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~~Book IV~~

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I must now inform the reader of an unexpected summons from the Maestro that removed me from Alois Hitler and his family for close to eight months. Indeed, it took me out of Austria altogether. I can add that this alert arrived on the same evening early in October of 1895 that Alois completed his apicultural negotiations. A colony of bees installed in each of two Langstroth boxes were purchased from Der Alte, as well as a variety of

tools, together with enough sealed jars of pollen and honey to feed his newly-acquired inhabitants through the winter.

So soon as purchased, the goods were transported by Alois to the Hitler home. It was to prove an ~~exceptionally~~ exciting trip for Adi who sat beside his father in the dray and could not sleep that night in anticipation of morning when the hive-boxes would be set up on a bench under the shade of an oak tree some twenty paces from the house.

If there is some curiosity concerning how much these purchases ~~came~~^{cost} ~~to~~ I have no very dependable way to carry a calculation forward from the kronen of Alois' era to the present American dollar—certain products are priced one hundred times higher today than a century ago; other increases are modest. I will offer one rough estimate: Alois' pension in 1895 may have been the equivalent of sixty or seventy thousand dollars a year in the present era, and so I can say that he found the new expenditures dear. What Der Alte charged him might ~~come today to the equivalent~~^{be the equal today} of a thousand dollars. Alois, fully anticipating that he would pay too much, was weary, nonetheless, of dealing with the old man and so did not press beyond the small satisfaction of acquiring a few extra tools at no ~~extra~~ cost.

It was at this point that I was ordered to leave Adi and the other members of the family (as well as my other clients in that area of Austria.) ~~I~~ ^{we were deputized!} ^{left at once,} deputized three of my agents (to remain and I embarked for St. Petersburg ^{on arrival,} ^{to become familiar with} where ~~I had to come quickly to face the facts and dimensions of a~~ ^{where we would embark on a} massive oncoming project. We ~~were going to~~ ^{would} attend the Coronation of Tsar Nicholas the Second, scheduled for May of 1896 in Moscow, ^{as} ~~This~~ event ~~was~~ still seven months away.

^{Yes, off} ~~Off I went,~~ to St. Petersburg, [!] ~~and on that very night.~~ Leave it that I was obliged immediately upon arrival to commence my study of the late Nineteenth Century Russian soul, all of it—belly, vices, beliefs, harmonies and inner disharmonies. Once in that Slavic realm, (which is so much nearer to God and to the Devil than any other land above the equator) I stayed for all of a winter in ^{the capital} ~~St. Petersburg~~ prior to coming down to Moscow on a cold April morning one month in advance of the Coronation that May.

During these seven months, I did receive news regularly of Alois, Adi, Klara, and Angela. There were even reports on the temperament of the dog, Luther, and the horses, Ulan and Graubart. In any event, none of that

was of great interest to me, not at all, what with our oncoming venture in Russia. Perhaps I had become a little too full of the Hitler family's intimacies. (I had also been hoping to receive more of an active assignment.) Now, I had it. Our O.O. was obviously in the first stages of bringing off a major and mighty mischief.

Now, I will make one apology, although I will do my best not to repeat it. (Good readers do not purchase novels, after all, to put up with the author's regrets.) I have to say, however, that having read the best and worst of novels for many years, which is, to remind you, part of a good devil's education, I should know by now (and do!) that not even ~~the most~~ loyal readers ~~will~~ stay true to an author who is ready to leave his narrative for what must seem an unrelated subject. ~~Given that restriction,~~ ^{Due to SA} I have until ~~now~~ ^{at 4:20 today} spared the reader ~~any~~ reference to ~~my~~ other cases, particularly the month I spent in London back in May of '95 when I attended the trial of Oscar Wilde and was in the courtroom on the day of his conviction for "sodomy and gross indecency"—a matter in which I played a hand with the jury's deliberations. (My instructions were to do my best to get him convicted.) It is likely that the E.O. was looking to stimulate a rabid sense

of martyrdom among many of Wilde's closer associates, particularly those who were of very good family. But to this I cannot attest. Only on rare occasions will the Maestro explain his strategies ~~and~~ we are there to fulfill his aims rather than to satisfy our curiosity.

Nonetheless, I was now harboring a conviction that this abrupt transfer of so many of our forces over to Russia had put the Dummkopf into a state of some disturbance.

For that, I can offer only my own set of explanations. While I ~~would~~ ^{cannot} ~~not~~ guarantee their dependability, I will say I have long suspected that our mighty antagonist, the D.K., is critically dissatisfied with the state of all the formal religions who claim to be serving exclusively in His name. (This, of course, must exclude reference to Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and any other sects or faiths not based on texts dictated—so goes the ~~churchly~~ ^{fundamentalist's} ~~and overbearing~~ claim—by God.)

No, I would assume He is unhappy with the strictures ~~and structures~~ of the Catholics, the Protestants, the Orthodox Jews, ~~the Reformed Jews~~ ⁷, the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, most unhappy that He was ~~not able~~ ^{unable} to control ~~sufficiently~~ the development of these forms of worship. Humans—many of

the worst sort—are now the overlords in most ^{halls} ~~such dens~~ of Godly worship.

Given the tenacity of the priests, reverends, rabbis and imams who have

attached themselves to these concentrations of power (and given their

unholy lust to control human behavior) these ^{leaders of organized} ~~religious officers~~ have

^{(hysteria) for some time} ~~have~~ succeeded over the centuries in installing themselves into the mind of half

of humankind. They ^{themselves, they} ~~have~~ also succeeded in keeping God at a distance from

His humans. I ^{could only} ~~was ready to~~ suppose that He resented it. Was that why the

^{was the generating and} ~~D.K. had generated such~~ special hopes for this Coronation? ^{But if so why} ~~What I knew~~

~~for certain was that the Maestro was preparing to go to great lengths to~~

~~thwart His expectations that it would become a luminous event,~~

For many centuries ^{The Maestro} ~~our O.O.~~ has been an incisive critic of the D.K.

We have certainly ^{gone} ~~enlarged~~ the sum of emotional dissatisfaction in men and

women. ^{80%} ~~[Thereby so went our working assumption we might succeed in]~~

~~[Deadening the vitality of the species]~~ Over the last two thousand years, one

of our more effective methods had been to encourage the ^{most} ~~most~~ humorless

^{varieties of} ~~religiosity~~. Everywhere ^{are} ~~are~~ fine men and women locked into a mosque, a

synagogue, or a church, all clinging to ^(what is virtually the) ~~the~~ same oxymoron. Despite every

other difference, they are attached to the obtuse belief that God is not only

All-Good but All-Powerful. This premise, so removed from all the existing

evidence of the perversities of existence, proves incapable of serving the

mind. (The contradictions are too mind-boggling!) All-Good and All-

Powerful is a concept to ~~erode~~ ^{staple the instincts God had} many of the hopes God held for human

development. By promoting exactly this concept—All-Good and All-

Powerful—we have succeeded, century after century, in locking the best

minds of ~~man~~ ^{human kind} onto the bed of Procrustes. All-Good and All-Powerful.

Indeed! Yes, we ~~had~~ ^{we are here for that!} looked to encourage every fundamentalist we could

find, every Islamist, Born-Again, or unyielding nun—we didn't give a damn.

"Come to us," became our creed, "come, all of you who are in need of rock-

hard faith and anchored certainties! Be born again into total mental

security, yes! ^{we are here for that!} How ready they were to believe they were serving God even

as they ~~began~~ ^{commenced} to work for us in ways they could never ~~conceive~~ ^{imagine}.

Now, the advantage we had obtained by 1895 was in part a product of

~~the D.K.'s~~ ^{God's} own inability to decide on which direction He would ^{look to} like to steer

His human creatures. (~~Encourage these avatars of free will to turn Left or~~ ^{Should he encourage their power of}

Right? God could not make up His ~~own~~ Mind.) His strength (as the

Maestro will be the first to acknowledge) is that He can beget a plenitude of

1. ~~Classification~~ Evidence of history, which is to say that immense compensation of perversion offers no service to the human mind. The contradictions are so

fine forms throughout the natural world. God is an Artist, and some of His Forms are ~~most~~ dazzling (the butterfly, the rose), some are ^{so} useful. Some are relatively successful. (The honey-bee might be one example.) And some were most improperly designed. (The dinosaur, the horse-fly, the mosquito—^{failures and excesses come to mind} all come to mind.)

