in one's conscience, one had to pay a tithe to money that was not earned properly. Money gave back its reflection of how it had been gained. Sometimes, he felt a passing chill. A good part of his prosperity could be seen as the flower that had sprouted from the coffin-soil of dead wives' dowries.

During this last year of service, while Klara took care of the children in Passau and he was free in Linz, he had begun to feel too old for other women. That was when he told himself to go back to the earth. It was what he had always heard from Johann Nepomuk—"the real woman is in the fields." The old man had only to get drunk enough, and he would repeat it over and over. "The real woman—look for the real woman in the fields. Respect her."

It was an adage Alois could enjoy but his present plans did not include heavy duty as a farmer. His aim, rather, was apiculture. He was interested in developing beehives. He would market the honey. That would be his real crop. All the same, owning a little land might be equal to acquiring another limb, a fifth appendage so to speak, as important to a man with peasant roots as a trunk to an elephant.

He had indeed bought a farm five years ago about the time Adolf was born. In many a way that purchase had been more exciting to him than the birth. Land, at least, was not going to die like the first three of Klara's babies who had gone back to wherever they came from.

The reverse had occurred. The land did not perish, but his ownership did not go well. The holding had been near Spital, about a hundred miles from where he was then working in Braunau, yet he had had some far-off notion of retiring to the place. In the interim, it might be a good way to take care of his sister-in-law, Johanna Poelzl, in preference to having her dwell with them as a maid. Johanna, he had long decided, was not only surly but half out of her head. In addition, she was a hunchback. He did not want her in the parlor every night, especially not with that dome on her back.

All the same, he did feel some admiration for the woman. Johanna had the fierce pride of someone who was not in the least afraid of God. She would put no trust in Him. "God," she would declare, "did not have to kill off so many of us in the Poelzl family." Alois could tip his hat to that. "She's not like my wife," he was fond of telling the tavern. "Klara is ready to kiss every cross she meets."

All the same, Johanna did not run the farm very well. Each peasant who worked for her was, sooner or later, antagonized by the hunchback's sharp tongue. Finally, she decided to give it up and go back to live with her father and her mother—also named Johanna. If we recall, this Johanna was the one who had been Alois' mistress on an unforgettable occasion. ("Sie ist hier!")

Alois was able, however, to sell that first farm at a modest profit and so was not ill-disposed to taking on the property in Hafeld these several years later. Here was a farm he would work himself. It was called the Rauscher Gut (which can be translated freely as the Windy Estate) and it offered nine acres plus a wooden house under a thatched roof with good views of the mountains of the Salzkammergut. In addition, there were fruit and oak and

walnut trees. A hayloft was in the stable and stalls for two horses and a cow, plus one prize sow.

It was perfect. All ways but one. After the purchase, (and only after the purchase) neighboring farmers were ready to hint to the new arrival that the land might be beautiful, but it was not necessarily going to be famous for its crops.

He looked upon these comments as exactly the kind of hazing that resident farmers would visit on a newcomer. Oh, he assured them, it did not matter. The land would be given a rest. He was there to raise bees. That was his element. Good honey could become the most prosperous crop of them all.

Indeed, in the last days before his retirement ceremony (which was acceptably eulogistic to Alois and most impressive, even thrilling, to Klara) he did have a series of drinking nights as a closer way of saying farewell to his staff and to the decades of his work. Since he had no desire ever to be seen as a man who would moon over the past, he dwelt on his future, he bullied his junior associates, plus a couple of old cronies, and a few respected town officials to drink more than one stein with him on the merits and

mysteries of bee-keeping. Indeed, he belabored each table on each night with so much of his Kultur concerning hive maintenance and the "mysterious psychology of these fabulous little creatures," that Alois' junior officers would warn each other, "Tonight, let's try to keep The Chimney from smoking us out with his bees."

In truth, he did see himself as something of a philosopher concerning this subject. What an achievement for an untutored peasant from the Waldviertel to be able to give a lecture equal to a university savant!

So, yes, in these last weeks before retirement, in the same Linz tavern he had frequented each night after his customs house shift, Alois spoke more and more often of the higher concepts of apiculture. Honey bees formed an amazing and complex world, he kept informing his drinking cohort. "With rare exceptions, these tiny creatures give their lives to one purpose: It is to build a future for the generations who will follow. The honey they convert from nectar and pollen is not only for their consumption, but, gentlemen, it is also to feed their larvae." He nodded. "These larvae are installed in the tiniest hexagonal cells, a wonder to behold, because they are constructed so superbly and symmetrically out of the very beeswax these insect workers

make from pollen, which process, gentlemen, is so mysterious that it is not yet quite understood even by the most modern chemists."

His company nodded, their spirits glum. This was not lively beer talk. But Alois, on these last nights, had become the kind of lecturer who is always ready to exhibit an incorruptible lack of sensitivity to his audience. "Some bees," he now remarked, "the heftier ones, become guards to watch over the entrances to the hive. Do you know? They are ready to go into battle at the cost of their lives. They will even fight off such powerful raiders as wasps or spiders or termites. Yes, all the insect world, you see, is looking for a free meal in the honey. But that is only one of the obstacles to a peaceful life for the bee. All through the summer, many of the worker bees, as one example, are constantly engaged in keeping the interior of the hive cool. How? By means of tireless activity. They never stop fanning their wings. A good many even wear out their wings. After which, they are ready to die. They give up their lives in this hard labor of creating a draft to cool the hive. Why? Because the larvae cannot survive in too much heat. Think of it. Thousands of wings all fanning away, even as others go out to forage and bring back more supplies from the fields of flowers. They collect the pollen in pods on

their legs and then, flying back to the hive, they manage to stay aloft under the weight of loads of pollen and nectar that weigh more than their own bodies. Flying work-horses the size of bees. I tell you, they create a society that is not unlike ours. But maybe more rational."

None of the junior officers were ready to argue. (If they did, he might go on for another hour.) It took one of the older town officials to reply. Taking several portentous sips of smoke from his pipe, he said, "Come, Alois, they are only insects."

"No, good sir! With all due respect, you are mistaken. There is much more to them than one would think. Some are, I believe, more inspired in purpose than the average human dolt. Let me say, they are one of the wonders of our universe."

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I was not well-prepared for Alois' interest in these matters. Here was not the man I knew. While I could see some practical purpose to it all, since the product was eminently salable, apiculture also had its risks, including the peril of receiving a serious number of bee stings. While it might be reasonable to engage in such efforts rather than endangering his long-worked heart by plowing a field, I had, all the same, an uneasy suspicion. Alois was too sincere in his enthusiasm. He was not sufficiently concerned with profit. That surprised me. It did not seem in character. The desire for money is the tap-root that drives most men like Alois into new activity. The relative absence of this desire did concern me, therefore. (I have to feel like a sorry devil whenever I cannot come close to a man's real intentions.) Yet

here was Alois ready to undertake this venture because it satisfied something in him that I had not yet ferreted out for myself.

I did recall that he had tinkered with keeping bees in one small town near Braunau, dabbled, and soon gave it up. In the last few months, however, he had written a short article for a bee-keepers' journal. To my surprise, the piece was literate. Alois' experience might be limited, but he had acquired a degree of book knowledge on the subject, and was now fascinated by new modes of cultivation. It looked as if bee hives made of straw would soon be done away with. Skeps they were called, squat-ribbed domed objects about the size and shape of big-bellied human torsos, and these old skeps had their drawbacks. To harvest the honey, bee-keepers had to keep the population of the hive stunned by enough smoke to put them into a near-comatose condition. It was an imprecise process, and the skep often had to be ripped open to collect the product. Despite the smoke, some honeybees awoke long enough to sting the collector.

A new and much-discussed innovation was, however, being developed in England and in America. Even in Austria, some bee-keepers were ready to do away with the old ungainly straw structure. If the skep had been for its

time an improvement over the more barbaric practice—common in antiquity and the Middle Ages—of chasing the bees out from their hole in a tree, advanced bee-keepers around Linz were now speaking of hives that could become the equivalent of a bee-city. This new housing, no greater in size than a small wooden cabinet, was filled with wax trays installed vertically. The worker bees seemed content to build their miniscule wax cells on both sides of each tray. Since this cabinet could hold a good number of trays, which each had room for thousands of cells in a grid of files and rows, some keepers calculated that each hive could be seen as comparable to a giant apartment building in some future megalopolis like Berlin or New York.

To explain this venture to Klara, Alois did emphasize the pecuniary promise. Good money would come back from clean work, and Alois Jr. and Angela would help, he told her. And Adi as well! He convinced her that the new project was eminently practical.

I was more than bothered. Klara might believe him but I did not. I had decided that Alois was looking to find a way to come nearer to the Dummkopf. That was not a matter I could afford to ignore.

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I was now debating whether to pass this concern on to the E.O. I was supposed to be on the alert for unexpected turns. On the other hand, Alois had never been one of our clients. We had never felt the need. He was by our measure an average man, which is to say, sufficiently corrupt to be available for our use whenever we might decide to invest temporarily in him. The assumption was that he would be open to a quick invasion. The Cudgels would hardly be guarding him. To what end? He was so self-centered. What could there be for them to protect? Whereas, when it came to someone like Klara, we did not choose to go near. Not for too little. It would have proved punishing and again—to what end? We did not need her directly.

Some of our most exceptional clients are the offspring of good mothers. Indeed, evil children can issue from the most loving mothers. Average men and women find it hard to accept that realization. It shakes their faith in the Dummkopf. How could God allow this? A standard lament.

We had not gone near Klara, therefore, except for that one incomparably special night—our lightning raid!—when Adolf had been conceived.

After that, she was more useful to us as herself, there, innocent, nurtured by the attentions of the Cudgels. This is, however, so complex a matter that it will have to wait. To give but an indication, let me say that Klara, being gifted with depths of love, would not only adore her Adi, but would become enchanted by the new one, Edmund; that was certain to agitate many of Adolf's feelings.

To watch over a child through the early years is, as I have indicated, so chance-filled a procedure, that we usually wait. We prefer to deal with reasonably expected outcomes. Alois, in himself, on the hoof, that is to say, Alois, his faults and virtues all more or less predictable, had been serving as the keel to our ongoing comprehension of the Hitler family. He was so

dependable in his strengths and habits, his productive contributions, his built-in cruelties and crudities, that one could, if necessary, intensify or reduce the heat of Adolf's hatred for his father in such a way as to mold the boy.

Depend on it! We depended on Alois. He was predictable.

Now, his outsize love for bees was turning matters askew. For me, at least! There are few atheists like Alois who can go all the way to the grave without being challenged in their heart on one or another occasion by the fear or, worse, the intimation, that God does exist. In this sense, they are comparable to pious virgins who are tempted into sudden and unholy heats. Like many such ladies, they cannot accept sex (or, in the case of atheists—religion!) as a force to be met on sensible terms. No, like the good virgin, the confounded atheist, has to take it, so to speak, through the back door. They fall in love with God by way of nature, paganism, service to others, technology—usually seen by them as the best possible solution to humankind's problems—or occasionally through exceptional allegiance to some phenomenon of nature. In Alois' case, it happened to be the recognition that a collaboration was possible between the mighty and the miniscule.

Since our good fellow was hardly ready to pray for the greater glory of the Lord, he approached this newly opened sense (of Mystery!) by way of his old allegiance to Franz Josef. I learned as much by a quick raid on his mind, an activity that depended on the likelihood that no Cudgels would be near during the length of my excursion. Indeed, they were not.

So, I penetrated quickly, and soon was out. I gathered what I needed. Now, I knew more about Alois' new preoccupation, and confirmed my unhappy sense of what might be in his mind. These bees gave themselves to a life he could find analogous to his own. This is why natural phenomena are so often the first perception by humans of the conceivable nearness of God. They discover, for example, that a puppy or kitten is a warm cuddly bit of existence not wholly unlike themselves in the need for affection and so can serve as the gateway to larger suppositions. For Alois, these bees out in search of new fields of flowers were creatures he could understand.

On any warm day, such foragers knew the heat of the sun and the intimate yearning that only the sun can arouse in flower petals. Alois was not about to throw open any bolted door to the mystical side of himself—he was no different from most people in that regard—but I had found a soft spot in

his psyche. He would actually, in the innermost recess of his thoughts, muse on the art that must be present in any scheme of creation which would choose to draw the honeybee into the perfumed caverns of the flower. It stirred him to think of two wholly separated existences, more and more entranced with each other through the burgeoning heat of the sun. The flower would surrender its nectar to the bee's tongue, while the hairs of the honeybee covered themselves with the pollen of the stamens. In another moment, the bee would separate from one passionate lust to look for another, whichever fine flower of the same species was beckoning in the breeze, ready to gather more nectar for the hive even as it left some of the pollen of the first stamen on this second infatuation.

Such images gave life to Alois. It was the balance between hard work and satisfied desire. He could feel close to that bee who would stagger back in flight with its pollen bags heavy, and its stomach valve full of nectar. Had not Alois, in his turn, given much to women and yet brought back much for himself, so much accumulated wisdom on how to deal with the world, or, at least, his customs-house corner of the world where by the end of his career, he invariably knew what was true and what was false in declarations offered

by strangers, particularly women who might wish to deceive him, yet could not, because he was wiser than they were. He possessed the true honey. Wisdom was the knowledge of what others were up to.

As Alois saw it, honey was a concentrate of secrets—secrets held by passing travelers and commercial people, secrets as sweet as honey, all those little goods travellers looked to steal and keep for themselves. But he had been there to capture their secrets. He could work as hard and long as any honeybee on the hottest and most productive day of summer when the flowers were most open, working hard for a future beyond themselves, even as he, Alois, had labored on many an occasion to protect the glory, centuries old, of the Hapsburgs and their exceptional Empire, so devoted to the future. Not all the Hapsburgs had been great, he would admit not all were even very good people, but it was true for the best of them, those who were like Franz Josef. They were good, very good. Alois could hope to find a resemblance to Franz Josef in his own features—the same sideburns, the same dignity. It was said of the Emperor Franz Josef that he could work for endless hours at his necessary and near-to-endless duties. When necessary, he, Alois, was also ready. And yet they knew enough, both of them, to comprehend that it was

not enough to carry the honey back, but that one must keep a taste for oneself.