But, by the time the Lord had raised primates to the level of humans, He had become much too proud of this, ~~His latest~~ ^{this} creative achievement. (He saw ~~the~~ ^{Indubitably so!} human animal as His finest work.) He felt ~~expansive, and so~~ ^{much so} that He even provided men and women with ~~sufficient reason,~~ ^{and sufficient reason,} memory, ~~and~~ ^{passion} to exercise free will. He encouraged them to develop speech. In the beginning, He was prepared to allow this creation to be ~~free~~ ^{free even} ~~on most occasions,~~ ^(At least on most occasions!) of Himself. Just so confident was His belief in His

Powers of Anticipation. He had no fear that humans would burst the limits He had ~~allowed them.~~ ^{allowed would be enough for them,}

This miscalculation ~~was~~ ^{proved} calamitous. It ~~proved~~ ^{was} equal to raising a ~~dog~~ ^{dog} ~~hound~~ ^{hound} who turns on ~~its~~ ^{his} master. Men and women, ~~once endowed with free~~ ^{soon} will, ~~proved unmanageable. Worse! They~~ gave every indication that, once left entirely to themselves, they would depose Him. (The first tendencies

^{even} are already visible in Adam and Eve.) So He gave up the heartfelt notion of engaging in a ^{an} free and open partnership with this highest form of His Creation. Instead, He now looked to frighten men and women back into obedience. Finally, He could not recover from the blow to His Hopes

occasioned by the Crucifixion. ^{it was necessary} He felt obliged, therefore, to return to earlier modes, to tyrannical judgments. ^{Even God is not} He came back to His Person as Jehovah.

^{would} He proceeded to terrify humans once more. "Obey Me and Fear Me. I am All-Good. I am All-Powerful." The message that He had wished to transmit through His Son—"Love each other and you will share in My love" was ~~now~~ converted by St. Paul and his ~~hard-assembled~~ crew of minions and

acolytes into "Fear Me, Respect Me, and on occasion, I will answer your prayers." ^{I suspect that the Lord could not recover from the blow to his Hopes occasioned by the Crucifixion.}

^{God's great} This retreat opened ^{large} territories to the Maestro. Since our

purpose is to lower the vitality of what is, admittedly, the most exceptional creature developed by the D.K., we look to ^{activate} encourage forms of religiosity that are mindless. Warp the brains of men and women, and ^a the corruption of human emotion will soon follow. (Yes, imbalance is the beginning of

The Maestro is there to demand us
 rot.) We are often reminded that once we accomplish our job, we may be
subsume
 able to ~~convert~~ His Creation into Our System.

This has ~~not only~~ been the ongoing intention of the Maestro through
~~many an age, but~~ and now found look everywhere
~~our activities have expanded far beyond churchgoers.~~ We
charm
 We look to atheists, philosophers, entertainers, and any number of highly
~~motivated or~~ have been independent individuals who are turning bitter at the edges.
 Through the Nineteenth Century, this ~~all~~ did worked reasonably well for us.
 Yet, by the approach of the 20th Century, the Maestro our O.O. seemed to be
~~contemplating a profound change in our procedures.~~ major Was he the Maestro
~~preparing his transformation from High Critic to Prime Creator?~~ to usurp the throne of the

what this might
 I could not conceive of such a daring shift. What might it require of me.
Perhaps
 us? I was perhaps too mired in our dependable Austrian tactics. So, this
new adventure in Russia did much had to arouse my uneasiness. For who could know
 more about the pestilence and slovenliness of human nature than those of us
 who have worked through the centuries to inflame all that has proved
 misbegotten in the calculations of God. we are there to snuff
~~all the~~ all the animal rage He left in His human beings. There had been one sum of
~~blunders upon another, and so many had been fashioned by the D.K.~~

~~As~~ ^{even as he kept}
~~Himself, yet~~ ^{while} in the course of investing more and more heedless if
 Godly enthusiasm into ^{this} most advanced ^{form of life} (Creation! And we had done our
 skillful best to make it worse. Given His Desire to ^{provide} ~~find a high but delicate~~
 a level of life that would ~~nonetheless~~ ^{unforgoable} be able to survive through grievous and
~~often incalculable~~ conditions of heat, cold, flood and forest fire, the D.K.
 had had to endow man (and woman, ~~most certainly~~) with a sense of self-
^{He had decided that that would be}
 importance ~~crucial~~ to their survival. But, once again ~~was it due in part to~~
~~our efforts?~~ ^{impaired} His creative balance was off. Human self-righteousness, so
^(I am important - I deserve to survive!)
 necessary to meeting the demands of survival, soon produced envy as its
^{by-product}
 first product, and that worked ~~as~~ dependably in our favor as compound-
 interest serves a long-term investment. Of course, ^{might be} the D.K.'s powers to
 fashion new varieties of Creation ~~were still~~ ^{might be} encyclopedic, but His skills as a
^(by the measure of the Cosmos)
~~cosmic~~ engineer were riddled with fault. His design of the earth's tectonic
^{plates}
 plates ~~was~~ open to earthquake. ~~So, His problems, even without our~~
^{His problems would have been many}
 presence, would not have been trivial. Over the eons of evolution, His
 endless refashioning of His own works by way of trial and error, (and His
 endless re-designings of works-in-progress) even His readiness to live with
 His mistakes until such time as He could correct them, His outsize rages as a

younger god!, His frenzies as Jehovah!, had compounded a multitude of
~~5 (ashes, scars, open wounds and spiritual amputations)~~
~~open wounds in every avenue of human history.~~ Now, I could wonder how
~~the body~~ ~~re-shape~~
 the Maestro would begin to refashion such a boggled Creation. We would
~~even have to deal with~~
~~be stumbling constantly over the disarray we had left by our work.~~ I was
 worried. Yes.

Sp? reshape
 or it reshape

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~~2~~

I will yet describe the disorder we would ^{look to / wake} wreak in the aftermath of the Coronation of Tsar Nicholas the Second, but I would prefer at this point ^{to stay with an account of} to return to the small events and minor adventures of the Hitler family in Hafeld during the period while I was away. ^(feel free to say) Only then will I return to what ^{activities /} we did in St. Petersburg and Moscow. I will say that the eight months from my departure in October of 1895 until my return to Austria in June of 1896 turned out to be of some future importance for Adolf Hitler, enough, certainly, to ^{re late} describe what took place during my absence.

Let me point, however, to a ^{my absence} serious difficulty. During this period, ^{reports} ~~an~~ account of the various experiences of Alois, Klara, and the children ^{were} ~~was~~

passed on to me by second-rate agents—the three I had left behind to

oversee my portion of the Province of Upper Austria. Given the import of

our mission to Russia, I had, of course, taken ^{my} the best assistants ^{along,} with me.

~~For my knowledge of what was taking place~~

~~As far as Hafeld was concerned, it was an ascertainable loss. Lesser devils~~

~~in Hafeld, I would ^{have} ^{to} suffer loss, Lesser~~

~~devils~~ are comparable to lesser humans, This is particularly true of their

~~in their~~ insensitivity to significant detail.

While I can ~~even~~ ^{99%} keep a reasonably close notion of what is transpiring

among my clients ~~and their associates~~ ^{to} when relying on what is given ^{to} me by

mediocre agents, ~~the work does~~ ^{but} ~~lose tone.~~ ^(suffer from a loss of tone) What will save the account

received, however, is that there ~~were~~ ^{I was able to review} a few determining events in Adi's

development, ~~and these episodes I was able to study~~ ^{these episodes,} if at a remove.

^{will} On the other hand, my narrative ~~does~~ not have to suffer ~~so~~ critically.

Even the least of my aides had been brought up to a reasonable level of

^{perception,} ^{say} ~~performance~~ and I mention this with pride. (They had had so little to offer ^{when they first came to me} when I first received them.) I am, however, not eager to explain our ^{means}

~~systems~~ of recruitment. It would bring us immediately into a more

sacrosanct question: How ^{do} ^{come to be} ~~are~~ devils ~~created~~ in the first place? Is the Evil

One on the alert for superior humans who might be ready to work for us, or,

as is more usually the case, do they ^{arrive} come to us as a brood of rejected humans? ~~One of the ironies is that even though they had often been our clients, they came to us after their death in a state of demoralization. They were bitter. They felt that God had not respected their merits. So, they chose us. They declared their desire to be liberated from the wheel of human reincarnation. They wanted to serve us again, but at a higher level, that is, not as a client but as a demon.~~ (How this arrangement was

^{Maestro} negotiated between the D.K. and the ~~EO~~ ^(is beyond my knowledge.) While I cannot declare why or when it happened, I am familiar with the results.

The Maestro, looking to make his way up onto a ~~nearer~~ ^{higher} plane of equality to

^{had to be} the D.K., ~~was~~ ^{was} ready to accept God's exudate—all these spoiled human

possibilities. Over the centuries, over—it well may be—the millennia, the

Maestro had to disburse a large share of his resources ⁱⁿ ~~to~~ training the ~~low~~

~~grade and highly~~ ^{do} disturbed material we ~~did~~ receive. It is analogous in

difficulty to working up a symphony orchestra from applicants who have yet to play an instrument.