Some people in Linz he knew, fools for the most part, had been shocked when gossip spread about the actress, Fraulein Katharina Schratt, whom Franz Josef had taken for a mistress when he had a wife so beautiful as Empress Elizabeth! Such news had spread like a spill of oil that has no boundaries. It had been a blow to some. Not to Alois. He understood. Both the best of men and the worst had to keep some share of the honey for themselves. As he entered retirement, this thought actually brought a taste of peace.

Let me not be altogether captivated, however, by the voluptuous turn Alois has just brought to his meditations. After all, he had his fear of bees as well. Once, in previous years, he had been stung so ferociously and apocalyptically (if I may put it so) that he never forgot the attack of vertigo it caused. Such power to create pain! That it could exist in creatures so small! It did not come from the honeybee alone, he decided, but must derive from congress with the sun! Such pain might even express the rage of the sun. With that, Alois was familiar. He had worked through many a summer in the

blare of hottest daylight, stuffed into his uniform. Of course he knew the rage of the sun. It might be there to disseminate warmth from the heavens above, but also to glow as a manifest of divine rage.

These were thoughts too large for Alois to accept openly. He never brought such meditations all the way forward into words, but this much he knew: Honeybees were agents of the sun even as he was an agent of the Hapsburgs, and both were close to the greatness of the ultimate power.

Could these swollen epiphanies be the product of full retirement?

The answer was troubling: Alois would not be ready to retire. I looked forward with my own trepidation to how he would deal with his four children now that Edmund had been born. For that matter, how would it be to live on a farm with Klara? I would have to be ready for unforeseen rages in a man whose heart was not wholly given to his retirement. Like still unformed clouds on the horizon was the shape of my disturbance. So, I was prepared, but not well enough for the trouble that Alois, Junior, would bring in the next year when he turned fourteen.

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Another situation had also arisen. On the very night in April when they slept for the first time in the house at Hafeld, Klara became pregnant. Until then, Klara had kept the children in Passau because Edmund was ailing, and it was winter. Moreover, Alois would not be able to join them permanently until his retirement at the end of June. By April, however, Klara decided to brave the difficulties and, right after Easter, accompanied by Angela, Adolf, Edmund, and the sum of their possessions, she accomplished the move to Linz. It was made even more difficult since she was without Alois, Jr. to help her with the luggage—he had had to stay behind and board with a neighbor until the end of his school year. Nonetheless, whatever the difficulties, she

embarked by train from Passau early in the day and her husband met them at the station in Linz with a large wagon and two work horses to carry their trunks, valises, packing crates and packages over the last thirty miles to Hafeld.

This portion of the trip lasted from noon to dark, but the day had been warm, and Alois, to everyone's surprise, entertained the children with one song after another—his voice was rich, and Klara, who had a clear if delicate soprano, would join him whenever she knew the words. Alois was in a rare mood, and proud of his skill with the horses and wagon. Having done little of that for decades, he had almost hired a driver, but given his oncoming responsibilities as a farmer, he felt it incumbent to take on the project himself.

The previous owner had—as was local custom—stocked each fireplace with logs and kindling, and so the rooms, before long, were warm. What with bread and sausage, plus a carefully packed jar of split pea soup, they had enough to eat and went to bed more happily than not. Alois was going to spend the next day with them before driving his rented wagon back to Linz.

That first night, however, Alois was also ready to establish some special investiture of the premises. By the light of the gas lamp in their

bedroom, he could see that Klara looked in fine color, not pale at all, and when he said as much, she laughed in true merriment.

"You, too, Uncle," she said. "Your nose is very red from the sun."

"Ah," he said, "you are still calling me Uncle. Soon, it's ten years that we are married and still, what am I to you? Uncle Alois? Do you mean Old Uncle Alois? That is a disgrace."

"No," she said, "we are all very proud of you. Today, so much. The horses and the wagon. You did it all. And so well. Something you never did before."

"Well, I can do a lot of things you do not know. I am never so simple as you think."

"I do not think you are simple," she said, "no, that I do not think."

"Yes, you can tell me. What do you think, my little Niece?"

It was not often that she was ready to speak to him so directly, but on this night, an exceptional night, after all, she said, "I wonder why you never tell me that you love me."

"Maybe," he replied, "it is because you still call me 'Uncle.'"

To his astonishment, her answer was the nearest she had ever come to speaking in a manner that most certainly belonged to other kinds of women. "Maybe I call you Uncle," she said, "because you are such a big, healthy fellow of an Uncle."

He was not about to pass this by. Instantly, the Hound was straining on the leash. Alois' voice was heavy. "How would you know what is the size of a healthy fellow?" he asked.

"I do not know. But I am free to guess. You are a very big Uncle."

That was all it took to make her pregnant. He was excited enough to take her by the side of the bed, both of them standing, half-dressed, and then he took her again in bed. He was full of love—for himself, first, and his prowess—such a fine power at his age—and then he felt a degree of love for her—plus a good deal of love for the farm. It was a beautiful piece of land. He even took pleasure in the thought of coming a little closer to his children, which is to say, he had an image of kids working along with him in the fields, doing what, he hardly could say, he was about to fall asleep and thought instead of summer bees searching the meadows. He was unusually delighted

with how much power had been in his loins on this night. To have it all there, just when he had begun to wonder.

He even held Klara in his arms, which was hardly his habit, and when he woke up to honor the alarms of his bladder, he almost kicked over the chamber pot. In the dark, what with his unfamiliarity with a new bedroom, he was stumbling around, and Klara was giggling. Then, she wrapped her arms around him as he came back to bed. "I am happy," she said. "I think this will be the place for us."

"Silence!" he growled. "Don't be a goose! One does not make silly predictions!" Yes, he could feel the earth of the farm, all those nine acres to the rear and to the front of them, and felt just as superstitious as any of the peasants of his childhood. A person should not be as ready as Klara to speak out with good feelings to empty night air. Not aloud! Was it so empty after all? Who knew what spirit might be there to listen to you with his evil ears?

In the morning, she could sense his impatience to be done with the unpacking. It was obvious. He wanted to go out and walk his grounds. So, she took over the larger part of the immediate tasks while he gave the children a tour of the barn, all three huddled close to him now before the

animal immanence of the two horses, the cow, and the prize sow that had been part of the purchase price. Those animals were huge to all three children, and close to overpowering them with the fetid statement of their odor.

Now, Alois told them to go back to the house and help their mother. In the afternoon, he would, he promised, teach them how to milk the cow, feed the pig, and curry the horse, not to mention the hen house and the eggs, but for now it was their good mother who needed them.

He wanted to walk his lands alone. He had to make more than a few decisions. So, once again, he studied the condition of the fruit and walnut trees. When he had seen it last, there was more than a little snow on the ground, but he had been able to determine that the trees looked healthy, and the bare branches appeared to have integrity, strong, reasonably straight, and not too many tortured shapes to suggest the aftermath of crazy storms when the trees were young.

In truth, he realized now, he had hardly studied the place before buying it. Enough that the price was not too high, and the house and the view were the best he had found. He had had to be in a hurry, he could not manage to

keep spending full days in travel out from Linz. This place was enough. In his work, after all, he could not examine in complete professional detail every traveler who might have something wrong about him, no, you made your choices on the spot. He had been good at that.

All the same, he was not so much at ease with his purchase as he had anticipated. Walking the meadows and mounting the one small hill of his new domain, the land was less extensive than he remembered, no larger, really, than what it was, nine acres, a good-sized parade-field. On the other hand, it was small enough to encourage him to do a little more farming than he had anticipated. Three or four of those acres would make a decent but manageable potato field. Should he give another acre to beets? Could he plant this year? That would be the question. He could not get going until the end of June, the beginning of July, but Alois, Jr. would be back here then from Passau, his school year finished, and, yes, maybe they could take on some late plowing.

All this while, his true disappointment came back to him. He must recognize—once again—that he could not cultivate his bees, not this summer. The brunt of the project would have to wait. Honey-gathering began in April

and hardly lasted into September. One had to be there at the beginning. So, he must wait. All right, he would have nine months now to prepare, counting at least from the time when he would be back here again, permanently, in June, late June, and an unexpected and most unpleasant shiver of anticipation came to him at this thought. Did he know what he was doing? Such a bad thought! He forced it back. He had been in control of his feelings since he was ten years old, and he was not preparing to let go now.

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By July, life became considerably different for Alois. Klara, for one example, was most definitely pregnant. In seven months, assuming the baby would be born without incident, there would be a total of eight kids who had come into existence because of him, eight, if you include the three who now were gone. Of course, if he so desired, he could add some Kinder not exactly accounted for—quite a number of cooks and chambermaids who had managed to conceive with what might be called mixed male parentage, much mixed. Yes, when one of them told him she was pregnant, he had agreed that it was possible. He could be the true father, but then, hadn't she also been with Hans and Gerhardt and Hermann and Wolf? With rare exceptions (like

Fanni) those women were not in a position to argue who was the true father. It was enough to give them a decent gift.

Here in Hafeld, he was face to face with the other side of such achievements. Through the heat of July, in this farm-house up on the hill, he had to look at five faces every meal, Klara all the way down to Edmund, sixteen months old and even trying to talk. By January, there would be another child. He was used to living with peoples' faces in front of him, more new faces than most people had to meet up with every day, but now, every day, it was the same mugs. He was not used to dwelling with such questions as whether Edmund, for example, had come up with a new phrase or was just gurgling as usual, globs of sound.

Managing the farm was another matter. He could take pleasure in Angela's work. For a twelve-year-old who had been putting cold cream on her hands ever since she was eight—a little city girl, ready to be spoiled!—she was now, to his surprise, decent help. She was always currying the two horses, and washing down the cow even when that hefty lady didn't need another bath. She would also get Adolf and Edmund to laugh at the hearty contentment to be heard in the full-gutted sound of the sow every time they

approached with food. Rosig (Pinky) was large for a pig, large even for a prize pig, and so happy in that smelly wallow with its pink rosette tacked above her stall, an old prize rosette from the summer before they came to the farm. By next summer, when all this new work wouldn't be weighing on them, and there might be a little time, Angela wanted to prepare Rosig again for local competition. Yes, his girl, Alois decided, was a prize herself. Angela even took the pains to keep the manure of the farm animals separate. She made a point of carrying each collection to a different pile. Why? Because she declared to Klara, "My father would want it that way. Nice and neat." She even succeeded in getting Adi to take up a part of the slack. While he could be counted on to throw a tantrum, Angela would ride it out. Then the boy would follow her, his nose up to heaven in horror, but nonetheless carrying a second manure pail.

His school year over in Passau, Alois, Jr., came to the farm at the beginning of July. For a short period, no one could surpass him at work. Right off, he was splendid with the horses, particularly Ulan, a stallion five years old. Alois was proud of how quickly Junior took to the saddle. The youth was also ready for the joy of a quick canter bareback up the hill and

down, accompanied by full screams of excitement from Angela and Adi. Yet, he also seemed content to work the plow for hours in the sun with the dray horse, Graubart. Before too long, they had turned up three acres of hard soil pasture for the potatoes, the same sprouting potatoes Klara had bought and stored in the root cellar a week after her arrival. Alois, Junior, worked harder for two weeks than his father would have believed. Then, all this splendid flurry of hard labor fell off. Bad news arrived in a letter from Alois' school in Passau. He had failed half of his courses this last semester. He would have to take those studies over again.

"I won't go back," he told his father. "The teachers are so stupid that we laugh at them."

Yes, the boy must have been living with what the Realschule news would bring. Had he been brooding over it for these two weeks, and not said a word, just kept working hard in his father's field? They had tilled ten inches deep into the three acres chosen, a stubborn, resistant soil, then laid the seed potatoes in shallow trenches and covered them lightly, each of the sprouters a foot apart, each row of furrow less than a yard away from the next, but that had been only the beginning. Now, came the labor that went into weeding,

and into fertilizing. Bad memories, from fifty years ago, came back to Alois. He now encountered white grubs and wire worms, and had to watch as the earliest potato leaves were nibbled into green lace by aphids and flea beetles. Every day one had to go back for more weeding. Soon enough, irrigation became an ongoing problem. One could only dig down a few inches for the irrigation canals. Go deeper and the potato roots would be slashed by the shovel. But these shallow trenches soon filled with silt. Hours had to be spent carrying pail after pail of well water up the slope to the meadow. On one of those afternoons, Junior disappeared. He was out riding Ulan. Alois put Angela to work in his stead, and for the rest of the working day, she carried the water, heavy duty for a girl her size.

That night, Alois gave his son a tongue-lashing right in front of the rest of the family. "You are," he said, "very much like your crazy mother. Only with you, worse. You have no excuse. Your mother, by the end, was out of her mind, yes, but at least she had always been hard-working. You are lazy. You are full of filthy, foul laziness!" If the episode had happened even a year earlier, Alois would have given him a beating, exactly the apocalyptic variety that leaves a scar on the heart, but now the boy was big, and wild

enough in the occasional expression of his eyes to make Alois pause. So, he did not strike him. Which, he came to decide in the days that followed, was a mistake. He should have left him with one hell of a wallop. Now, Junior might be able to think that his father was a little afraid of him, maybe a little, yes. Thereafter, the boy kept looking to reduce the total of his hours. He was no longer acting like a farmer's son—more like some boy from the city doing summer labor. Often, short of sundown, he would ask Alois to let him take Ulan for a ride over the hill.

The trouble, Alois told himself, was that as a father, he was false. Under all the hard bite, he had a soft palate. The truth was that he adored Alois, Jr. The boy was so attractive. Restless, yes, victim to terrible moods like his mother, much too prideful, and in full flight from getting a decent education, yet he could be as charming as Fanni when he chose to be. He reminded Alois of how well she used to move. He even felt pride at how quickly his son had gotten on good terms with the stallion. Alois himself hesitated to ride him. It was truly a long way to the ground for a heavy man! But Alois Junior could saddle up with all the eclat of a prize cadet—the sort who used to promenade along the best streets of Vienna wearing the boots

that Alois had made for them in those years, all the way back when he had so admired such well-turned-out young men. Memories returned of those officers strutting on the Ringstrasse with their handsome ladies, even as he, the apprentice, had dreamed of finding an elegant and lovely young milliner for himself whom he might persuade to start a shop offering the finest hand-made hats and most exceptional boots, a stupid dream, but now his own Junior reminded him of those cadets. Such a striking young man. He was not at all like little Adolf, full of hysterical temper, or tiny Edmund, full of snots.