I will not pursue these difficulties here. I will only say that the agents

I had left in Hafeld ~~(the~~ ^{the} ~~lees, so to speak, of my small squad)~~ did their best to

report on Alois' ongoing efforts at bee-keeping, but ^{since} they did not always
have a close enough sense of his difficulties, ^{they did not always} ~~certainly not enough to~~ satisfy
my understanding.

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

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In late October, if I had permitted it, my agents would have overwhelmed me with detail. To my complete lack of surprise, Alois had any number of obsessions concerning his new venture.

I had no time to attend to this. Short of forcing a direct entrance into Alois' waking thoughts which, it may be remembered, is rarely done with men and women who are not our clients, my agents had to work by way of their milk runs. In what our Maestro chooses to call "the markets of sleep," most dreams of men and women are reasonably available, open to devils

and Cudgels alike, and so their daily thoughts can be picked up (at least in superficial degree) by no more than passing through the night chamber.

We also learn a good deal through the simple expedient of listening to a family's chatter. To be sure, a plethora of superficial information now arrived, more than enough to annoy me. It was a biased portrait. My agents perceived Alois as weak and much too worried, but they lacked ~~the~~ insight ~~required~~ for dealing with men or women who possess strength, yet are being ~~closely~~ studied at a time of anxiety. (It is easier to comprehend those who are weaker than ourselves than to anticipate the moves and true feelings of those more powerful.) A sense of nuance is demanded, ~~and this is~~ precisely what ^{my locals} ~~these agents~~ were lacking.

Being of no great stature themselves in their former lives, they tended to pick up all that was second-rate in Alois. I was left, therefore, with the burden of discounting improperly weighed materials. While I will give some adjustment to what I received, let me abjure the reader. We must not forget that the boy who later became Adolf Hitler emerged from a childhood with this father and mother. So, it has to be obvious that we would do well

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

Very well. Here then is my developed if second-hand account of Alois' woes now that he is becoming a bee-keeper.

His first concern (which I find comic—since he has spent his life in uniform) is that he has to remind himself constantly to put on light-colored gloves and a bee-keeper's large trapezoidal hat and veil, always of the whitest material. Since he must avoid dark coats or trousers, when that is *his customary dress,* what he usually wears, he is always concerned in these first days *not to remember* ~~forget~~ to change his garments before going out to the hive-boxes. Deep and somber colors, he knows all too well, do irritate bees. He knows that by experience. On the particular occasion some years ago when he had been gravely stung while working with the little colony he then kept near Braunau, he had made the mistake of inviting an attractive woman out with him one Sunday afternoon. As an element in his plan of seduction, he thought he would demonstrate not only his competence with the hive, but his elegance. Therefore, he was in full dress *dark-blue* ~~uniform~~. That twilight he was stung so fiercely that the recollection still rises in one quick spurt from the

pit of his stomach. Alois' hopes of fornication were obliged to remain unsatisfied that Sunday, indeed, the lady was stung as well, and on no less than the exposed flesh of her ample breast. Only a passing romance was lost, but a blow was given to his best opinion of himself. As we see, he continues to pay the price. ^{*Dressed in white*} ^{*nonetheless*} ~~shoots~~ of fear, bright as rockets, fire off ^{*as*} in his stomach ~~when~~ he approaches the hive boxes.

Nonetheless, Alois, in some part, remains a good peasant. He has not forgotten that after any small disaster, one must stay on the alert for whatever value can still be plucked from the misfortune. His interesting medical theses, for example, were stimulated by the alleviation of his rheumatism on the following day—bee stings did seem to be good for his knees. When their meeting occurred, Der Alte, we remember, was ready to agree.

This confirmation may have been part of Alois' decision to accept Der Alte's opinion that imported Italian bees were superior to the Austrian variety. While Alois had his suspicion that Der Alte might be selling exactly the stock that, for whatever reason, he wished to get rid of, still, the telling point (to Alois' present shame) was that Italian stock was easier to

handle. They were gentler, Der Alte assured him. And what with their glowing rich yellow tan, not unlike the mellow hue of the best shoe leather, they were incontestably more beautiful. Alois did admire the three golden segments of their bodies, each fold set off by the sharpest edging in black. So striking! Chic! Whereas the Austrian honey-bee was gray and hairy. No, she did not gleam like these gilded Italians. All the same, Alois felt as if he had been disloyal. He should have taken the "Franz Josefs," the gray-beards.

What added to his unease is that he kept wondering whether he would have done better to wait for spring? Now, he had to keep his colony warm enough not to perish in the cold.

All through these months, therefore, he would have to keep taking the temperature of the air within the hive. He had even been advised to start a diary for recording the daily and weekly data. Yet, he must not open any hive. "No matter your curiosity," Der Alte had confided (as if in full command of the new apiculturalist's temptations) "you must not allow yourself to peer in, or extract any of the movable frames in order to study the combs. Why, the cold draft that could arise from raising the large lid of

the box might so lower the temperature that your bees would need hours to warm the interior again. Such a chill could decimate your population. Take no chances, Herr Hitler. Up until now, from what you have told me, I expect that in the past, you have only lived with bees in June and July. Any tourist can do that. But to be the Skipper of your little people through the ice-cold air of all the winter months to come, that takes character, my friend." And then as if to enrich the assumption, he added, "My new friend."

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If Alois had stood in the dock before himself as judge, he would have found the defendant guilty. How could retirement prove so enfeebling to a strong man? He had bought the farm on impulse and now, to double such a bet, had purchased ~~three~~ two bee-hives in their Langstroth boxes. Why, so suddenly, had he committed himself to apiculture over the winter? Hadn't that also been done on too quick an impulse? Der Alte had had the consummate nerve to say to him, even as Alois left, "You will soon see how much work I have saved you."

What Alois saved in work, he ~~now~~ spent in worry. He was still under sixty, damn it, not yet sixty by a year and more, but he felt such a sense of

inner weariness before these new responsibilities. His two populated boxes were now set under the oak tree with tarpaper underneath for warmth, and more tarpaper above, all kept in place with stones. Two populations housed in two boxes. Each day he read the temperature of the heat within each box, and did his weighing once a week. Part of the real problem was that he did not have enough work, just worries. All through the dark months while feeding his winter bees (a most tricky technique in the beginning), he would console himself with the thought that if the colonies looked to be weak when spring came, he might combine two boxes into one, and, if necessary buy more bees at that time, undertake more expense, more of Der Alte, who would be farting in his pants, no doubt, from laughing so hard at the great esteemed High Customs Officer Herr Hitler with his ten thumbs all ready to be stung by what he didn't know about bees. Already, in November, Alois was lecturing Angela and Adi, even Klara, on the need in apiculture for immaculate hygiene once warm weather arrived. No matter how warm the day, they must certainly not leave the hives open. Above all, they must never spill honey outdoors. If they did, they must mop it up instantly, for the bees could be drawn to it and might begin to fight for free honey, easy

honey, as it lay in a pool on the ground. If the puddle were deep enough, they could drown en masse.

Such were his fears, enough to harangue his family for what might or might not occur in summer. And then he would go back to worrying about the putative weaknesses of a winter colony. So much depended on what he read each night ~~(negative or positive)~~ on the subject of keeping a winter hive.

He engaged in a flurry of work and built one new hive box (which he ~~certainly~~ did not need immediately, but was proud of the skill it demanded—yes, he could have been a decent cabinetmaker!) but also had to admit it was not the equal of his Langstroths. Then he proceeded to paint the three boxes. Three colors—blue, yellow, and ultra-violet. ~~His manuals told him what he knew already. His bees, if they never got to flying again, would be able to recognize—yes, each one of the tens of thousands of these bees would know by the color—precisely which hive-box they belonged to. By the color, of course. Just as he had explained it to Kiara.~~

~~He~~ ~~still~~ He enjoyed working with his hands. Doing the carpentry, his worries eased. For a week, his chest even puffed up again with an old

truism. "Good German blood understands," said Alois to his wife, "that blessings do not come from God, but from hard work. That idea is as safe as a sound house." Still, it was not such a ~~fine~~ ^{very good} remark. Why not speak instead of ~~good~~ Austrian blood?