So, Alois could not bring himself to refuse when Alois, Jr. would ask for an hour off. Ulan, after all, had to be exercised. And the horse did love his young rider. But not the father! Whenever Alois approached, the beast would paw the straw of his stall, showing large horse teeth in an unmistakably evil grin.

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On one warm evening in August, Alois, Junior, took another unpleasant liberty. This time, Klara was infuriated. The youth was at table ready for their evening supper, but Angela was not. She was in the barn currying Ulan's wet hide after her brother had put the charger into a gallop on the way back from the woods and then provided too brief a walk-down to allow the animal to cool. Klara could not believe such selfish behavior. It was one of the few times in their marriage when she spoke sharply to her husband. After six pregnancies, he was no uncle to her now, not at this moment. "You allowed your son to leave such work to Angela? That is certainly not right."

"Angela likes wiping Ulan down," said Alois, Junior. "I can do without it."

"I may not know horses so much," said Klara, "but I am still ready to say that he who rides a horse has his duty to it afterward. The horse sees the difference. Even if you don't."

"You know nothing about the subject," said her step-son. "When it comes to horses, you are ten degrees less than zero."

"Silence!" shouted Alois. "And keep your mouth shut for the rest of the meal. Not one word."

Coming into the fray these several steps behind Klara, he had to be masterful. "Yes, silence," he repeated. "I call for it."

"Jawohl!" shouted Alois, Junior.

Now, Alois had to ask himself whether he was being mocked or obeyed? "I will repeat," said Alois. "You are to be silent for the rest of the meal. Not one word. Not even 'Jawohl!'"

Alois, Jr., stood up and left the table.

"Come back," said Alois, "come back, sit down, and be silent."

There was a pause, and then Alo did come back, but in the pause was a suggestion of what might be yet to come.

They finished the meal in silence. Angela came in, flushed from currying, started to speak, and then did not. She sat down, her face still moist from the quick wash she had taken with the dipper, and put her face to the food. Sitting next to her, Adi was so full of excitement and foreboding that he was stiff with fear that he might soil himself. And Klara? She ate slowly, pausing often, her spoon in the air. She was filled with an unruly desire to upbraid her step-son, again and then—no small impulse—upbraid her own Alois as well. She said nothing, however. She did not dare. To interfere with two men who were in such a rage was not safe territory. Edmund, pale, pasty-faced, lip-dribbling Edmund, began to cry.

That offered a solution. Klara picked him up and left the table. Then Alois rose and quit the room. Angela and Adi gathered the plates for washing, and Alois, Junior, continued to sit at the table, poised within his own silence, gravely poised, as if he had converted his father's order into a species of silent reverence addressed to himself.

That night, Alois, Senior, could not sleep and by the end of the next afternoon, he quit work early. For the first time in quite a while, he went to the only tavern in the area, a full mile away at Fischlham.

He had hesitated whether to go. The company was certainly less to his taste than the old beer cronies in Linz. Besides, he knew enough about farmers to anticipate the nature of his reception. He could hear certain thoughts in advance. "The peasant who tries to act like a millionaire," they would say behind his back. Or, as easily, the opposite—"this rich idiot who wants to play at being a peasant."

He had visited a couple of neighbors in January when he first looked at the house he was to buy, and had asked a few questions. They had not trusted him much. He expected that. They were not about to talk too openly to a stranger who could also choose not to buy the farm, yet might repeat enough of what he had heard to leave the owner altogether offended by their gossip. So Alois was only told the good news, land good, just a few animals, but excellent livestock, prize sow, good orchard—walnuts, all by themselves, were easy money once a year.

Alois had not bothered to believe them. Nor to disbelieve them. He had wanted the farm. He had assumed it could not be as good as it looked, and, of course, it wasn't. Already the big cow who had been giving fine milk every day had come down with udder trouble.

He did bring this matter up at the tavern in Flischlham. He needed to. He was looking for a few opinions on the respective merits of the veterinarians in the district, and used it as a calculated opening to stimulate the farmers drinking with him to say a few other things as well. He had decided to be mild in manner. One didn't want to be perceived as a retired fool throwing some weight around. So, he listened to their guarded opinions about the local veterinarians and learned nothing he could count on. Next, he talked about his land.

When he told them that he had planted potatoes, they looked uneasy. In the most indirect manner, it did come out that he might have been wiser to consider beets.

"I planned to put one acre in like that, but not this first year. Too much at once."

They nodded. Farming and work. Yes. The oldest marriage. One must never do too much at once if one could help it.

They were more slow-spoken than most of the voices he had heard since he first went to Vienna forty-five years ago. It took an hour of staring at the unadorned wooden walls of the tavern, fretting all the while over the one spike of a splinter in his behind (a gift of the dried-up wood of the tavern bench) before one of them would come forward with the muffled hint that this land on which he had planted potatoes should have been given to beets. That was because last year's crop had been wheat. Now, they spoke of a variety of wheat whose genus was unfamiliar to him, but that was what the previous owner had been planting these last three years. Who knew? The soil could have been depleted. They did not say as much; they just drew on their pipes and drank their beer and looked sad. Worst of all, as he could tell, the sadness was hardly for him, no, it was offered to the outrage done to the earth now owned by another rich man, an interloper trying to be a peasant.

The smell of the tavern became unpleasant. He could not locate the odor that mingled with the beer, but it was impure—sour milk? Old manure? A compost pile outside the door that had gone wrong? What he resented

most about this quiet dun-brown wooden den was that there was not even a hint of schnapps in the air, no, not even one good town drunkard.

The evening proved, however, to be not altogether a loss. He learned the name of an apiculturist who lived in Hafeld. To console himself further, the walk home was agreeable. The late summer moon was out, a harvest-orange moon, and he finally felt the pleasure that beer usually offered just so quickly as he could quaff it. Tonight, however, those pints had merely been stored in his stomach, only ready now to dispense their goodness because he was at last alone. He had a long splendid urination by the side of the road.

Next morning he was back in his gathering gloom. He had to live with the disappointment of his three acres of potatoes. He had ended with a crop where not much more than half would be marketable. His drinking companions of last night (who in memory now smelled as dank as the Fischlham tavern) had been right. He knew it in the pit of his stomach, knew it whenever he dug up another potato. He had felt a few twinges in that same gut during the last few days of August and his heart was definitely acting up. Now, when Alois took Ulan for a ride, Alois, Senior could feel the boy usurping the edges of his authority again. That was guaranteed to get his

heart to race! Sometimes he even felt as if this long-trusted organ—such a hearty companion—was forcing itself right up into his brain. Which is to say, he was having headaches.

Given the work yet to be done of digging up the potatoes and carting them to the market in Fischlham, he ended by hiring a day laborer for the week, a stupid fellow, yet, on balance, the man probably served up as much useful service as Junior. How was that boy going to end? Would he yet be a criminal? Alois could certainly conceive of him in something like the French Foreign Legion. Dark thoughts, but they had their appeal to Alois. When he was young, he would have made a good soldier of that variety, ready for anything. Or was that nonsense? There was something in the boy that was wilder than himself. Was that why, these days, they always had to speak to each other as if they were in ballet shoes? Up on tiptoe!

The day laborer was stupid, but he was not so incapable of thinking when it came to putting a number of those potatoes aside for himself, and Alois could not even be certain there had been a theft. Feeling not too well one afternoon, he had let the laborer take the produce to market, and the man

returned with less Kronen than Alois had estimated. Just a little less. More fingering at the edges.

Then there was a miserable end to the prize sow. It died. Angela was disconsolate. Alois was now amazed at how long and how hard a twelve-year-old female could cry.

It started with that big, pretty pig being a little grumpy. Then, day to day, it got worse. Angela was so upset that Alois broke into his own reservoirs of pride and actually turned to his three nearest neighbors for advice. It was then he had to recognize that he had forgotten one of the laws of his childhood received before he was even ten years old from Johann Nepomuk. When it came to farming, there were no laws you could count on, no, not if you had the bad luck to meet an unexpected problem. Even your wisest friends could disagree on the solution. Of course! Every farmer, he now learned, had his own idea of how to cure a sick pig. Of course!

The three neighbors to whom he turned offered three solutions: an emetic, a binder, and a diarrhetic. All were wrong. The sow stopped breathing and was gone. All three men had assumed the trouble could only be in the stomach or the bowels. Where else in a pig? Who had ever heard

of consumption in such a heavy porker? Perhaps it was something else. Even the veterinarian he called in after the demise was unsure. Probably the lungs, but he couldn't say.

Nothing could have aggravated Alois more. To pay good money after the animal had died! Why? Because he had to know the cause. What an idiocy! He wasn't going to raise any more pigs, not now! but still he had to know. And then he found out that the specialist—if you could call him that—was no more sure of the cause than his neighbors. It would take, he told Alois, the further expense of lab tests in Linz, or maybe, even all the way to Vienna. To hell with that! Such an expenditure would be obscene. On top of it all, he had to bury the animal whole. He was tempted, but he did not dare to carve away any good part of it for the family. Left to himself, Alois would have looked for some choice cuts—how much did the hams have to do, after all, with the lungs? But, no, the vet was definite. "Do not take a chance, Herr Hitler, on any part of this animal."

Yes, that is what the vet told him, but only after he had been paid! And there was Angela going on and on with her hiccups and her sobs, "Ach, ach,

ach!" Not to mention his own labor of digging a big goddamn hole for the carcass.

Yes, these were losses to calculate. What kind of profits could he point to from his mediocre potato crop? When he added the cost of the seed potatoes, the compost he had bought for the three acres, and then subtracted the wages of the hired hand, the loss of the sow, and the fee of the vet as well, how could he claim to have made any respectable sum? If not for the walnuts, which had been easy money, money off the ground, he would not even have had a token profit.

He had to reassure himself. It wasn't that he was in real financial trouble. Never yet! His pension alone was six times the income of any day laborer like the poor fellow he had hired, who, dumb or not, was also able to cheat him. But, all right! In the old days, in the best years of his earning power at Passau and Linz, he had been situated in what you could call the well-salaried layers of the middle class.

All the same, that hardly extracted the real thorn from his gut. One of his strengths with these younger officers who came from good families had always been that he, being real peasant stock, could know at least when

people were cheating him. And now he had discovered that the land he bought was nothing to brag about. Once upon a time, he might have been a peasant. Now, he could just as well call himself another town idiot, fooled on a deal involving land! Could he feel any worse if Klara took up with a farm boy? That was impossible, but then, how had it been so possible for himself, Alois Hitler, to be gulled on this deal?

By October, he was settled in gloom. Even the Hound was one sick puppy these days. How was he to look at himself—a man in his late middle age who dangled a sad pup between his legs?

Klara, seven and a half months pregnant, tried to explain it to him. Now that the potato crop was in, and so much hard work was finished, it was not unnatural to feel a little unhappy. Women, she could tell him, were that way after a child was born. So much had gone into the womb, so much hope and effort, but now one was empty again. The baby might be there and beautiful, but for a time the woman had to feel empty. For a little while. It was natural.

She had never waxed so philosophical before, not to him, but he almost took her head off. "What am I, a woman?" he wanted to shout.

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Changes occurred, however. Alois' depression lessened. Junior was no longer around. Klara had taken it upon herself to suggest that he should be sent to Spital where he could work with her father, Johann Poelzl, who by now had certainly become old enough to need a family hand. It developed that Alois, Junior was also in favor of the move. His father's depression, with all its muted threat of more despotism to come, lived in the midst of the son's rage like a fist jammed in his face.

So, it was arranged. Alois' cart, driven by the hired man, would take the fourteen-year-old to Linz. Then he would travel by train to Weitra, where

he could get on a jitney that passed through Spital. The boy was gone, and a cloud of dark presentiment could lift.

In September, Adi and Angela began school in Fischlham, Angela in the fourth and most advanced grade for twelve-year-olds, Adi, at six, going to first grade.

His first school days proceeded through a bright September, mellow with sun. The green was still on the fields. It was a fine walk hand in hand with his sister over hills and through meadows. There was only one peril on the route—a full-grown bull grazing in a fenced-in pasture. Depending on the bull's mood, they could choose to take a detour, or dare to cross the field. On most days, one or the other was not up to it.

Soon enough, Adi learned that it was not wise to shame Angela when she was afraid. She knew all too well how to pay him back. She would inform him that he smelled awful! Sometimes, it was his breath, as often, his body odor.

Probably, she did not know to what depth down into his quick-beating chest these accusations entered, but deep they went, and for good cause. They were true. He did have an odor—a touch of sulphur and an

unmistakable hint of something rotten—of that I may soon choose to speak. Such off-odor is one of the constant problems of our clients. It besets us. The Cudgels pick it up.

From Angela's point of view, it was simple. If Adi was trying to make her cry, of course she would look for ways to bring tears to his eyes as well. Besides, bad smells did not bother her that much. By now, she was accustomed to sour milk and horse manure. A wind full of pig wallow even brought a real sorrow to her heart—poor dead Rosig!

"What are you crying about now?" asked Adi. "You tell me how I am bad-smelling and I am the one who should cry—you are mean."

"Oh, shut up. It's not you I cry for."

That meant she was thinking of Rosig and he did feel sad for her. This was not because he had liked the sow so much (in fact, he had been jealous of Angela's affection for the beast) but because he did like his older sister. She was good most of the time. Besides, she was the brightest girl in the school, just as he was the smartest boy inside the four walls of the one-room school house.

Depending on weather and the immediate needs of the neighboring farms for additional labor, there were sometimes less than forty boys and girls, sometimes it was down to thirty, even twenty-five, but the school-room contained seating divisions for these four grades; and each child, First to Fourth, six to twelve in age, was able to listen to all that took place in every other class, a routine matter since there was only one teacher, a middle-aged lady, Fraulein Werner, who had a long nose and wore spectacles.

Adi was soon able to follow the lessons for all four classes. His introduction to German History came by way of the senior grade, the Fourth, where Angela and the others were studying the exceptional deeds of Charlemagne. An hour later, in First, Adi would be asked in company with the other beginners to decide which pictures of animals should be connected to printed words on a big card Fraulein Werner would hold up. In the beginning, it was wondrous—all those awesome letters that made a word. At first, the line vibrated in his eyes, but before long, it turned into no more than a puzzle. By the time he had reduced it to a solvable problem, he took care not to make the same mistake twice. Indeed, he soon grew bored waiting for others in his class to catch up. Then, he could barely wait for the lessons of

the Third who were studying the geography of the Hapsburg empire, the Great Hapsburg Empire, as Fraulein Werner would always say. If permitted, he would have been ready to speak out to those students who were simpletons, and could not find any of the places on the map he had already noticed, Braunau and Linz being the first to catch his eye. Plus Passau, just across the Danube on the map.

So, by the age of six, he was absorbing the lessons of the eight and ten and twelve-year-olds, and it pleased him that Angela was the brightest in her class. He could see the approval in Fraulein Werner's eyes each time they entered the room, but then, they were also the neatest brother and sister. That was Klara's doing, and it helped to put them so high up in Fraulein Werner's favor. All the same, such neat dress obliged him to stay apart from other boys during recess in order not to get into a fight. There was one bully a year older who kept daring Adolf to wrestle with him.

"Are you crazy?" he would answer. "I am in my good clothes. My mother will kill me if I get them dirty." The daily wars of Passau had enriched his voice with just enough assurance to deter the other. But then that boy was nothing. If Adi could manage to live with Alois, Junior, how

much had he to fear from a fool like this, also named Klaus, same as his lieutenant in Passau? It was big sister who bothered him with all this teasing.

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Angela was all too concerned these days by what might be her own unsocial presence, having come in the last week to her first period. Here, Klara had been of great help, and had done her best to allay the girl's outright horror. It was all connected in Angela's mind with Rosig who, by the end, had been hemorrhaging blood all over her hams.

To bring some calm to Angela's poor outraged feelings, Klara spoke for the first time of intimate matters. She adored her step-daughter. The twelve-year-old was by now her substitute for a woman who could become her nearest friend, and so she spoke not only of this new condition, but went on at good length about odor in general, and its peculiar subtleties in nature. Odor

was part of nature. Casting about for happy examples, she passed on a piece of information Alois had provided her in passing. Once, Klara had asked how he could be sure his own bees (once he did start his hives) would know how to find their way back to home. As she understood it, he planned to acquire a couple of hive-boxes, each a full colony in itself. There they would be, sitting side by side in the shade of the big oak near the house. "How will these thousands of bees know where they belong?" she asked.

He had been sufficiently pleased by her curiosity to explain that he would paint each of his boxes a different color, green for one, sky-blue for another, even pink, possibly, for a third. Bees, he explained, liked to return to dwellings that could be close to the color of the flowers whose nectar they brought back.

"But you tell me that each day these little creatures go to a different kind of flower. They are faithful only for this one day at a time to each variety of flower. Is that not so?"

"Yes." He wasn't certain he liked the conversation. Would he be able to answer all her questions without slipping and sliding into other matters?

"So it could be a flower of one color on one day, and another color is what they like tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"How do these bees not get mixed up?"

Yes, he was reluctant to tell her. It was not something to talk about. Not necessarily. Still, he chose to proceed. For Klara to be interested in apiculture might, on balance, be better for him than if she showed indifference. "Each queen bee has her own odor," he informed Klara. "Since she will fertilize every cell in every comb and so puts tens of thousands of eggs, yes, larvae, into separate wax cells for their beginning in life, so she is certain to pass her own odor into each of her thousands of children."

"That is remarkable," said Klara. "How do you know this, Alois? So much you know."

"I have read about these discoveries in books," he said grudgingly.

"You have never smelled it yourself?"

"Do I look so stupid as to put my head into a hive in order to give a dozen bees the opportunity to fly up my nose?"

She began to laugh. In certain ways, she knew him well. He might read his books on the subject, but, at bottom, he did not like to admit that he had not learned the subject by way of his hands, his feet, his strength, his own patience and his five good peasant senses.

Indeed, Alois had told her a little too much. Now, she had to know more.

Before the conversation was over for this night, she actually prodded him to explain how the queen was fertilized. She was, after all, curious about any queen who could birth so many thousands of children and still remain a queen! She could see it! There was such admiration in Alois' eye when he spoke of this. Everything depended on the Queen—the absolute success of the hive, you could say.

So Alois did choose to lead Klara through some descriptive steps. Given her evident excitement, he could sense it would be to his advantage on this night. She was clearly full of ardor at the thought of so female a creature, so tiny, so noble. So extraordinary.

He explained then that the young queen, very much a virgin, not twenty days out of her own wax cell, (which was no larger in width and depth than

the eraser tip on the end of a new pencil) would be fed on her emergence from that cell, by bee nurses and bee attendants. Yet, just three weeks from the day she had emerged, she would be ready nonetheless to take her maiden flight out of the hive as a full virgin, and this usually took place on the first warm day in May. Up she would lift into the heavens on this first sortie, higher than all but for a few male bees who would dare to follow.

"The ones who are called drones?" asked Klara.

"Yes, fat, spoiled fellows. They jam their corner of the hive. They live to eat, and on a good day they fly around like fools. For the fun of it. They do not even bother to bring back honey. It is only when the virgin queen comes out for her first flight that they can justify their existence. On this day, they have been flying around waiting for her. They know she is coming. This Queen who flies so high, who is so beautiful compared to all her sisters, those thousands of worker bees, yes, work-horse female bees always looking for more nectar to bring back—those poor girls do not have full ovaries so they go out and forage, except when they are attached to necessary duties for the hive. Clean-up duties. Chores. But this Queen, she is different, still a virgin, she is not yet really a queen, more, I would say, a princess. And then, I

would also say, very much like a princess, she flies so high that only a few of these drones can follow. It comes down to two drones, to one, but, oh, this last strong one, he reaches her, he puts what he has, yes, you know what I mean, his very own organ which he has kept inside himself until now when suddenly it comes out and goes, springs up, you could say, into, yes, yes, springs into—call it her vagina—why not? It is so, and she takes it all in even as they are up in the air so high, just the two of them."

"It is a wonder," said Klara. Her eyes had begun to shine. She almost said, "A miracle of love."

"No, not exactly," said Alois. At this moment, he did not know how to continue. If he said too much, he could spoil what he was looking for on this night. Still, his shrewd side was ready to speak, and he knew, yes, the best was most likely to come from telling it all.

"This drone," he said, "this one good brave drone, sticks it in so far, which is exactly what nature demands, we must suppose, that then he cannot get it back."

"What?"

"No! Donnerwetter, he can't pull out! The queen has hooks, or something of the kind, very sharp hooks for certain to keep him there. She likes him there. He is stuck. When he does insist, when he has to pull away, you won't believe it, his good organ is ripped right out of him. He has to leave it behind. His manhood! Gone. All gone."

"And him? What happens then? To him?"

"Oh, he dies. He is gone. Of course! He falls to earth."

"The poor creature," she said. But she could not help it. Against her will, Klara's mouth pulled into a smirk, then slipped over to a smile. Once begun, she had to laugh. Then, she could not stop. Never before had Alois heard her laugh so long.

"What a life," she finally said, and Alois had been right to tell her. She was over six months into her pregnancy, but they made love that night. Alois had known more than one woman who could even give you a good piece of the real business in that very last week before she would pop out someone else's baby. But that had hardly been the case with Klara. On this night, however, she was different. It was equal to her best.

Of course, he certainly did not go on to tell her of two other things. The first was that the queen was perfectly capable of having other lovers after that first fabulous flight. Over the next few weeks and into June, she could have five or six more lovers. That would store more semen in her ovaries, enough to lay thousands, then tens of thousands of eggs, one each to every cell among those thousands of cells, and continue to do so until cold weather came. Then this cycle could be repeated for as much as the next three years to come. (All that wealth of impregnation derived from no more than five or six copulations!) This meant that for the rest of her life, the Queen would have no more to do with drones, but would be feeding honey and pollen to the pupae she had created while her court, her own worker females, followed her with devotion, capping cells of bees yet to be born with a mysterious wax substance they were able to make from the pollen of the May flowers, a wax that no chemist could duplicate in the laboratory. No, he did not describe how devotedly the Queen would have to work for the rest of her life, and he certainly did not tell Klara that when mating season was done, these female worker-bees would evict the drones from the hive, or, dealing with the laziest bums who would not stir, they would sting them to death. (The worker bees

did not lose their sting. The belly of a drone was much softer than human skin.) After the slaughter, they would sweep the carcasses out of the hive. He did not speak of more worrisome complications. There was always a tendency, once warm weather began and the empty cells of the hive had been filled near to capacity with new brood, for as much as half of the colony to be ready to swarm, that is, to fly away, to desert the hive. You could lose most of your future profit in a hurry. Nor could he conceive of telling her of new queens being born, five or six perhaps, fed for that purpose on royal jelly, who were often extinguished by the high court of bees who surrounded the Queen Bee. No, he left such details alone. It was better that Klara should remain sympathetic to what would be his oncoming enterprise.

Klara had not only been engrossed by what he told her that night, but now, (much like an older sister), would use it to cajole Angela out of her woes. Klara, remembering her own early flow, could certainly recall the depth of vulnerability it could leave in one. She had felt herself to be an open wound open to future depredations. So, now she chose to describe to Angela the castration of the brave drone who succeeded in reaching the Queen. This time, Klara had company in her laughter. They carried on perfectly, like girls

of the same age or just about, and so as Klara divulged more and more of what she had learned from Alois on the subject, the topic turned not only to odor, but to the exceptional power of the Queen Bee. There she was, this creature, hardly larger than her own nursing bees and certainly smaller than any drone. Nonetheless, this Queen Bee had the power to impregnate the air of the hive and the thousands who dwelt within it. All of them would know their own hive for they all smelled the same. "It is," said Klara, full of a new set of giggles, "as if all Russian men and women have one kind of awful aroma, and those Polish oafs another. Maybe there is a good decent smell of tea for the English, and we Austrians, we have to be something special, we are warm like strudel." Again, she had Angela in laughter. "And the French, yes, a shameless ugly scent. So harsh! Rotten onions. Italians—nothing but garlic." They were hugging each other by now. "Maybe the worst, the Bohemians. I shouldn't describe them."

"Why not the Hungarians? They could also be just as terrible!"

They wiped their eyes. Adi, hearing their laughter, came to join them. He was annoyed when they explained nothing, merely kept laughing at the sound of each country.

All this talk of good and bad smells gave a special tingle to Angela's nose. In school, she was now most aware of Fraulein Werner with all her talcum powder, like too much on a baby, and her own little Adi. He had this absolutely terrible stink when he ran up and down too many hills. She was always coaxing him to use more soap, or on those nights once a week when Klara boiled enough water for each of them to bathe in the big farm house tub, Angela would insist on lathering his back and his armpits before handing him back the bar of soap. Then, with a wholly mischievous grin—"You have the soap now, so put it where it can do some work, you careless boy."

Adi would scream with anger at such rudeness, loud enough for Klara to come running in, but he would not tell his mother. He was in a turmoil of indecision. Either he smelled as bad as Angela kept saying, or she was crazy. Who could know? He could barely sniff a thing on himself.

Angela, however, would begin to brood again on the death of Rosig. The prize sow had indeed been full of a strong odor at times, not unlike Adi at his worst, or was it Rosig at her worst?—enough! Angela began to cry for both, the boy and the pig together. Full of remorse for teasing him, she tried to make amends by telling him a few of the wonderful secrets Klara had told

her, all of this new knowledge about bees, and on many a morning as the two walked to school, she would take up the topic again—her head was so full of what she had been told that Adi's imagination was soon inflamed by the mysteries of the Queen Bee.

Ever since they had come to the farm in April, he had been most aware of the nearness of bees. In May and June, there had been hours in full daylight when the sky was full of tiny lights, pellets of light whipping about, flying in so many directions. His mother was always warning him that he must not try to touch any such tiny creature, not if he saw one on a flower. Worse, he must never dare to kill one. That same bee could give him something to remember! Then one fine morning in July, Edmund got stung and didn't stop screaming for an hour. So Adolf, in his turn, had been most respectful of the perils of their presence.

Now, however, to hear that the Queen Bee shared her odor with every bee in the hive (and he could count by now to a thousand) yes, that did excite his thoughts.

So when he heard that his father might be going to talk to a neighbor about purchasing what Alois called "the first materials"—an announcement he

made on a Saturday evening at dinner, Adi had a vivid dream that night. He saw an army of bees flying in circles above the farm. Standing near their house was an old man who was dressed differently from anyone Adi had ever seen. His shirt remained outside his pants and came to his knees, and he wore an old hat over his white hair, as long as a stocking. It hung half down his back. He was not short, but he still looked like a dwarf because he was so bent over. In this dream, Adi knew his name. The man was called Der Alte, and the boy woke up on Sunday morning to learn that his father was actually going to visit a bee-keeper named Der Alte.

How could he not ask his father if he could go along with him? Alois was surprised, and then pleased. Every Sunday until now, Klara was picked up by another farm couple in their wagon to go to Sunday Mass in Fischlham's small chapel. She would travel with the three children, even as Alois stayed at the farm. "In truth, in good conscience, I cannot go," he would tell her, and he would be left alone to walk his fields. This morning, therefore, he was all the more pleased that Adi asked to join him.

I can say that I was directly instrumental in shaping the boy's dream. It had been the first active participation I had taken with the family since the

night I entered Alois' mind just after his beer-soaked sermon in Linz about the beauties and wonders of apiculture.

Now, I feel (with some unease) that I must address the reader again on an unappetizing matter. It does concern Adi's bad smell.

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It is curious, yet, after all, not so curious that few matters concerning men and women are as difficult to discuss as odor. To make matters even less agreeable, it is also true that our echelon of aides to the Maestro do not possess a keen sense of smell. Gossip among devils can hardly avoid the notion that we, too, stink on occasion. We have to! We are spirits. We live in the air and that medium is always full of odor.

Enough! It is not a good subject. At this time, approaching the end of the Nineteenth Century, some of the problems in managing our clients were traceable to one phenomenon. Many human beings in whom we had

invested, had to be exceptionally fastidious in their personal habits, or they would at varying times be rank enough to arouse distrust.