This concern stayed on like a minor sore ~~that does not heal~~. The question bothered him. Did certain blood possess special virtues? Why, ~~they~~ ^{they} praise German blood? Yes, ~~why~~ ^{why} not Austrian? He had an Emperor who could live with the huge (and often) idiotic problems of keeping Czechs, Hungarians, Italians, Poles, Jews, Serbs, plus gypsies ~~everywhere~~ living together in peace under one Hapsburg empire. Germans couldn't do that. ~~Germans were always fighting with each other.~~ ^{squabbling} Without Bismarck, they would ~~still~~ be nothing. Petty principalities. ~~Squabbles~~. Mad King Ludwig I is followed by Mad King Ludwig II, both crazy Bavarians. And Prussians were worse. ~~All~~ Prussians had a ramrod up their ass. Why speak ^{them} of good German blood? Yet, he said to himself, "All the same, I know what it means." Yet what did it signify to declare to yourself that you knew something when you didn't, not quite. Except in some way you most certainly did. A nice enigma. He was now thinking like a philosopher?

Not so bad for a boy who was once a peasant. He was tempted to bring up the question at the tavern in Fischlham, but didn't, after all. They were dolts. He resented the time he spent with them. By November, he had even found himself drinking there in the afternoons, a proof, if he needed it, that there was not enough work to do. For that reason, he had chosen to stay away for a week, and do all the carpentry, paint the exterior of the hive boxes, even build a framework on which to hang some netting near the hives so that the birds would stay away in the spring. He even debated whether to visit Der Alte, but recollections of the smell ~~in the hut~~ put an end to that.

Before long, he was back in the tavern. ~~Just about every day.~~ There was one pleasure he did find there. The dolts had come to see Alois as an expert on apiculture. Every bit of advice Der Alte had offered, plus whatever he had picked up of late in his reading, was now presented as his own well-acquired lore. Alois would be the first to say that honesty and modesty were excellent virtues, and should be employed where possible when dealing with superiors. An inferior mind, however, wanted—especially when drinking—to feel it was in the company of a wise man.

Since he was more available to the locals than Der Alte, he stood in as the resident expert on bees. A farmer even walked over one Sunday afternoon to seek his advice on how to get started. Alois proceeded to overwhelm him with the details of feeding a hive through the winter.

"Given the cold weather, you must not open the lid of the Langstroth," he said, "so how do you get the food down to them? You must nourish your bees, and your feed mixture has to be precise. The honey has to be properly diluted, one part honey absolutely equal to one part water, and this must be honey that comes from your own stock from last summer."

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

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

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

~~"My apologies," said Alois. "I was thinking that for a beginner like yourself, sugar could be better. Easier. Perfectly simple. Use a different mix, however. Three parts of sugar to two of water."~~

This discourse allowed him

Alois was beginning to feel like the fine fellow he had once been, yes,

before his retirement. "The trick," he said, "is to master the technique of ^{your} ~~this~~ special feeder. Because you not only put in the liquid nourishment, and cover the mouth of the jar, as I just told you, with the fine mesh, but you must have a small pump built into the bottle as well to create a vacuum since you will next be holding the vessel upside-down over the bung hole above the brood that is waiting to be fed. Do you follow?" Alois could see that he didn't. Before long, this Sunday visitor, thoroughly disheartened, said goodbye—he was not ^{likely} ~~like~~ to be competition come June.

All the while that my agents were giving these conversations to me, I was growing testy. Such expositions were boring. They gave little new insight into Alois. They were missing the depth of his new anxieties. So

soon as his visitor left, Alois felt so alone with his project that he began to wonder whether disease might strike the colonies.

He spent an evening reading his books but the anxieties remained. He had dreams of living in one of his boxes, himself a bee, no more than part of a cluster living in deepest and darkest obscurity. How could these bees guide themselves in that world, so stygian, so bereft of light?

By the end, Alois had raised this dream to the level of a nightmare. (Now I could feel more interest in what my agents were transmitting!) Alois' hive multiplied in the darkness, then escaped from the box and flew away, far away. They could not be found.

When spring came, would he lose his hive? In the dark, he felt for Klara, and his hand came across her belly. She was so big now, yet the new one wasn't due until January. Would he be a giant of a fellow?

She came awake with his hand on her, and would have nestled into the embrace of his arm, but in the middle of this darkness, he felt a need to discuss a worrisome matter. But he had only to say a few words, and she was wide awake and unhappy.

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

She knew immediately what he would next suggest. Herr Rostenmeier was the owner of the country store in Fischlham where once a week, on Saturday, she and Angela would buy a few foodstuffs they did not raise in their garden. Klara liked Mr. Rostenmeier, and had begun to talk to him about the future sale of their honey. Alois had told her not to make any deals, not yet. There was always the possibility, slight, of course, that he would do business with Der Alte. She had taken pleasure in the thought that it would probably be Herr Rostenmeier, and she could be the in-between, and bring a little money back to the house and hand it over to Alois. Her fingers tingled each time she thought of such a direct transaction.

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

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

"Yes, yes," said Klara, "but you told me you don't trust Der Alte. Yes?" She was close to becoming hysterical. To be torn out of an agreeable

sleep for this! "Yes, you say you don't trust him, and yet you choose this Der Alte over an honest man like Herr Rostenmeier?"

"Klara, this is all because you feel embarrassed," he told her. "Maybe you had a little too much conversation with Herr Rostenmeier already. Something you haven't mentioned, maybe. A real commitment. Without speaking to me first."

"No," she said, "not at all. I am not embarrassed. I made no commitment." She was tempted to add, "But this I will say, I must say, I will never understand the thinking that goes on in a person like you." However, she knew better. She was silent. He would have ridiculed her for such a stupid remark. "A person like me?" She would have been up half the night explaining those few words.

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His bees just

No surprise. Alois went back to Der Alte after all. ~~There were just~~
gave him) too many worries with these bees. He was a realist, he told himself, and so

he was used to bad odors. After all, one had to deal now and again with the devil. (My devils snickered as they informed me of this.)

Alois paid his visit on the next Sunday and, once again, took Adi with him. This time the boy paid careful attention to the route. It was but a mile away and so he knew he would be able to find the hut again by remembering the forks of the road. All the while, he was filled with uneasy excitement. A woe as large as a loaf of bread had settled in his stomach. All the same, perched above such heaviness, his ~~chest~~ ^{heart in his chest} felt most alive. He knew

he would not tell his father that he planned to visit Der Alte on another day and very much on his own.

"Yes," he kept saying to himself, "I will not be afraid to walk there. In the night, maybe yes. There are many spirits in the woods then, and ~~you cannot see them, but~~ they listen to all that is said."

The second meeting between Der Alte and his father was, however, even better for Adi than the first. If, at the start, they spoke about the marketing of honey and Adi could hardly follow that, it all became much more interesting once business was done. For then the old man could not stop talking about the ongoing mysteries of bees. "Yes," said Der Alte in a most resonant voice, "I never weary of contemplating these tiny creatures with their immortal honey and their near to immortal sting. There are such subtleties to their keeping."

A rich discourse ~~not at all interruptible~~ ensued. If Alois was hardly able to speak, he was nonetheless not too displeased for he would use it tomorrow night at Fischlham. A gift for the dolts! Adi, in turn, listened ~~intently~~ ^{with care,} The words he could not understand lived ~~nonetheless~~ ^{with} in his mind by the turn ~~of~~ ^{with} of their sounds

"Can we," asked Der Alte, "ever pay enough attention to this work of Creation itself? It is so full of genius! Think of it! These little devils come to us from the Good Lord's divine and curious aesthetic, a Coronation of nature's wisdom expressing itself in ^{this} the most bizarre form ^{we are given} as a hint of God's secret rites, ⁴ ~~His investiture in wonder and awe.~~"

Der Alte went on. He could go on! References to God's ballet, ~~investiture in wonder and awe~~ God's gymnastics, God's ~~delight in the paradoxes of Creation~~, Der Alte was like many of our clients. We encouraged them to ~~be ready to praise God in~~ *In* the highest. Always. ~~I, however, did not enjoy all this hyperbole. It was too suggestive of soulful regrets at his commitment to us.~~

For that matter, he went on for so long that Alois was, once more, repelled. Only so much time could elapse without some exercise of his own voice. Moreover, he did not like the look in his son's eye. Those blue eyes, so similar to Klara's, ~~were always~~ large and alive! But there was reverence in them now.

Alois managed finally to interject a word.

"Why don't you take us into the other room, and show the boy your viewing box? "

It was obvious that Der Alte would prefer not to—even as Alois had expected—but Adi spoke up. "Oh, please, sir," he cried out, "I have never seen the inside of a bees' home. They have been with us back at the house for so long—" he tried to count quickly—"for seven, no, I think it is eight weeks, and I have not seen even one of them. ^{Must I} ~~Do I have to~~ wait until summer? Please."