How this condition began, I do not know. I have served the E.O. for many an age—no need to count the centuries—but my recollection of earlier eras is no more grounded in the far past than is a human's sense of his possible previous incarnations. It is probably not to the Maestro's interest to have us know any more than we need to know. Rather, we are asked to deal as effectively as possible with the problem before us. We do not have to call, after all, upon Judas or Bluebeard or Attila the Hun to encourage a drunken client to slug down one more shot of booze. In consequence, we have almost no idea of the real beginning of the war between the Dummkopf and the Evil One. Whether they were brothers (the D.K. being presumably the older) or, as Milton proposed, the contest was between God and an angel as important as Lucifer—that is entirely beyond my province. It is not for us to know. Nor can we dismiss the possibility that the Dummkopf (in whole command of this earth and this solar system) was obliged nonetheless to speak to higher powers somewhere in the galaxies of his immediate need for an assistant. It is possible that our O.O. (to use for a moment his highest self-assigned title—

the Other Omniscience) was sent here on purpose by those greater powers. Why? Why not? They may have been dissatisfied with the progress of the D.K. Evolution had exhibited so many dead ends and disasters. In these matters, there are only questions.

Yet, if I must offer my conjecture as to what might have taken place during the interminable eons consumed in that same evolution, I would posit that the D.K. is undeniably the Creator of the familiar sentient world of weather, flora, fauna, and primates that we inhabit, all of us, all we separate souls, bodies and spirits—divine, satanic, and human. So, yes, if He is the Creator, then evolution was certainly His great laboratory, and the signs of His Stupidity as well as of His Genius are to be found in all those endless experiments concerning the development of His creatures, yes, the nearly measureless time it took before He could divine how to enable certain of His beings to fly, the extreme divergences in the breadth and bulk of His earth-bound and marine species, His great and godly hopes that went, for example, into the dinosaur (only to discover that that particular construction of animal life was simply too large to survive—that is one failure.) A myriad of others are present. The Creator had His relative successes and His abysmal failures,

but it has to be admitted that He never gave up, even if He was not always in firm control of the earth He had fashioned. It is incontestable that earthquakes and ice ages brought many an interruption to His experiments and savaged many of His pursuits. Why? Because He had incorrectly designed the globe of earth in the first place.

Of one matter I am relatively certain. By the time men and women had made their way into the D.K.'s concept of how He was to develop His primates, so did our Maestro also appear. With *his* entrance, the perversities and uncontrollables of human activity were stimulated. There, at just such a point in the creative development of the world, came a shift in the importance of odor. Its presence became an often determining factor in human relations.

I can be fairly certain that in the bygone era of primitive man, odor had been one of the D.K.'s assets, an enhancement to aid the development of all the species. In large part, animals and humans both were drawn or repelled by one another through the messages that came in through the nose. Presumably their smells (as developed by the properties that the D.K. had put into them) were there to reveal the depth of each animal's courage, perseverance, fear, treachery, shame, loyalty, their determination to

propagate—no end to the list. It was all useful to the D.K. It enabled Him to take good creative steps forward in evolution without having to oversee every mating.

I think by the time our Prince entered the lists, however, the D.K. could no longer see Himself as All-Good and All-Powerful. The presence of an unwanted colleague reduced His stature. So He began to search for a method whereby His Cudgels could determine (assuming that they possess a good sense of smell!) which men, women, and children had become separated from Him in their loyalty. If the Good Lord was not without His own skills as a sorcerer, (and indeed, how could He not employ such powers given the new and dire complexities of dealing with the varied acts of the Maestro?) I would go so far as to say that the D.K. even had the ability to mark each of our clients with a touch of condign odor, a marking process, if you will, chosen for its simplicity and relative lack of expense considering the inevitable disbursements of divine funds that are inherent in any change of program. From the Middle Ages on, however, our Maestro combated this forceful obstacle to his subtle intentions by encouraging many of his alchemists to develop perfumes whose subtleties became a means whereby rotten odors

could be marinated into sweeter, earthier, more untraceable, and finally more appealing fragrances, even exotic in their hint of a curious, even exciting, bit of reek beneath the bouquet. (It is, for example, impossible to reconstruct the history of court life in France during the reign of Louis XIV without pondering those redolent tricks of camouflage. Moreover, it proved a boon to all of our clients who were rich enough to afford good perfumes.)

By the end of the Enlightenment, matters had altered once more. Soaps, developed by us, were able to add their powers of obliteration to mephetic aromas. Again, the Dummkopf was confounded. At this time of Adi's boyhood, and indeed, throughout the decades to come, a pervasive erasure of human odor became part of our immense progress across this sector of divine combat. Soaps, bath-tubs, cleansing oils and the development of plumbing all came into being, due in large part, to the determined and highly focused energies of those entrepreneurs in whom we had made successful investment. (A history has even been written of the common crapper.)

By the middle of the Twentieth Century, the D.K.'s dependence on bad human odor as a means of warning that the Evil One is near, had been

rendered obsolete. Deodorants dominated the day. At the time of this writing, hardly anyone ever knows any longer how their closest partner might actually smell. (This is certainly true in the more developed nations!) This removal of cognitive power from the D.K. has given great impetus to our work.

Back, however, in the period I now relate, this was not so, not yet, and the meeting between Alois, Adi, and the bee-keeper called Der Alte was characterized by a curious but immediate intimacy between the boy and the old man.

I must not leap too quickly, however, over the walk to Der Alte's farm since Alois may have had his first real conversation with his son, Adolf Hitler, on this occasion.

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What may be more important, however, is to speak of the dream I installed in Adi's sleep on the Saturday night which came before Alois' Sunday meeting with the beekeeper. This dream was fashioned in response to a direct order from the Maestro. I will add that creating a dream which is unconnected to the dreamer's previous experiences, is not routine. Not in the least. While we have the power to originate chimerical episodes, or even on rare occasions, insert whole scenarios into our client's sleep, it is also true that these dream-works exact real inroads on our budget. Inner dramas are expensive to produce ex nihilo. Moreover, there is risk involved when the client is that young if the work can stimulate open conflict with the Cudgels

who may also be involved with the client. A set of delicate manipulations calculated to alter a subject's psyche should not be undertaken under battlefield conditions. Few people prosper from a nightmare.

It has been my experience that the installation of highly selected visions can deliver many desired effects, but that usually turns out well only when one is able to work slowly with the protégé, nimbly, subtly, proceeding in small steps over many a night in order that the Cudgels are not alerted. Count on it, His angels react savagely to any dream that we initiate. From the commencement of human existence, the D.K. has been directly attached to the power that dreams offered Him. They proved essential for controlling those primates He was developing into humans. Much later, during what the E.O. calls the Jehovah Period (that is, approximately 1000 B.C. to the advent of Jesus Christ) it is clear that the D.K. wielded a host of awards and punishments by way of His dream-works. He could arouse visions in prophets and plebians alike, He could drive His wards in any direction He desired, often, I suspect, on not much more than His imperious whim. (Gods, like humans, are less admirable in certain periods than in others.)

Our entrance, however, into the developing life of humankind resulted in a diminution, indeed, a leeching-out of His divine powers. No longer could Jehovah employ dreams to control His chattels at will, and by now, after our work through the centuries, dreams are no longer seen as visions. Rather, they present themselves as eccentric, jagged, totally confused, and broken-backed narratives. Incomprehensible intrusions. People now do their best not to search too long for messages they can extract from episodes that take place in their sleep.

The D.K.'s once imperious use of dreams is, therefore, at present, inoperative. Our forces now vie with the D.K. on how to direct men and women. Jehovah, willy-nilly—and I use the word advisedly!—has had, willy-nilly, to reduce these outsize demands of His Ego. Manic obsession with Himself and His Powers, so swollen during that Jehovah Period, had to lessen. Now, He could no longer insist on the absolute adoration of His servants. No longer do so many of them feel obliged to bring gifts and sacrifices to His altar. The D.K. has had to adjust. On occasion, He can even show Himself to be adroit in His nocturnal insertions. The function of the dream has altered. Less often now does it serve as a medium to deliver

commands from Above. Instead, the modern dream serves, ideally, to give the sleeper a sense of buried disturbances in his or her life. If a trusted friend might prove a hint treacherous down the road, then the dream is now there to alert one to just such a possibility. If, on the other hand, the subject is himself ready to betray a close friend, that possibility and its consequences can also be suggested. The D.K., given all His shortcomings, was now looking for a way to protect His human beings. Indeed, for those lucky or worthy few who had been guarded by the strongest angels and so could rarely be approached by us, (real candidates for sainthood being one example of such protection), the D.K.'s new methods did prove efficacious, until humans, given their freedom, ran amok with it. For a short period, there was a vogue that dreams were to be seen as wish-fulfillment, a most popular notion that never proved itself to be more than a theory. The dream was, after all, a special species of communication between the human creation and Himself. Indeed, on those occasions when we devils and demons are not present to alter the content, a dreamer might actually obtain some insight into his or her vulnerabilities. The intense but mock situations created by the dream are there as tests to dramatize the subject's ability to withstand anxiety. When

successfully interpreted, the subject would now be most unhappily aware of how he or she possessed less courage, less loyalty, less devotion, less love, or less health than previously assumed. Now, the function of the dream was to serve as a security system full of warning bells.

To the degree, however, that we could interfere, we looked to warp the D.K.'s new system at the root. Most of these nocturnal wars now produced chaos. The average dream became an extravaganza, usually incoherent.

So, the task of creating a whole dream for a child appeared, on the face of it, to take too much attention away from other projects. As I have remarked, the Maestro did not, for the most part, encourage such expensive incursions toward children. Looking upon their growth as essentially indeterminable, he saw such actions as prone to failure. It will be recalled that when the Hitler family made their move from Passau, I was instructed to cease paying attention to little Adolf. He and his family would now be monitored through routine milk-runs by my assistants. Except for the sole occasion when I had slipped into Alois' brain long enough to delve into his fascination with beekeeping, I had been working in that region of Austria with

other clients. The information provided by my assistants proved adequate. I had had the information I needed for the Hitlers of Hafeld.

Now, an unexpected and direct communication from the Maestro had arrived—no ordinary event. I was formally instructed to implant a dream into the head of a six-year-old, none other, of course, than our young first grader, little Adolf Hitler. Indeed, the order proposed considerably more than the passing insertion of a concept. Etch was the verb employed by the Maestro. "I want you," he said, "to etch Adi's brain with a permanent notion. We have been quiescent in that direction long enough to expect no interference from the Cudgels. You can probably gain an open operation."

That was not a short speech for the E.O. His regard for each of us could be measured not only by how quickly we were ready to carry out his desires, but by the length of his communication. All too often, reading our minds, we would hear no more than "Yes," or "Don't!"

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The act itself took no more than a few minutes, but the preparation had not been simple. Etch, I must repeat, was the determining word. A fixed notion, once successfully installed, can link the client to us. (Often, should he wish to leave, we use it to bring the stray back to us.) But etching is not there for every devil to practice. It must be done with an incisive stroke. Misapplied, it can drive the recipient mad.

I will go so far as to say that on this occasion, I was deft. Given the knowledge absorbed from the milk runs, I knew that Alois would soon be visiting this neighboring beekeeper, Der Alte, also known as Der Alte

Zauberer—the Old Sorcerer. So was he perceived by the neighboring peasants.

The term was an exaggeration. This old man was a hermit and highly eccentric. He was also as mean as a winter wind, but he could on special occasions seem as agreeable as any other warm old fellow. The peasants in Hafeld, having known him for decades, knew better. Nonetheless, he was the only apiculturist in the area, and he knew more about beekeeping than anyone within a day's walk in any direction. Besides, they were curious to see whether he would succeed in charming Alois.

What was most comfortable about Der Alte was that he had belonged to us for decades. In effect, he was an old pensioner. Moreover, he and Adi would be kin in odor, and so were likely to find that the other had a good smell. The thrust of the dream soon suggested itself. I would etch the boy's mind with a clear image of Der Alte before they met.

As a matter of style, I have always been inclined to avoid excessive virtuosity in a dream-work. Modest scenarios tend to be more effective. In this case, given the necessary precision of the art-work, I satisfied myself by producing as close an image of Der Alte as I could manage and then placed

this image into a short dream Adi was having. He was given a close representation of Der Alte—his appearance, his voice, his manner of movement. For the setting, I presented one of the two rooms of the old man's hut, and made the yard visible through the window. The action of the dream could not have been more direct. Der Alte led them inside his quarters, and fed Adi a spoonful of honey. I made certain the taste was exquisite on the boy's night tongue. (Never to be forgotten, forever etched!). I left that for the climax, and so Adi awakened with wet pajamas from navel to knee along with a whole sense of happiness. He stripped his wet night-clothing, a not unusual event, and went back into slumber, replaying the dream with his own small variations, looking to taste such honey again. In his mind, he was certain that he would soon meet Der Alte, and this emboldened him to ask his father to take him along next morning. Alois, as I have remarked, was pleased.

Their conversation on the walk to the Sorcerer's house is yet to be recounted but I will choose to jump ahead long enough to say a little more about the Maestro's concept of etching for it has a good deal of relevance to our work. For example, we now knew that when Adi met Der Alte on this

Sunday, he would feel a new sense of importance in the heart of his thoughts for he would now believe he had the power to peer into the future. Indeed, we had gained just this anticipated bounty. Der Alte had been instructed in his sleep to give the boy a taste of his finest honey directly on meeting him. Indeed, the experience proved so close to how it had been portrayed in the dream that it took up permanent lodging in Adi's memory.

Be it said again, this man, Magnus Rudiger, spoken of by everybody in the area as Der Alte Zauberer, was in fact not much of an old sorcerer. His curses were neither remarkable nor effective, and his command of magic was not impressive. Whenever a sense of dread came to him from forces he could not name (usually from one or another branch of the Cudgels) he hardly knew more than to lay a circle of salt around the table where he sat by himself in the kitchen. That was, for all its picayune effect, as effective at nudging us away as the Cudgels. Minor clients such as this Magnus Rudiger are an annoyance. Particularly when they grow old. Still, he was enough of an actor to keep everyone in the area respectful of him. No neighbor was in a hurry to attack his self-esteem, and indeed, he did offer a convincing suggestion (by way of his dress, his odor, his resonant, even reverberating, voice, and his

compendious knowledge of bees), that he was a species of magician. At least, he did have the ability to safeguard his self-esteem, and in his favor, I can add that he rarely resisted our uses of him.

In any event, Adi, etched by the dream, was equally conquered by the visit. His belief that he could, on necessary occasions, bring to mind the presence of people he had not yet met, would be no mean instrument for us.

I will say that we were to exercise such a spiritual device often during Adolf Hitler's service as an Army courier over the several years when he had to carry messages up to the trenches, then work his way back to Regimental Headquarters. We were there for him on many a day and night during the First World War. Since he was performing dangerous duties, a belief in one's ability to anticipate the future, can prove of no small assistance. It is, however, too soon to speak of that. His experiences as a soldier—a most complex amalgam of our magic, and his desperation and dedication—are still eighteen years away. For now, I will leave discussion of the profits and problems produced by etching until it is necessary to discuss the practice again.

Rather, I will follow the unspoken thoughts and the following conversation he had with his father on the walk to see Der Alte Zauberer. Alois, of course, did most of the talking, and was anticipating his meeting with no great confidence. It was never routine for Alois to encounter a man who knew more about a subject than himself.

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Once the father and son began to talk, Alois proceeded to supply Adi's head with so many new concepts and names—all the while continuing to walk at a good pace—that before long the boy was twice breathless. He did not dare to lag behind by a step nor a word. In turn, Alois, so rarely in the habit of spending time or thought on this little Adolf, was a hint short of breath himself. Over the years, he had packed enough rheumatism into his knees and enough constriction upon his lungs (via tobacco) to move as a rule more measuredly. But now, discovering that there was an actual vein of conversation to pursue with the boy proved a stimulus to his legs. It was not Alois' habit to harbor many sentiments toward his younger children, indeed,

he never found fatherhood a subject of personal interest until Alois, Junior and Angela had worked with him on the farm. Now, most unexpectedly, he felt a sense of mystery from the presence of his boy. This was unprecedented. He actually wished to enlist the admiration of his own little creature trotting along so breathlessly beside him.

Adi, in his turn, was most excited to be in the company of his father. He had barely learned to spell but Alois stood before his eyes as MEIN VATER! Just so large was his recognition of the size, and—no other word will do—the immanence of the big person striding along beside him. Alois aroused in him the same kind of awe which stood in the expression of his mother when she would speak of der gute Gott.

How the boy wanted to please Alois! At the commencement of the walk, their mutual silence had been formidable. It remained so until Adi found a few words. "Have there always been bees?" he asked at last. It was a simple question but fortuitous. It came just before they would have remained mute for the rest of the walk.

"Yes. Always. Bees," Alois amended, "have been on our fine earth for a long time."

"They go very far back, Father?"

Alois gave him an encouraging pat on the nape of his neck. The boy's obvious desire to keep the conversation in flow now served to activate Alois' funds of exposition. "Yes, I would say, the answer is: Way back! Longer than us. Maybe longer than us. And there has never been a day when we didn't look to steal their honey." He laughed at the extent of his own insight. "I have read that already, back in the time of the Bronze Age, we were already eating honey, yes, and I can say for certain that I have seen drawings and some old poems in glass cases right there in the dusty old Linz museum we all went to once that showed how, going back into the Middle Ages, beekeeping was already a serious activity. Although wild, very wild then."

Despite his touch of rheumatism, Alois was indeed walking fast. Adi's breath was now seizing his lungs in a unique mixture of happy fervor at the fact of the conversation itself, and the desperation that he might not be able to keep walking (half-running) at his father's pace. So many unfamiliar words were coming into his mind at once. This past August, standing under the walnut tree nearest to their farmhouse, a gale of wind came by like the crack of a whip, whereupon three walnuts, hard as stone, pelted his head with

such authority that he had not even dared to cry—it was as if the walnuts had their own voice and told him to be silent. Now, he was buffeted by the Bronze Age, and next, the Middle Ages—maybe he had heard Middle Ages before. He felt as if he half-knew it. Charlemagne, maybe. No question of stopping to ask—he strode along as fast as he could, and air kept burning in his lungs.

"They had," said Alois, "no hives in the Middle Ages. Bee-keepers already, yes, honey, yes, but they had to go out hunting to where they could find a swarm of bees gathered together. Where? Where else? In hollow trees. Locate such a tree, and then grab what you can of the honey before they come out to sting your head off. That was how good men must have done it then. Only even that was not enough. They also looked for the wax. This beeswax was so important. With it, you could have light for your hut. Every night. Candles! But, oh, they had to pay. So many bites. Then along would come their Duke or their Baron. If he heard about your honey, you had to pay up. Too much of a good share. Imagine. What do you think he gave you back?—a bow, a nice strong cross-bow. Why? Because what the huntsman was doing, was dangerous. The bears in the forest were also

looking for honey. Think how crazy those bees must have got when a bear stuck his nose right in to lap up their hive. It is one thing to sting a man, but how do you stop a bear? A bear with his thick skin! They had to go for the eyes. It didn't matter. The bear would still come looking. So, a man needed a cross-bow—to kill the bear. Not so easy to go near honey if the bear got there first, but you could have compensation. Sometimes you had bear meat. Once in a while, you had bear meat and honey."

Adi's breath by now was on fire. Their path was passing through a small wood, and he was on the lookout for a bear. One more fear for the tumult in his lungs.

"Sometimes," said Alois, "on a cold day this time of year a man would find a tree ready to fall, a dead tree with a big hollow in it, and a swarm of bees right there in the hollow. All clustered together to stay warm against the cold. An enterprising sort of peasant might dare to take the tree down. He would have to do it carefully, not to stir up too much, so carefully, and he would have to do it in the evening, when bees are more quiet, especially when it is cold, and then he and his son, or maybe his brother, would carry the tree

back near their hut, where they could manage to extract the rest of the honey."

"What about the bears? Would they come?"

"Yes. The kind of man we're talking about had to be ready to kill the first bear and hang him up near the bees. That kept all the other bears away. That is exactly how it began. But now, what has it become? A hobby! A little risky, maybe, but profitable."

"Hobby," the boy repeated—another new word.

"Soon," said Alois, "it will be a business."

They walked in silence. Der Steckenpferd was how Alois had put it—a horse-on-a-stick, a plaything, a hobby. Soon it would be a business, he had said. The boy was confused. The continued pace at which they were walking was now pinching his breath past the point where he could ask even one more question.

Abruptly, Alois stopped. He had become aware at last of his son's discomfort. "Come," he said, "you sit down." He pointed to an available rock, then sat next to him on another rock. Only then did he feel the pain in his own knees and legs.

"You must understand," he said, "this bee-keeping will not be fairy-tales for us. Honey is sweet, but bees are not so sweet. Sometimes they are cruel to each other. Very cruel. Do you know why?"

"No," said Adi. His eyes were, however, alight. "Please, you must tell me why, Father."

"Because they obey one law. It sits on top of everything. It is so clear to them. This law says: The colony must survive. Nobody can dare to be lazy inside this hive of bees." He paused. "Nobody, except for the drones. They are there to serve their one good purpose. But then it's all over for them. They are gone. Goodbye."

"Are they killed?" The boy knew the answer.

"Killed. Yes. Of course. All of them. Once a year, right about now—just after summer they are gotten rid of. No charity." He began to laugh again. "In the home of the bees, there are no good Christians. No charity whatsoever. You will not find one bee in any hive who is too weak to work. That is because they get rid of the cripples early."

As they rested, however, Alois' thoughts receded back into silence. He was full of dread. It was not intense, yet it lived within him on this Sunday

morning. It could have been a cloud holding many shapes at once. He could not even name all his fears. He knew he was directly afraid of being cheated by Der Alte. Alois had understood what the neighboring peasants were not ready to say. They had praised Der Alte, they had echoed each other while speaking of his vast knowledge on this subject of apiculture. Yet Alois could hear no great allegiance to the man himself. One neighbor even whispered, "You can trust Der Alte, yes, I think so," but Alois neither liked nor trusted this neighbor. And did not the neighbor feel the same way about him?

This was but one hint of his fear. If the fine and attractive location of his own farm had been the good reason for its purchase, he could not say the same for his the land. He did not wish to be cheated again. Indeed, given the trouble with Alois, Jr., he had kept putting off the decision to go into this beekeeping. Now, all of August was lost. It might even be too late to start the winter colony. He did not feel competent about this aspect of apiculture, but he knew—he had delayed too long, that his choices were now restricted. He had to buy and buy soon. He might have to pay whatever unnatural price would be asked for the stock and materials. Yes, he would be held up, wherever he went. He certainly did not enjoy the thought of these peasants

laughing at him again, but that was not his prime uneasiness. He could not quite admit it to himself. Yet the last time he had been in this bee business, going at it as a horse-on-a-stick, just one hive, one skep, kept in a little town at walking distance from Braunau, a place he could go to in the evening to get a rest from the tavern and his fellow officers, or be able to visit on a Sunday in order not to have to watch everyone going to church—a diversion, he had thought. But then he had had a near disaster. On a given Sunday for no mistake he could point to, he had been stung so quickly and repeatedly by so many infuriated bees that he decided afterward he must have been poking about in the Queen Bee's quarters. Who could tell with a skep? Straw has so little shape! He realized his ignorance of the real stuff if he was so open to ambush in the course of working with a hive.

Now, he could say he knew much more. He had been reading on the subject. At length. Given his lack of education, no one could claim to be a quicker student than himself. He retained what he read. How many could say that? Where, then, was his fear?

But he knew. He could tell. By the way he was preparing in advance to recount to this man, Der Alte, that he had taken many stings on his hands

and his knees and that that had subsequently proved beneficial for the stiffness in his joints, yes, that stiffness acquired over the years of standing at Customs posts. For certain, he felt ready to impress Der Alte with his knowledge of bee venom. He would speak of the degree to which diseases in ancient Egypt and Greece had even been treated in that manner. He would also speak of Pliny and Galen. Romans, but great doctors. They knew how to make ointments from bee venom and bee honey. Charlemagne and Ivan the Terrible as well. He could speak of these monarchs' afflictions of the joints and how they had had such pain eliminated, or so it was reputed, by bee stings.

But was he really prepared to enter this kind of conversation with Der Alte? Alois felt somewhat trapped. To the degree that he had spoken at such length to Klara on the subject, he had lost his room for choice. But did he wish her ever to become aware of the fear he had now developed in his heart that this might not be, no, not when you got down to it completely, that this might not be the next step he really wanted to take?

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Magnus Rudiger, Der Alte Zauberer, was one of ours. I have called him a pensioner and that is accurate. In recent years, we have not used him often and any benefits he has received from us have not been large. From time to time, we offer a new insight to one of his old perceptions, (a species of gift-giving practiced by angels and demons alike) and we look to revive faded loyalties with a lagniappe, a Trinkgeld, a bonus, as it is stated so baldly in English. In turn, our pensioners will work a little harder for us when we require it. The impulse to put a spoonful of exquisite honey on Adi's tongue even as he and Alois came through the door was entirely by my suggestion. For certain, the old doctor carried it off as I requested. The old doctor. Even

I refer to him as doctor. Nonetheless, it is one of his more unseemly vanities. (He will insist that he is an honored and learned university graduate.) I have heard him refer on separate occasions to his years at Heidelberg, Leipzig, Gottingen, Vienna, Salzburg, and Berlin, none of whose eminent schools he attended. Indeed, only Heidelberg and Gottingen ever saw him, and that was for a brief visit to enable him to say that he had been there. Our old and learned doctor is a fraud, a half-Jewish Pole, of no certified higher education who, nonetheless, much through his own efforts, has acquired some of the verbal skills and superior manner of a tried-and-true Doctor of Philosophy. If he has chosen in his old age to look like a confirmed drunk, an odd choice (since in fact he does not drink) he is attracted all the same to many of the slovenly habits of old sots. His clothes are filthy. Even his long woolen cap manages to be full of soup stains (for he wipes his mouth with the tail of it) and his white beard is discolored with nicotine. Often he smells of these unhappy odors we look to reduce in our clients. To put no pretty word on it, he is incontinent. Not only his clothes but his furnishings have the harsh persona of old urine.

Nonetheless, he is striking. That long stocking cap which he even wears in summer and indoors does serve his devoted image of himself as some kind of a throwback, can it be, to a court jester?—for he does sit in his hut swathed in an old cape full of faded bright colors, a fool's motley. One could hardly expect him to be impressive in appearance, yet he is. Undeniably, he is. His eyes are extraordinary, as blue as the coldest skies of the north, yet full of merry lights that offer a clue to many a trick he has learned.

Alois, who for forty years had encountered hundreds of people a day, was hardly to be surprised by an unorthodox appearance. For that matter, he had developed the ability to capture the first moment, so to speak, in just about every passing exchange. Travellers were not prepared for the phenomenon of meeting a Customs official who possessed such a degree of authority. Yet there he was at his post, or, later in career, at his desk, exhibiting the strength of his peasant roots, while offering his physical resemblance to Franz Josef. The first moment, therefore, invariably belonged to Alois. Few were prepared for the intelligence that stood out in

his immediate glance. "Try to fool me—you will fail!" was the unmistakable sentiment in his eyes.

This was one of the reasons for my specific direction to Der Alte that he must meet the father and son at the door with a spoonful of honey, and insert it without leave into the boy's mouth. Whatever Alois had been preparing for, it could hardly have been this. So rude. So gracious! Both at once! And nothing offered to Alois but a superior smile from Der Alte as if his piss-soaked den, worse than an abode of fifteen cats and their leavings, was nonetheless Der Alte's realm and he was happy in it, and, I may as well add, diabolically unembarrassed.

Moreover, Der Alte won the boy over on the instant. It had taken no more than this one move. (Plus all the strokes of my etching on the night before!) Alois now perceived a look of admiration on the boy's face for this extraordinary old man. Adi's eyes were now alive with the same intensity of admiration that Alois had been receiving for all the length of their walk together. His paternal reaction seemed ridiculous to him, yet he felt as if Der Alte had stolen affection which, by right, belonged to him.

Now, they sat down. The old man fussed a little (albeit most skillfully) at preparing tea. To Alois' further discomfort, the procedure was courtly. A very old gentleman, or even a very old lady, might have been showing the adult visitor how little he knew—after all these years!—of the putative elegance of a tea ceremony, particularly between absolute strangers.

All the same, I do not approve of Der Alte. For all his gifts, he has never accomplished much for us, not as much as I had anticipated. For a time I had expected he would become one of my prize clients. He certainly did not have to end as a bizarre, impossibly smelly hermit with an immense reputation for dealing with hordes of bees in a pretty little corner of Austria, a country filled already with pretty little corners. I had lost standing with the Maestro by remarking decades ago, that I saw extraordinary promise in this young half-Polish, half-Jewish Magnus. Of course, he was at that time a real pagan with the ladies. This client had settled for much too little as far as I was concerned.