"Spring," said Der Alte, "it is necessary to wait until spring." But ² then he shrugged. "All right," he said, "only you must be prepared. It is ^{now, 4} winter. The bees are sluggish ~~at this stage.~~"

Indeed, they were. In the kitchen, bare but for a small stove, a sink, a hand-pump above the sink, and a pail beneath for the run-off, was also a table. On one end of it had been placed a narrow glass box, perhaps two feet long and one foot high, its interior concealed on both sides by black curtains. Once drawn back, two glass walls, not three inches apart, held one vertical frame in the space between, and it was filled with a mosaic of small wax cells, an uncountable number of them.

Adi was disappointed. A cluster of pullulating things, no larger than dark pills in a bottle, kept climbing over each other, startled by the light, a

poor gang, crammed, jam-packed, an assembly of what looked to be squashy little creatures about as ugly as roaches. (Their wings were folded.) Adi had not been so disappointed since he had first seen Edmund's homuncular face squeezed up on Klara's breast.

Now, these bees could just as well have been beans bumping around in a heated pot, except, no, beans did not look so nervous. What an awful way to live! They miss the sun, the boy thought. Since last summer, he had been thinking of these bees as flashes of light in the garden. Now they were just shoved up against each other. He sighed in preference to bursting into tears. Could these bees breathe?

"At this moment," said Der Alte, "they are the poorest of the poor, no better than sodden creatures in a slime of their own exudate. Yet their lives will yet span the extremities of existence. Now, they do nothing, but in summer, you will see them dance in the air, as wonderful as drops of dew in early morning light. So fearless. How they will strut as they enter into the golden petals of the flower-blooms that are waiting for them."

"Hear, hear," said Alois. No matter the drear aspects, Der Alte did have a manner. Give that much to the ~~old~~ stink-pot.

And Adi was thinking, "these bees can sting you and then you are dead." He shivered in the old man's kitchen before the incomprehensibility of dying. Yet, right in the midst of this chill, he felt as close to the old man as to his father, for he could listen all day and all night to the wonderful words that came forth.

"Come and visit me," the old man managed to whisper before Alois gave the signal to leave.

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~~6~~

I do not know how powerful an influence this last murmured message could have had on Adi, but I will say that at no moment up to this point did ~~I~~ ^{feel more (at)} regret being obliged to rely on my Hafeld agents. Not long after (on Christmas Eve, no less!) when the rest of the house was asleep, Adi got up from bed, bundled himself into his warmest clothing, and went out to sit on the bench under the oak tree where the two Langstroth boxes were placed. There he remained for a considerable time, growing more and more chilled as the minutes elapsed. Yet, he stayed, and having placed himself between these two boxes, he kept embracing the back of each. He was praying for the continued life of the bees.

This was of signal interest to me. I queried my agents more than once about what they could glean from ~~the tag ends of~~ the boy's thoughts, and ~~the more I received, the more valuable it appeared.~~ *some of it seemed of value* That night, Adi ~~had~~ *was* heard his father complain that the screen protecting the hive entrance ~~had~~ *had been* been torn away. The entrance was small, but all the same, ~~it was possible~~ *could have* that a mouse ~~had entered~~ the hive. Alois soon decided ~~aloud~~ *not* that this was unlikely—the hole was simply not large enough—but Adi was ~~convinced~~ *not* a mouse had gotten in. Since his father had repaired the screen that afternoon, Adi no longer knew as he sat between the boxes which one might be occupied by the mouse. Ergo, he set a hand on each.

What with it being Christmas Eve, the boy was full of his mother's spirit of celebration. "On this night, one thousand, nine hundred and ninety-five years ago," said Klara, "the Son of God was born, and he was the nicest human being ever to walk on earth. The loveliest, the sweetest. If you love Him, He will love you."

Adi was certain. This was one night *when feel free to* you could ~~breathe~~ *grant* the night air, no matter how cold. For the Son of God was present. Would He ~~offer~~ *grant* the power Adi needed to kill the mouse ~~through~~ *by* the force of his thoughts?

To kill the mouse by the force of his thoughts? I knew the limitations of my agents. They could not have ^{conceived of} been the inspiration for such a notion.

This had come from Adi. It was his. His alone. If I had been present, I would have ^{increased the stakes. I might have gone} thought to get the boy ready to believe that he could save certain lives by exercising ^{the} his power to destroy others. That is one of the rarest and most useful ^{suppositions} of the aptitudes (we can implant in ~~our~~ clients, but it does call for a ^{sequence of} series of exquisitely focused dream-etchings.

Since I was not present, I did my best not to brood over ^{the} this lost opportunity. There was more than enough to occupy me in St. Petersburg. ^{I facing considerable opposition} In company with my assistants, ⁱⁿ was undergoing some punishment ^{to} in the course of exercising my activities. I had never encountered a group of Cudgels as determined as this Russian crew. Nor as brutal. Over the last few centuries, these Russian angels had developed ^{a powerful} an exceptional capability ^{contest} to resist ^{installed} the many demons we had succeeded in planting within Russian Orthodox churches and monasteries. In consequence, these Cudgels—fully as rough as the meanest Russian monks—were ~~not only powerfully~~ ~~motivated, but~~ in command of considerable zeal. During these months, they

were wholly ready to defend the Coronation of the young Tsar-to-be,
Nicholas the Second.

When the Maestro consulted me—as would occur now and again in
Russia—I did present a notion that he would adopt. I was bold enough to
tell him that by my estimate, our chances of disrupting the Coronation ^(itself) ~~were~~ going
to be too much weaker to be arranged against us,
minimal. Creating a powerful disorder in the days after the event, however,
could accomplish many of our ends.

I had dared to speak my mind, but then, the Maestro ^{will not accept a} ~~does not like a~~
lack of opinion among his subordinates. "Musing upon the ^{distorted} ~~contortions and~~
^{most of you are bound to} ~~distortions of perception~~ that even the best of you will offer, proves more
is nonetheless more ^{useful} ~~useful to me than the inert silence that sits upon~~ the fear of being wrong ^{much}
will ~~leave your intent.~~

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

All the same, whether I was interested or not, Klara gave birth on
January 21 to the new infant. For Alois, minimal joy. The much-
anticipated strongman of the future had not arrived. ^{Now all} ~~Instead,~~ a little girl was
in the maternal bed. ~~At~~ the ruckus of baby-feeding at night and baby
yowling in the day ^{time}, would now be for naught. He had been counting on

^{as an improvement on}
 a powerhouse of a son for his old age ~~instead of~~ the three boys he could not,
^{only baby}
 at present, boast about, a wild one, a mamma's boy, and a ~~big boy~~ snot, yes,
 Alois was unready to celebrate, but he did—at the tavern in Fischlham night
 after night for quite a few nights (although the beer began to smell as sour
 as his infant's throwback). There were now six human beings in his home,
^{Could the end of}
 and by late in ~~spring~~, when Junior returned from Spital, ^{and} he could count on
 seven. Yes, the louder the tumult of voices in the bar, the more he was
~~ready to complain of the noise at home.~~ ^{as comes in truth}
~~That was a joke. The bar was~~
^{however, the bar was noisier.}
~~noisier.~~

Let men drink in a crowded room and solidarity rises among them.

They soar on zephyrs of grain spirit, a brotherly defiance against the
 inroads of angels and demons, a certainty that as men, they are at this
 moment equal to all else.

These are not good conditions for our work. Openings, however, do
 present themselves, particularly when the drinkers are staggering ~~on their~~
~~way~~ home. We are ~~so~~ ready ~~for them~~ then. Sometimes, disgusted at the
 hours lost, we even slam them to the ground. They usually take it
 personally, their lament most characteristic. "Somebody shoved me," they

often cry out. Nobody believes them, but they know better. Wrath had struck between the shoulder blades, and it was not their own rage, not at all.

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On his return, Alois may have been staggering now and again, but he was also feeling too alive to enter his house. Instead, he sat by the hive-boxes and fished out a rubber tube he had been keeping in his pocket, ^{next,} ~~then~~ ^{and thereby was} he placed one end of it against a wall of the Langstroth ~~in order to be able to~~ listen to the thrumming of the tenement dwellers in his little city. A fine ^{for his ears} sound was there, ^{But} almost a tune, rich with little swells of contentment. ~~He~~ ^{then,} could just about swear to that. Of course, why should they not be content? Come morning, hundreds, then thousands of his bees, would be in a cluster awaiting their turn to suck on the mesh cloth of the wide-mouthed jar for their honey-and-water. So, in this dark and nicely drunken hour, separate

thoughts passed through Alois like horses on file, one large thought at a time. He tried to count how many bees might be inhabiting the box. No matter how drunk, he could still make an intelligent guess. Call it 20,000. That was bound to be the answer. Despite himself, knowing he should not really disturb the hive, he knocked on the side anyway. Because then, through the tube, he could listen to the shift in sound. Were they issuing alerts? The calls had gone up in pitch. Like the strings of a crazy violin. Then, quiet again. Soft. Like cats who sheathe their claws. Purring while asleep.