Once they had taken their tea, Der Alte in little sips, and Alois in three scalding gulps which enabled his host to pour him another cup almost

instantly (as a most subtle form of reproof) they began at last to talk about the reason for the visit.

Alois, much habituated by now to dominating the onset of a conversation with any man or woman newly met, had developed an unhappy habit out of this very confidence. He would, by now, even take the first step in a verbal encounter when he sensed that he was overmatched. In effect, he was buckled to his habit.

So he began by citing Pliny and Galen, Charlemagne, and Ivan the Terrible, just as planned. He spoke, or so he believed, in a most moving manner of the afflictions of the two great monarchs and the dedication of Pliny and Galen—two medical geniuses—who had known way back then how to deal with ailments so grievous that others could find no cure. It was not, he would vouchsafe, that he, personally, had suffered inhumanly from gout or from rheumatism, merely, you could say, that he had received his intimations that there could be future miseries. He had, however, learned a great deal on one particular occasion when he had been prey to an unprecedented attack, "just the one time, but with many bites to the knees which subsequently provided considerable protection against the expected

commencement of my rheumatism. I admit that I would have given much to be a medical scientist for I would have begun research on just this subject. I am even sufficiently confident of myself to believe I would probably have made significant discoveries."

"Just so," said Der Alte, "you might, you might very well have done just that. Because indeed, dear sir, what you then believed was there to be discovered had indeed been detected by no less a figure than Dr. Likomsky back in 1864, thirty-one years ago when you were still a young man, and I might also mention Doctor Terc who put the crowning cap on what could have been your thesis. Yes! Herr Doctor Terc came forth with serious chemical studies on the nature of bee venom and its as-yet-undeveloped potential for precisely these valuable cures. Rheumatism and gout might both be seen by now as ailments of the past if not for the innumerable obstacles which present themselves in the way of administering treatment. We are still looking for more precise positioning of the bee sting onto the affected body. It is rumored that the Chinese"—now with a melting look (designed most shamelessly to add to the mutual delight that existed already between him and

the boy) he added, "the Chinese who live on the other side of the earth from us. Have you heard?" he asked of the boy.

Adi nodded solemnly. He had heard of the Chinese, heard of them in his one-room school house during the hour when Fraulein Werner instructed the geography class (two grades above) on the far-off placement of India and China.

"Yes, in that far-off near-mythical land, esteemed Finance-Watch Chief Officer Herr Hitler, it is said that these Chinese employ the stings of needles to alleviate gout, an excellent solution I would think, since the least attractive aspect of my beloved bees is their eagerness to sting, yes, we love them for their honey, but not necessarily for their so-often-martyred condition when they seek to defend themselves, and succeed with their sting even as they surrender their lives."

Alois sensed that he would do well to leave this topic. The tea had left a most penetrating aroma in his nostrils which, to his surprise, was compatible with the urine. Needless to say, he would have preferred a good swallow of beer to pump a few of his prepared remarks up into more forceful

delivery, but as of now, this conversation did belong to Der Alte. At what length he went on!

"I cannot," he remarked, "begin to call you my good friend as yet. For I do not know you. Except, of course, by your fine reputation. Word of your former most respected position precedes our meeting. Your father," he now said to Adi, "is well-regarded by all, but"—and he was now back again with Alois—"I am still ready to call you my friend because I feel in myself an imperative to counsel you, for, oh, I must say, there is, dear sir, so much to learn about these bees and their good keeping." He sighed with a sound of woe as physically intimidating in its resonance as any of a number of less poetic bodily sounds.

"Let me declare that I would not wish in any manner to impose on your pride." He stopped. Since a man's pride was involved, he would not proceed without a laisser-passer.

"No, tell me, good Doctor, you must tell me what you think," said Alois, his voice most normal (to the degree he could command it) but his nostrils were near to quivering. He hardly knew if he was at the onset of an

intolerable sense of woe or whether a true burden was about to be lifted.

What could be this imposition on his pride?

"Given your gracious permission, I would say that I must caution you about your honorable and honest desire to enter the endless vagaries of apiculture. It is, you see, a vocation." He nodded. He turned again to Adi as if the boy was one more equal, yes, all three sitting there as equals. "You, little fellow," Der Alte said, "you, who looks so smart, are you smart enough to know what a vocation might be?"

"No," said Adi, "but maybe I do. Yes. Almost."

"You do. You know it even before you are aware that you know it. That is the first sign of a truly intelligent person, not so?" Der Alte's voice vibrated into the tender pit of Adi's stomach.

"A vocation," said Der Alte, "is not something you do because others tell you that this is what you must do. Not so. With a vocation, there is no choice. You give all that you have to doing whatever has now become so important to you. 'Yes,' says the vocation, 'you must do it.'"

"I would not wish to dispute your learned words," said Alois, "no, I do not wish to commence a dispute, but surely one can keep a hive without

building a monastery to enshrine it. I can foresee no more than a serious but modest investment for a retired man like myself."

"Dear sir, it cannot and will not ever be that way," said Der Alte.

"That much I can promise a strong person like yourself. Heartbreak or happiness. Nothing between!" He nodded with all the profundity of the decades he had continued to present himself as a great and learned doctor.

"Herr Hitler, I cannot allow you to consider such a project until you are made fully aware of the risks that await you, the diseases and mortal enemies that surround our delicate sweet-seeking bees. After all, the honey they make is to the world of nature an exact equivalent of gold. So many of the creatures of nature, large and small, are jealous of the life of these remarkable little creatures who are not only able to make honey but dwell constantly amidst that golden and intoxicating presence. In consequence, honey-bees are hated and pursued. I can inform you of one genus of spider who is evil, nothing less. Die Krabbe-Spinne, it is called. So soon as it finds a promising flower, it ensconces itself deep within the cavern, the small perfumed cavern. There the crab-spider waits, fully at home. It activates the scent of this flower by stirring about within those flowered walls of the corolla; soon, its own spider

odor is overcome by the intoxicating elixir of the petals. What then? It waits. When the forager-bee, our sweet hard-working female with its undeveloped ovaries—only the Queen, as we know, is complete in that most mysterious compartment of female existence!—ach, these other females are there to work for the length of their short lives, to clean house, to serve the Queen's court, or to forage. So here, contemplate our poor little forager, our honey-bee. She smells the inimitable redolence of the flower's cavern. She enters to pick up its lustful store of nectar and pollen and, at once, she is done in. Cruelly! Most sadistically. For, at first, the poor bee is only half-gone. She has been paralyzed by a sting from the crab-spider. Whereupon, the bee lies there, numb, incapable of saving itself, while the spider, altogether evil, proceeds to sup on the vital liquids and subtle constituents of the bee's internal elements. When nothing is left to sip but the dry whisper of an empty hull, a husk, this crab spider goes to the actual labor of ejecting the remains from the flower, after which, I must suppose, it ensconces itself in all the bliss of sleep, yes, a successful destroyer's sleep. It slumbers, all sated, in the corolla."

Adi would dream for weeks to come of the bee, the flower, and the spider. But more fearful detail was to come. Der Alte began to talk about the

bee-wolf, a wasp who would strike at the honeybee just as it was alighting on a flower. The bee-wolf would always go for the throat. "Always! The honeybee has a soft throat. So once again, our forager is paralyzed. The wasp is now in complete command of what she knows how to do. Exactly does she know how to do it. She proceeds to squash the belly of the honeybee in order to disgorge all the nectar that hard-working little being has already taken into herself. This nectar squeezed up from the belly overflows out of her mouth into the maw of the bee-wolf. Is that enough? No. This veritable female brute now undertakes the labor of flying away with her stricken victim. She brings her to a nest most specially prepared and lays her down next to as many as six or eight still-living but wholly-paralyzed other honey-bees, after which she proceeds to deposit in the same crypt one egg, one solitary egg which will later feed on those unmoving bees who are still alive. And when the egg becomes a larva, it is ready to eat its way up into the form of another wasp, another bee-wolf. Every last one of the suspended but living bodies are there as sacrifices for her slow growth. In their misery, the victims cannot even die. They must wait to be eaten, piece by piece, limb by limb. How can that be accomplished? How are they preserved? The

answer is simple. Our so-called good and wise system of nature can show nonetheless all the cunning of a maniac. It is the venom in the wasp's sting that preserves the flesh of these paralyzed bees, for the length of days that this one hungry little larva needs to become a bee-wolf itself.

"I have offered these two exceptional cases as lively examples of the perils to the life of any colony you may hope to protect. There are so many enemies. Skunks will fret their claws on the front wall of a hive until the guardian bees within must come forth to repel him. These soldier-guards are heroic, but futile. They are swallowed en masse. Toads wait beneath to pick up the droppings. Another variety of spider will wrap artful cocoons about each bee that hurtles by mistake into a web. Ants are capable of invading your hive. I have seen a number of colonies, never my own, where the bees are actually obliged to tolerate the ants, and will even surrender a portion of their territory in order that these rude invaders do not attack the combs that contain the future brood. With mice, it is worse. In summer, they loot the combs directly for the honey. In winter, they move into the hive seeking warmth, then proceed to construct a mouse-nest in one or another corner. When the most valiant of our home guard attack the intruder, they can on

occasion succeed by the force of sheer numbers in stinging to death the invading monster. A glorious victory. But what then can they do with the dead mouse? To them, it is larger than Leviathan. The carcass will rot, and make the hive intolerable. So they choose to cover this catastrophic and immense dead presence with disinfectant. That is still another substance which they know how to manufacture from pollen plus a few chosen green buds. Have you heard of it? This propolis?"

"Certainly," said Alois. "They also know to use propolis for mending cracks in their walls." He had succeeded in looking not at all disconcerted.

"I see," said Der Alte, "that I may have failed to discourage you."

"I live by the law of averages," said Alois. "I prefer to think of the ongoing possibility of profit rather than of the occasional perils."

"Does the bee-wasp frighten you?" asked the old man of the boy.

Adi nodded, but then was quick to say, "If my father is ready, then so must I be."

"You have a splendid son," said Der Alte.

Alois was ready to agree for the first time that this might be a possibility. How nice it was to learn that his little Adolf was more than a

bed-wetter and might even, conceivably, be the equal of Alois Junior one of these days.

But thoughts of Alois Junior invariably reminded him of all that might not be in place. So now Alois wondered why Der Alte had been seeking to discourage him. It made no sense. Given the state of his hut, the old man could use the money. Doubtless! Why then scorn a potential customer's desire to invest?

For the first time, he felt as if he had a grasp on Der Alte. The hermit understood him better than others, decided Alois. "He knows that I am a man who looks to keep his pride intact. I do not give way to the first warning. So Der Alte must know that the more he discourages me, the more I will be ready to begin my colony. He will have his money after all!"

Alois now gave Der Alte what he considered his largest and most confident smile. "I respect your cautions," he said, "but we must move now to the other side of the question. Can we speak of what you will do for me, and what I can do for you?"

"Not quite yet, said Der Alte. "If you wish to remain a man with a modest little hobby, I will, of course, be available for the necessary materials.

But I see in you, Sir, if I may speak on a more personal level, the possibility of a true vocation. So, I would propose another consideration, a better approach. I, for example, to learn my metier, put in an apprenticeship that lasted for three years and provided me with an advanced license. What I would propose to you is a more collegial relationship—may I put it so?—I am prepared over the next few years, for the most modest fees, to have you study with me as I work on my colonies. It could prove a delightfully agreeable arrangement. You will learn much, and I will have the pleasure of an intelligent man's company. It is sad to say, but in all these verdant hills and fields that surround our Hafeld here, we are the only two individuals of outstanding intelligence."

Alois kept a smile on his face but his nostrils were paying their own tithe. "Work for three years with you, you foul-smelling old goat?" was the speech he did not utter. The compliment to his intelligence had blocked the insult as completely as his need to come to an arrangement with the old mountebank for materials.

In turn, I was horrified. No professional has a greater desire for competence than a devil. I had been incompetent here. Der Alte might be a

pensioner, but I had neglected him for too long. The loneliness revealed in these last remarks was like the chill in an old stone house that has been unlived in for too many winters. I was not worried that Alois would take up his offer, but now I understood how intense was the old man's yearning to see more and more of Adi. No bold move is ever free of unplanned consequences. The Maestro would not be tolerant of any mischief that developed between Adi and Der Alte. Calculated mischief was our province, but must not belong to a client, not if we could prevent it. We look to direct the romantic habits of our fold, rather than correct them! Any future episode between the old man and the boy would not be to the Maestro's liking. Not so early! Too many indeterminables!

At this point, Alois said, "I am honored by your personal interest in me, but I must explain. In my family, we are blockheads. All of us, blockheads. The worst to be said is that we are proud of that. So, I must work alone. That is how I am. I look forward, therefore, to enjoying a mutually agreeable commercial relationship."

Der Alte nodded. He, too, had his pride. No matter the need, he would not repeat his suggestion.

"Yes," he said, "we will make arrangements. I will put together a couple of colonies for you and supply those tools and products you do not have in hand already." He turned to Adi. "Soon your father will be very busy. Are you able to count to one thousand?"

"Yes," said Adi. "They do that in the Upper Class at school, and so I know."

"Good. Because this spring your father will be master of many, many thousands of bees. Will you be afraid of them?"

"I am afraid," said Adolf, "but you know, I am also curious."

"A wonderful boy," said Der Alte, and his expression was full of love. Tears came into Adi's eyes. His mother would soon have another baby, and again it would be the same as when Edmund was born. He would not see the love he wanted to find in her eyes when she was looking at him. Not for a while.

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It is safe to say that I know a good deal. As I just remarked, I can enter into many a mind; I can recover, if necessary, the concealed, even long-buried memories of any particular client I have picked up on my own, or to whom I have been assigned. This power consumes Time, so much Time. (Time is, indeed, a word I capitalize since for us, as well as for the angels, it is a resource comparable among us to the way Money serves as a matrix for humans.) We are always calculating how much Time we can afford to give each of our clients, and such expenditures increase when we choose to inhabit people's dreams. My need to acquire more insight has to be balanced, then, against the cost of investment required in order to work our will upon a

person. For this reason, the average human who has, at best, limited powers of insight and memory, is not of interest to us. We look to develop in promising clients an ego that will be ready—sometimes at risk—to transgress divine or social laws on the way to carrying off a major endeavor.