He roused himself long enough to go into the house and get his shirt off and his pants. Then he fell into bed. But he was still hearing the chorus. Strange sounds. His breath lifted over a small hesitation and down he went into slumber. He had one final thought as immanent as one more splendid horse on parade—it was that he certainly enjoyed these hymns of the bees a good deal more than the caterwauling of an infant.

His dreams, however, were not good. He had entered a large and cavernous interior where, to his lack of surprise, he found himself among his bees. It was not agreeable. They were defecating, and there he was,

one of many, suffering just like his brother-creatures—no, sister-creatures—wasting away in the contractions of a severe bowel disease, all of them defecating into the narrow aisles of the Langstroth box—what a filthy vision.

He looked to rouse himself. Because this was a dream. Healthy bees did not defecate in their own habitat (except perhaps for the worst and laziest of the drones) no, he had listened to the bees in one hive, and their sound was honorable. They would wait until the weather was warm enough for them to go outdoors and only then would they do their duty. (Concerning the other box, he was not so sure the sound was good.)

Now he was awake, ~~yet still~~ agitated by the dream. It had certainly been too cold for bees to dare to ^{fly} go out ~~yet~~ into this ~~early~~ February air. ^{The} ~~As~~
^{thought male Alois}
 Alois lay there he felt painfully aware of all the excrement that had been ^{accumulating}
~~building up~~ in his colonies over all these months. How could ^{such} ~~these~~ little ^{buggys}
~~creatures~~ hold it in? And once again he tried to recall the sounds of the hive. Had he really heard contentment rising from their midst? These were bees. Could he detect the difference between happiness and panic, calm and

near-madness? Yes, he told himself, he did know—he was sure they were content. One hive-box anyway.

It was warm next morning, the first warm morning of a February thaw, and as Alois came out of the house, his horde was everywhere above, hundreds of them, thousands—who could count? They were leaving their droppings all over the place, fifty and then more than a hundred feet away, such a curious caca! It smelled like ripe bananas, and was so visible on the snow, a field of white dotted with yellow spots. Innumerable yellow spots out there in a big circle around the hive bench. Buttercups in the snow! Hanging on a clothesline, Klara's laundry had also become polka-dotted. Paula's diapers were spotted. An immense shower of defecation. Alois stepped it off. Yes, you could even find yellow spots in the snow one hundred ~~feet~~ paces away from the hive boxes.

Klara was as furious as she dared to be. "You never told me to be careful," she said to her husband.

"It is too bad," he said, "that you will have ^{all laundry} this work to do again. But how can one apologize? It is, after all, an act we have received from that good God you are so sure is yours."

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

Alois was not about to tell himself that he felt sorry. Rather, he was happy for the bees. What delight they had shown while they flew about. Since it was a Saturday, Adi was nearby in the meadows and Alois, on impulse, decided to call him over. Let him hear some real talk.

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

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

"What about him?"

"He still does it in his pants."

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

Later in the day, Adi remembered the time when Alois, Junior, had stuck a dab of excrement right onto his nose, and even the recollection of it now brought forth the oddest cry from Adi's throat, so humiliated, so full of glee. Nor could Adi get over his excitement at the cleansing flight. Those bees had been so happy. They were dancing in the wind. That was because there had been so much caca in them, and now they were light. They were free. He couldn't help it. He couldn't stop his giggles. It had all made his mother so angry.

Now he remembered what Angela had whispered to him one morning. "Your mother has a saying," she said. "Kinder, Kuche, Kirche." He nodded. He had heard it already. He yawned in her face.

"Oh, you think you know it all already," Angela said, "but you don't. There is a secret word as well. I was told the word."

"By who? By my mother?"

"I can't say. I have to keep this secret. It is a secret word."

"Who told you?"

She could see he was ready to burst into a tantrum. "All right. I will let you know," she said. "I heard it, yes, from your mother, your dear mother who loves me even if I am not hers."

"Tell me or I will yell and she will hear."

"That is you. That is just as mean as you." She held him by the ear. "Remember," she said, "she told me in secret that the real saying is, 'Kinder, Kucher, Kirche und. . .'" she started to giggle. "und Kacke!"

Now, he was giggling as well. Oh, those bees, worse than babies. He had a crazy picture of every bee with a diaper, the tiniest diaper. He was laughing so hard that he felt like urinating, and that made him think of Der Alte who came into his thoughts so often, especially when he had to urinate.

Now, Adi realized that he would like to visit Der Alte, yes, he wanted to, so much.

Next day, Sunday, was warm again, and once more the bees were out. *After Klara left for church and Alois dozed,* Adi started to run up and down the meadow, as if to use up the impulse to visit the old man, but in his mind he kept seeing each fork in the forest road, and so he knew he could find the hut. This was so much more than an

impulse. The desire to make such a trip by himself was as sure as if a rope had begun to tug on him.

He went. And Der Alte, prepared for the visit (by the same message, for certain, that Adi had received) was there once again at the door, but the tablespoon of honey was not yet in his hand, no, for that, Adi now had to sit on his lap. "Yes, you are such a good boy," Der Alte said, "I can love you like a grandson, and you will never need to be afraid of me. Yes, you are so nice and strong." Der Alte laid a hand upon the boy's thigh, but with only the lightest touch, even as he fed Adi the honey.

The boy was not afraid, or, yet, perhaps a little. In school, they had fairy tales to read, and sometimes there were ogres in the forest and evil spirits could change little children into birds or mice, or pigs or goats. However, it did not feel ~~as~~ so risky sitting on the legs of Der Alte. It was better than his father's lap. He never knew when his father would blow pipe smoke into his face. Then, when he coughed, his father would laugh. No, Der Alte was a nicer man.

And indeed, they sat there long after Adi had tasted all of the spoonful of honey and felt happy with Der Alte's old hand resting on his knee.

After a considerable part of an hour has passed, he began, however, to feel less comfortable. Would his ^{father}~~mother~~ begin to wonder where he was? Yet, when he stirred, Der Alte said a few words which aroused the same sense of surprise as turning a page in a book and right there before you is a nice picture.

"Do not tell this to anyone," said Der Alte, "but I am trying to make one little bee very happy. I have asked this bee to live by itself, but near to me."

"Does it try to talk?"

"It can make sounds. For certain!" Der Alte smiled. "But no, dear boy, I do not try to encourage this little bee to speak our language. That is certainly too much to ask. I just try to make her happy. Which is not so easy now. Because now that I have selected her, she must live alone in a small queen box I use just for her even if she is not a queen."

"My father says that bees can live only for other bees. They are—" he searched to remember the expression—"they are ^{deeply cabal} bound to the community."

"Your father is correct. Yes. Bees who live in a hive do not seek to live alone."

"Even if they are fed good things all the time?"

"You are the smartest boy I know. You are full of understanding. I want to see what will happen if I select one bee and keep her warm and most well-fed, and think about her all the time with all the good feeling that is in my heart. So, when I go into the other room, I take care to speak to her. That is twenty times a day. She cannot comprehend what I am saying. But I want her to know that I am thinking of her. Sometimes I even take her out of the Queen box."

"Doesn't she fly away?"

"Oh, no. I look to prevent such a possibility." He touched the boy's head tenderly. "When I remove it from its little box, it jumps around, it is so merry, but it knows it must not try to fly."

"Does it have no wings?"

There was a pause. "No longer does it have wings."

Adi knew. No need to ask. Such a mix of good feelings and bad. His happiest feelings were trying to lift themselves above the bad ones. He asked now to look at the bee in the little box.

It was so little and so frisky and it jumped about in excitement when Der Alte let it out of the box. Indeed, it hopped onto the tip of the old man's finger which had been dipped into honey.

"I do not know how much more will happen," said Der Alte. "What I *am* attempting is difficult. I see little chance for success. But how wonderful if I can brighten the feelings of this little creature. After all, before my intervention, she was insignificant. Can I lift her now to that level her sisters cannot attain? I feel for her. She is so lonely. She misses the horde. She is ~~now~~ loneliness itself. But I am ready to try to bring a certain sweetness of relief of a sort that can come only when one's terrible loneliness is replaced by well-being. Yes," he said, nodding his head most profoundly.

"Oh," said Adi, "I hope you are able to do that. It is so sad to be lonely. Sometimes I, too, am lonely. So, I know. But I feel afraid for this bee. Will it die?"

"Sooner or later, it must. It will. But I would like to see if I can make her happy for a little while."

"Yes," said Adi, "I understand. You love this one."

"Maybe, ["]~~more than a little,~~" said Der Alte. He sighed. "Next time you visit, we will see if I have made progress."

Let us recognize that what has just been recounted is likely to leave many a reader uneasy. For some, interest in Der Alte might now be affected by the suspicion that he is a touch uncontrollable in his senility. Let me explain then that this outlandish pursuit of "well-being" for one isolated bee, an obviously stupid procedure (particularly after it has lost its wings!) is not without purpose. For the Maestro, that is. We have to test the immutability, if you will, of the instincts that the Dummkopf has placed in his vast consortium of creatures. The oddest experiments do reveal much to us.

I will say one outcome was clear. This minute and wingless embodiment of loneliness died before Adi saw her again. What is also to the point: Der Alte and Adi had tears in their eyes on the boy's next visit and were closer than ever. Count on it. Der Alte had decorated a small matchbox to serve as a coffin for the bee, and the old man and the boy then *laid it into the earth under a spoonful of* buried it by the side of his hut. *excavated dirt.*

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Early in March, a week arrived that brought the sun to Hafeld every day. The hives began to stir, and the hardiest of the winter bees came out to forage. It was likely that the queen was now laying eggs out of her well-kept store ^{of} ~~from~~ ^{consummated} old fornications high in the air last summer. Now, one of the hives ^{came to} ~~weighed~~ more each morning. That worried Alois. The other should be doing as well.

He decided to open the top of each Langstroth box and look in. Whereupon, he discovered exactly what he had been fearing. The two colonies might have sat on the same bench through the winter, but that was the only condition they seem to have shared. One was thriving, the other

could not be termed healthy. While a few dead bees lay on the lowest platform of the good box, a tumble of miniscule carcasses were ^{on} ~~in~~ the ~~floor~~ ^{of the} other!

Of late, just before the warm spell, Alois, by way of the rubber tube, had heard a great deal of restless humming in ^{this} ~~the~~ second colony. It worried him. Now, open to examination, fecal droppings were visible near the hive entrance, and many of the brood combs were empty. Had the queen died? He did not really know how to locate the lady—she was, after all, only a bit larger than her own worker-bees, smaller, indeed, than the drones.

He would have been dispirited, but his acumen had also been confirmed. He had not worried for too little. There had been real troubles in that second box. It looked like one or another killer disease.

So Alois decided that the remaining bees of this colony had to be gassed. He was ready to call on Der Alte for assistance but decided that he would not. His winter-long worries had engendered their own kind of fortitude.

He chose a Saturday. Adi and Angela, home from school, were his assistants, and the process was not difficult. He took a small cake of

sulphur (part of the equipment he had purchased five months ago), lit it, and left it to smoke on the floor of the bad hive. The entrance was plugged, the hive lid at the top was laid on again, and the gas did the job, and quickly enough. When Angela began to ~~cry for~~ ^{weep over the death of} the poor bees, Alois sent her inside. ~~But~~ ^B Adi watched, sitting beside Alois on an adjoining bench, his eyes ~~most~~ alive in response to his father's lecture. "In nature," said Alois, "there is no mercy for the weak. Your big sister was silly. To become so upset!"

"I am not bothered," said Adi.

"Good," said Alois. "Now, let us go and empty this box and clean the combs."

Adi found himself thinking of Der Alte's one lonesome bee, now dead, and that did bring tears to his eyes.

But, of course, there was no comparison. He blinked back those tears. It was clear to Adi: Der Alte had loved one little bee, but the sick ones here in this bad hive dirtied the place where they ate, ^{and} where they slept. No comparison.

That night, by way of a suggestion from the Maestro, I prepared a small dream-etching, simple enough to be installed by the best of my local

Hafeld agents. It was a repetitive dream in which his father asked Adi to count each and every one of the dead bees. To make sure of the number, Adi was told to lay them out in rows, one hundred to each row—a tedious dream to be certain, and in the morning, he was almost late in leaving for school, since it took many minutes to awake. All the same, he was proud of the high number he had managed to count. There had been at least forty rows of one hundred bees, and each one of them was lying there on the white cloth he had laid out for them. He had not realized until now that he could count to four thousand. No one else in his class would come near. His only regret was that he had not finished. There had been ^{many} ~~even~~ more mounds of dead bees, *to count*

Here, I would warn the reader not to make too much of this gassing nor of the body count. It is certainly not to be understood as the unique cause of all that came later. For one dream-etching, no matter how complete, leaves but a dot upon your psyche, a footprint to anticipate a future sequence of developments that may or may not ^{come to pass} arrive decades later. Most dream-etchings are akin to the ^{abandoned} foundations for buildings one can see on the outskirts of Third World cities. ^{Left to rot} Abandoned for lack of further funds, *they lie there, ~~on a~~ ^{excavations} on a scrappy field.*

It would be a gross mistake, then, to assume that this dream-etching determined all that was to follow. I assure you we would be the first to applaud if matters were that simple.

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~~9~~

The good hive was another matter. It was thriving. The weight of the colony increased each week, and the honey comb began to fill up. From his books, Alois had learned that each of these miniscule cells was not capped by the worker bees with wax until the water content in the honey had been reduced to less than 20%. To blow off such surface water, half the hive had to be occupied all day fanning their wings. Alois felt intoxicated all over again by the dedication of his newborn creatures to such never-ceasing chores. To sweeten his mood, the first honey was also ready, and now his bees were capping the cells—just as they were supposed to!

Out in his white garments with the big box-like white veil over his head, protected by his gloves, Alois began to feel as if he was acquiring a bit of real technique. It was, after all, not so simple ^{to pull} an art of pulling combs out for examination, then ^{slide} sliding them back again. He certainly didn't want to be such a lummock as to squash his Queen. ^{if she happened to be moving around there} Indeed, the confidence he gained from these results took him over to Der Alte's hut long enough to purchase a new Queen to replace the lady who had been gassed.

Der Alte ^{gave} had even ^{given} him a lesson ^{on} in how to spot the lady, ~~when she was alone.~~ Otherwise ^{it} was not too difficult an observation ~~now~~ when she was laying her eggs into empty cells, for she would be followed by a retinue who hovered ^{in turn} over each ^{deposited} new egg long enough to discharge their own enzymes ^{on to} and to enrich the larva, "magical fortifiers," ~~as~~ Der Alte was quick to ^{say,} ~~put it.~~

Alois had to submit to the lecture but he returned with not one but two new queens, (both impregnated in the past year). One would establish a colony for the box that had been fumigated, and the other was to be installed in the one Alois had built himself last Fall. Some of his combs of new brood together with combs of new honey would now be transferred to

the two empty boxes. All three would be only partially filled, and that was ^{also} to the good. Each of his new three colonies would now build wax cells for their new brood as well as storage cells for their new honey. ^{If} he had lost one colony to gassing, he would soon be able to consider himself the master of three, all flourishing—could that be? Of course, he had had to lay out good money to be able to speak of such success.

All the same, ^{he} ~~Adi~~ began to feel a cautious optimism. This spring might yet prove good to him, and beautiful for the family. April had come. Flowers were sprouting, the walnut trees, the oaks, the plum trees, the beeches and cherry trees, the maples and apple trees were in bloom. There would be a host of flowers in the meadow.

He liked to sit by his hive boxes with Adi beside him, the boy carefully covered and veiled in an outfit Klara had put together. Father and son now delighted in keeping watch ^{at} ~~on~~ the entrance ^{to} ~~of~~ the busiest hive where guard bees stayed on post at the foot of the box. Every last bee who came back with pollen and honey was ^{carefully} ~~sniffed over~~ by one of the guards before she could enter. On occasion, Adi would begin to hoot because the

guard would drive a visitor away, especially if it carried no honey. "Look, Father," he would say, "she doesn't smell right."

Yet, with all these incoming riches, Alois still kept serving food to the colonies. "Now we feed them honey," Alois told the boy, "so they will make even more honey." Five trays were now filled with combs in each of the three hives. And three queens were working in three separate hive boxes to deposit their eggs in cells. Yes, endless numbers of Queen's eggs to be fertilized by long-contained sperm from the dead drones of those monumental fornications up in the long-gone sky of summer past. His colonies were flying missions from morning to dark. Each evening Alois would check the weight of the hives. It took so many trips to increase the weight. Each forager would be back with its load in a few minutes, then out again. ^{Alois} He had read that it took forty thousand such voyages to-and-fro to make two pounds of honey.