Such men and women, are, of course, rare. More often we have to be content with common types. Then, for the most part, we look to make such mediocrities successful. In our Company, provided we are sufficiently patient, that can also produce promotions for oneself. Over many an era, I have had clients whom I was able to develop to the point where they could serve directly in one or another of the Maestro's larger projects. The majority of humans, however, caught in the push-and-pull, the back and forth between their guardian angel and a directing devil like myself, end by producing little that is useful to either Kingdom. On the other hand, I can recall a few most unhappy situations where the guardian angel who was my opposite number retained the spoils.

At one period in the past, as a result of several such losses, my position suffered. For a time, I was assigned clients of petty origin or modest achievements. I encouraged common soldiers, for instance, to injure the

morale of their company by desertion, I served workers and peasants who looked to stir up revolutions, but turned corrupt. I knew a few priests in small towns who got into trouble with little boys, or estate managers who pilfered funds. I served petty barons and counts as they gambled away the last of old holdings, and I might as well list petty suicides, petty thieves, drunken louts, unfaithful wives of the worst sort, ditto their male counterparts, as well as comparable flotsam and typical jetsam. I had a horde of clients, but only a few could offer a new or interesting problem for one's special instincts. I had to serve as proctor for all too many nameless men and women who were born with little and proceeded to less. It could have been cause for despair. Even as recognition from a social summit gives life to a snob, only large projects appealed to me. While I could rarely know whether the Maestro was saving my services for some large if hidden purpose or merely marinating me in various backwaters until I acquired more experience, I did, on occasion, take hope that he had not lost interest. He even remarked once that I might seek high rank again, a post comparable to some of the epic encounters of our Company during the first three centuries of the Church in Rome. All of that might be there for me once more, provided I was ready to pay unremitting

attention to my present wretches, thugs, and drunks. I did, and eventually, I was again promoted. I learned then that the E.O. had selected me to oversee the work of a number of other minor demons who were keeping watch from time to time on a young Austrian client whose developed potentialities might yet prove astounding. Insignificant at present was this person and so was his family, but he had ancestral fault-lines full of the intoxicating stink of our old friend, blood-scandal. So I had observed him closely through the years. By 1908, this lad was jobless in Vienna, and stricken with timidity. He had quit school too early, was an avaricious reader who remained hopelessly superior to what he read (particularly when he could not understand it,) and was, in addition, lazy, prone to temper tantrums, and possessed of an ego as swollen as an infected limb. All the same, he was desperately afraid of virtually all meetings with other human beings. Yes, this boy was an unmitigated mess.

I did not dare to ask, but of course I could not, in those years, hide my curiosity from the E.O. any more than my agents were able to conceal their active reactions from me. At this point, the E.O. actually chose to speak directly to my thoughts. He said: "Why have I been so interested in this boy? Can it be that he possesses the largest ambition one could possibly

encounter in a young man who is not already insane? I may propose that you will yet take him on full-time. But, remain at ease! It is still no more than a project. It could certainly fail. He will need endless instruction. His terrors must be allayed by the most reassuring experiences you can arrange for him. And you must guard him from receiving any more crushing defeats to his ego. Already, you have allowed too many. In time, if he develops the greater part of his potential promise, he could, as I say, become your only client. Must I say more? Do pay attention. We are looking at a major project.”

All this was uttered by the E.O. with characteristic irony. Since he usually responded with an unvoiced intimation which was all we needed (in much the way a dog can rise from his sleep and shake himself at his master's silent command), we never knew how serious The Master was when he spoke aloud into our mind's ear. The irony in his voice took away any certainty that he was committed to what he said. Sometimes I felt that this irony came from his own uncertainty, but that was a perilous notion.

In any case, I dared not ask: What if, after all I have given him, I do fail? Many of our projects do. Particularly, major ones, our most outrageous gambles. Our Source—to employ still one more honorific—is not unlike God

in this regard. There are blind alleys in existence, and a good many, I can tell you, are the fault of the Lord who did not design them well. The dinosaurs, for example. If God is the greatest artist, He has also made the most prodigious mistakes.

I was depressed. This new project remained an outrageous gamble. I knew about the hopeless fate of most such exceptional but highly warped clients. Unless an historic epoch developed that could accelerate, even thrust, my assigned protégé into history, he would end as one more failure. At this point in 1908, there seemed no sign of such special conditions arriving. (The First World War and the disasters that fell upon Germany had not yet occurred.) My role, as I saw it, was to continue to be a jockey who guided a horse running against unbelievably long odds. I could foresee further demotions for myself.

All this is not of much interest now. We know, after all, what happened to the horse. And I was the one who rode him (with occasional but crucial help from the Maestro). I rode with Adolf all the way up to glory (and down again—which is half the matter, the other half being why I now propose to tell the tale). I know so much. This knowledge seems to exist as a

separate force within me, separate and independent of Our Maestro, a force, indeed, so intense that—as we know!—I have broken the first rule of our cohort. Moreover, obliged by the logical demand of my tale to initiate my reader into hitherto guarded revelations concerning Time, I have even told how Adolf was conceived, and how the Evil One under those extraordinary nocturnal circumstances chose to stand in for Gabriel.

The reader may recall that I was not actually in that bed at the time. Not literally. Nor did I have to be. Nonetheless, in stating that I participated in that particular carnality—that apocalyptic carnality!—I was telling the truth fully as much as I was purveying a lie. For even as we now assume to our logical confusion that light is both a wave and a particle, so do we devils live at once in the lie and with the truth, side by side.

The explanation—provided one is ready to follow!—is considerably less difficult than, let us say, Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. Spirits exist in a relation to Time that is not analogous to human perception of that same mysterious word. Our ability to ingest the experiences of lower demons enables higher devils to pass through periods of Time that human beings can recognize by way of linear chronology. But, I, as a higher devil, did not have

to be present on the night Adolf was conceived. Nonetheless, I was able to take in later the exact experience of what happened. Another devil (of lower rank) had been present in Alois' bed on that occasion. By order of the E.O., this devil had entered the act. I must say that this is always an option for any of us. We can enter into any and all cohabitation. On rare occasions, and this was one of them, a demon can even call for the presence of the E.O. So can the angels look to their Master. Since the resources of God and the Devil are—I must repeat, believe it if you will!—not infinite, such insertion must not be merely desirable or entertaining, but purposeful to the highest degree! The devil who had actually been present that night transmitted the experience to me somewhat later with a completeness of odor and carnal detail that can be termed absolute. It is fair then to say that it happened to me. For all practical purposes, I had been there. (Among us, to be given an exact recollection is equal to being present.) So, I also knew from the irrevocable intensity of the occasion that the E.O. had also been present, had joined with his petty agent for one instant (even as Jehovah had been with Gabriel during that other exceptional and history-altering event.)

While I was not going to be exclusively attached to Adolf Hitler for many years, the E.O. had, as I have indicated, placed him in my Overview. It is equal to saying that the devils who worked with little Adolf were there to pass their experiences on to me. His life and modest deeds as a boy were conveyed to me daily. Then, as the day approached when I would look to take whole possession of him, so did my concentration upon the sense-offerings of the minor devils in my domain take on more prominence until I was at last as steeped in the life of the boy and young man as if I had been alone with him over all the years of his childhood and adolescence. For this reason, I am ready to write about his life with an immediacy no biographer could attempt. Ditto for what I can relate about Klara, Fanni, Anna Glassl, Alois, Sr., Johann Nepomuk, Johanna, and any others.

Now, this profound if most mysterious urge to share my insights with men and women I do not even know has to be part of the same strange force that is behind what seems to be my incontestable readiness to betray the E.O. Indeed, I may have begun to understand why I am doing it. Profound experience communicated to no one else will scourge the soul. I, who have lived so long in the belief that I am no more and no less than a spirit—a

presence void of soul—may have to face a serious disruption of my understanding of my condition. Somewhere within, I sense the remnants of something much like a soul in myself, comparable, perhaps, to nerves still attached to an amputated limb—nerves which all but insist on promising the body that this limb can grow again. Such is the force of the thought in me that something of this sort may be present.

I have to recognize I am offering too much for so early a moment in our biographical endeavor. It will take all of a book that I may never be able to finish for you, dear reader, who is not at all in my likeness, and not my brother, to begin to absorb this confession. If you are disturbed, so, to a degree, am I. The present is with me again, the precise period of these years now that I live in an America I can barely comprehend. If I am a presence who consists of no more at this instant than the all-but-retired spirit of a devil who is without a serious assignment, I also sense that I must keep to the premise that an account of the life of my most important client will help, yes, will help to re-establish my footing on some long-lost terrain where I can begin to search for the remaining oddments of what may once have been my soul.

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I must now inform the reader of an unexpected summons from the Maestro that not only removed me from Alois Hitler and his family for close to eight months, but took me out of Austria altogether. I can add that this alert arrived on the evening early in October of 1895 when Alois completed

his apicultural negotiations. *A colony of bees installed*
in each of two Langstroth boxes
~~Two Langstroth boxes with a colony of bees installed in each,~~ were purchased from Der Alte, as well as all the necessary

N Diary May 18 1896 11/18/04 triple

Xenia, Diary, 19 May 1896 Moscow

Yesterday's misfortune keeps going round in my head like a nightmare! In my opinion, Uncle Sergei's behavior is beneath comment. He has washed his hands of everything, saying it's nothing to do with him, and ~~that Vorontsov is responsible for everything!~~ Yesterday, he didn't even take the trouble to visit the scene of the disaster—it's out of his hands!

~~talked of nothing else while I sat with Mamma in the morning.~~

~~I don't know why, and Gerasim [the Greek?] kept trying to tell~~

Ella my opinion about everything that had happened! Her reply was, "Dieu

merci Sergei n'a rien a faire dans tout cela!"

~~of Yenna almost burst into tears
she felt such a desire to stroke
and Ella came late straight from the hospital. They only had
Ella. To thank God! To declare:
that Sergei had nothing to
do with all this!"~~

Denial of Ella
+ Sergei.

Not very much

stet

stet

stet

stet

stet

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hegemony of the Tsar and the Russian Orthodox Church. He would install Nicholas the Second with an unforgettable ceremony, fortify the Church even further, and ^{guide} ~~let~~ this association of Crown and Cross ^{to} rule with authority over the inchoate but vast energies of the Russian people.

If so, it was more than an amazing decision, it was a staggering choice. To depend on Russia—so invested with corruption! So teeming with injustice! It was what we looked for. We counted on injustice. It was the yeast to inspire hatred, envy, and the loss of love. If we had a rule of thumb, it was to encourage injustice wherever we could. For rare was the man or woman who did not possess an intense sense of the injustice done to them each day. It was our taproot to every adult. It was a fury in every child!

As I looked then for an explanation into the motives of the D.K., it seemed evident that part of the answer might be found in the young man who would receive the Coronation. While we prided ourselves on having a keener appreciation than the Dummkopf of the flaws and potentialities of the men and women He had created, nonetheless, the D.K. like many another creative artist, had His own vanities in this respect and would have

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argued, doubtless—if debate between the Maestro and Himself were possible—that the history of human nature had been improved by the advent of Jesus Christ into the daily life of the masses in so much of the world.

We were ready to disagree. We saw Christ's efforts ending in failure even if the Maestro had to respect the brilliance exercised by the D.K. in the aftermath. It was incontestable that He recovered quickly enough to claim credit for the very crucifixion He had certainly wanted to avoid. "God,"

our Maestro was always ready to inform us, "was cheating on ^{the} his own rules. *It had formulated. He +raduced His own Game!* ~~of the game.~~ Free will for human ~~kind~~ becomes meaningless once there is

divine intervention. But leave it to the Old Goat! Secretly—blind even to ~~the darker elements in~~ His own motive—He was determined to establish His Kingdom on earth. In the most literal sense! He wanted a Kingdom with His Son on the throne. He most certainly was not anticipating the disaster that befell my poor kid brother Jesus." And the Maestro laughed. (He had a rich, self-pleasuring laugh whenever he made a remark that could leave a scar on the Scriptures.)

All the same—such caustic merriment to the side—it was becoming evident to me that the D.K. had to be placing His hopes in the character of

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the young man who would soon be crowned as Tsar Nicholas the Second.

You may be certain that I made a request to the Maestro: Could I devote my efforts to learning as much about Nicholas as was possible under these constrained circumstances? "Yes. Learn what you can," said the Maestro. "That could prove most interesting for you."

I did not know whether I was being promoted or abandoned, but I learned soon enough that it would not be routine to get near to this Nicky. (That is how everyone in his large family referred to him). Nicky had two younger brothers, two sisters, a beautiful Danish mother (the widow of his recently dead father, Tsar Alexander the Third), four Grand Dukes for uncles, one beautiful Grand Duchess as one of his aunts, and a host of cousins and in-laws who, for the most part, so far as one could discern, were surprisingly fond of him. Indeed! That, in itself, told much.

But I could not, as I say, come near. I had never encountered a human being more guarded by squadrons—in all literal truth!—squadrons of angels from His highest ranks, there to keep observers like myself at a distance. That was a loss, for me. ~~I can tell a great deal about a man or woman once I approach them.~~ ~~and I can tell a great deal about a man or woman once I approach them.~~ Taking in the scent of a human being from

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the other end of a room, I can detect as much as an animal with a keen olfactory passage. My eyes can perceive defects in the corner of a nostril or the subtle turns along the ridges of the ear—enough to reveal concealed twists of character. Yet, these are not fine senses I look to retain for all occasions. Our satanic existence could enervate us if our sight and taste and smell, our sense of touch and hearing, were always at a level of exquisite readiness—no, we call upon such faculties only when urgently needed to learn a good deal about a man or woman in a few moments. Here, however, as I must repeat, one was not able to approach. There were far too many Cudgels. Once again, I had to rely on the secondary materials that smaller devils had extracted from the numerous clients who dwell in the lower and middle reaches of the palaces of St. Petersburg and the churches of the Kremlin.

This, then, is what I learned from these more or less academic resources. Needless to say, I am hardly speaking of texts or of libraries. There was, however, a fund of copied material that had been collected by royal valets, chambermaids, and house servants who had become our clients, a full flow, indeed, of the most useful gossip and insights. It seemed