Sometimes he would look at the old bees who had lived through the winter in the good box. They were easy to notice. They certainly were old now, battered and dying off, relics with worn-out wings, frayed from over-use. The hair was gone from their bodies. They had been out to forage at

the beginning of this season, but now, undeniably, they were expiring. Each morning a team of new-born worker bees would collect those bodies which had fallen to the ground floor of the box and ~~would~~ sweep them out ^{of} the guards' entrance, then off the ramp. Alois could hardly mourn their passing. Young stock was taking their place. He felt as if he had finally begun his ~~long-awaited~~ real venture into apiculture. The new bees would be his, not Der Alte's. He did not dwell on the fact that all three of his queens had been fertilized a year ago, and so, in that sense, were Der Alte's children. Such thoughts ^{could/ ~~can~~} put a dead spot on one's ~~honor~~ ^{self-esteem}.

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Given a splendid morning in May, with a host from each of the three colonies in the air, Alois began to notice a pattern in the movement of one bee. Just overhead, this scout—or whoever she was—kept making ~~repetitive~~ turns in a ~~curious~~ pattern, ~~wigwagging~~ ^{she kept duplicating} her belly as she flew around an oval, and then ~~flew back~~ ^{turned to fly} through a reverse oval, ~~only to repeat,~~ ~~this over and over.~~ One figure eight after another!

"She is signaling to the others," Alois said to himself. "She is showing them something."

And he was right in this observation, he knew it, because in another few minutes, a good number of other bees had joined the first, and off they

flew in company toward the head of the meadow. On the other side of that rise, as Alois soon discovered on his walk, wildflowers had sprouted overnight. The bee he had observed was indeed a scout.

An old lust came back then. If there was one thing Alois ~~had~~ wanted out of life even more than ~~enjoying~~ ^{for him} a new woman, it was ^{to be} the proud, happy, and honored discoverer of a new concept, something so startling and so valuable to human culture that his name ^{might even} ~~would~~ be honored across time.

The desire still resided in his belly, and it gave him considerable happiness to think that he ^{had just} ~~might have~~ discovered a new concept right here, ^{right now} ~~this spring~~, and by his eyes alone! He had seen what he would call a signal-dance ^{was} ~~of~~ ^{one bee} ~~looking~~ to bring others to a place where flowers full of nectar were waiting. Bridesmaids, you could say, all lined up to be deflowered by the wedding ushers. But these hard-working foragers could not be called ushers. They were girlies, making love to flower-girlies. A joke, but his own joke, and he enjoyed it. In none of the books he had read so far had he seen any mention of this little dance, this wig-wag in the sky. He was twice afraid to mention it to Der Alte, once—because for all he knew—it might be an established concept already among apicultural

cognescenti, or, to the contrary, if brand new, might not Der Alte know better than himself just where to publish the observations?

Alois did permit himself to entertain the hope that Alois, Junior, might, just for once, use his intelligence to work well for his father's ideas. Yes, let the son become equally famous. How much Franz Josef had wanted that. Sorrow came to Alois at the thought of the Emperor's pain in the hour ~~when~~^{after} he learned that Rudolph, his own Crown Prince, had died at Mayerling in that awful situation so many years ago, that murder and suicide, or double suicide—whatever it had been!—with his young mistress. What a blow for the good man, the Emperor-father. And tragedy for Sisi, the beautiful Empress. How she must have loved Rudolph!

Feeling these sad thoughts in the midst of his new vocational pride allowed Alois to have an hour mellow enough to surrender his vanity—after all, he did not feel inferior to Der Alte any more. So, he decided, on the spur of this invigorating impulse, to visit the piss-bum and ingest a little instruction on how to treat the Queen bees (and, incidentally, locate them.)

Der Alte experienced no difficulties with that. He was certainly skillful—it had to be said. He opened one of his leaf-hives, scanned the

racks, located the Queen, reached in with a bare hand, and grasped her wings carefully and most delicately between thumb and forefinger. "In a few years," he said, "you, too, will be employing this approach to capture, but for now, I will show you a safer method." Of course, he proceeded then to discourse on all the methods and modes of discerning just where the queen might be, whether depositing eggs, or fertilizing them one after another in their new cells, or resting occasionally in her court.

"Once located, it is so simple," said Der Alte, "to capture our Lady."

"This, as I understand," said Alois, "will be most necessary when I look to collect my honey."

"Exactly," said Der Alte. "That is a time when you are moving many frames, and scraping the wax covering away from the honey cells. A careless move can crush the queen. So,"—to Alois' annoyance, Der Alte wagged a finger at him—"so," he repeated, "we do not go first for the honey, no, we locate the Queen like the good fellows we are, and then we use this queen-catcher, this glass." He took up a glass tube which offered a larger opening at one end. "The blunt part here is what you lay over the queen, and then you slip a little queen-cage"—he held up just such a small

flat container, two inches long—"under the glass tube, after which you blow the queen right into the cage, punkt! Now she is safe. You don't have to put her back until the honey has been taken from the comb."

We can be certain that Alois practiced catching the queen. Indeed, he spent an afternoon apprehending and releasing each of his three beauties, finding them, putting the bulging end of the tube most carefully over them, and then blowing them right into the little queen-cage prior to ~~offering~~ ^{returning} them ~~back~~ to the colony.

14
-11-

Alois' fine spirits waned with the loss of warm weather. A cold spell arrived, cruel to the expectation aroused by early spring. Alois now ^{girded} prepared himself to expect that all his gains ^{be ready if} would be lost ^{were} to this out-of-season chill ^{upon} on the earth.

An old axiom returned to him. Johann Nepomuk used to say, "Spring is the season that will betray you most!"

So there were days when he came close to exhausting himself ^{thoroughly} by the ^{the} to-and-fro of removing tar-paper from the top of each hive, only to put it back again if the light at high noon might go dim in the sky, so abrupt was the movement of the clouds. Soon after, he had to run back to strip the

tarpaper away for the sun was out again and the day had returned to warmth.

Back and forth, anxiety driving him ^{inside and out,} ~~back and forth.~~

During one near-freezing cold spell, he caught a cold. That offered a collateral worry. Was it impossible that one of his Queens might also catch a cold? In sympathy with the overlord? He scolded himself. Such nonsense!

Then it occurred to Alois that this return of his fears might not be so silly. What if it was a reflection of how he felt (in secret even from himself) about the condition of his true health? Was he coming nearer to his end? It was the worst thought to have. His imagination now entered a matter he had never allowed himself to approach. All through the years, so far as he could remember, death had not seemed ~~all that~~ threatening to him. A dull end to a good life, maybe, but nothing to do with hell. ^{was not} ~~No~~ such drive ^{for him.} A reasonable state of peace in the ground, wet at times, but so what? Once ^{would not} ~~dead~~, you ~~didn't have~~ feel clammy any more.

Now, however, one damn question was following another. What if death was not as he had assumed? He had been certain that religion was there for a very good practical reason. It couldn't be simpler—you had to

keep the weak and unruly in order. But a strong man (such as himself) could do as he chose to do.

Now, he was feeling a panic of a new sort. What if there was ^{actually} such a condition as guilt, ~~real~~ guilt? His heart took a leap at the thought, one fearful leap as if his chest had been pummeled. *Could guilt be real?*

Poor Alois. He was now there for the taking. No Cudgel would bother to protect him. I could have the tried-and-true pleasure of appearing to him in a dream with my own—I will make such a claim—my own most adept impersonation of a guardian angel. He would soon be ours—as bound to us as Der Alte. I did not even have to be present. It was easy enough for the best of my three agents to bring it off.

But to what end? Would Alois be worth the maintenance?

The sober fact, which we do well not to ignore, is that people ^{are} ~~are~~ as ^{Alois' age} ~~they~~ are rarely a prize. Their utility is limited. They are already too shaped to warrant much molding of their nature, and flexibility is exactly what we ^{look for in new} ~~require~~ in our best clients. So often, their aims must ^(be redirected) ~~shift~~ with ours.

On those special occasions when we do choose a man or woman well over fifty, we look for a serviceable warp in their nature, a particular distortion that we can employ for a particular purpose (usually outlandish). Repetitive irritations are one example. A mean old lady who keeps asking everyone whether they want something to eat when she knows that they don't, can unhinge a good family. They grow uneasy at their increasing desire to smother her with the nearest pillow.

Alois, however, was too average a human product. So there was little need to pick him up now. Milk runs would be enough. Let my agents hover just above his dreams.

15
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Early in May, the weather turned warm again, and many of Alois' woes eased. In part he had already recovered some of his good spirits by cleaning and oiling the tools he had bought in the fall from Der Alte, and this chore he performed in much the manner of a good soldier who takes his rifle apart in order to oil it and put it back together again.

My Hafeld agents, having little to report, filled their latest communications with lists of his tools and did this so assiduously that I grew irked at their enumerations of pollen feeders, hatching cages, bee-smokers, a water sprayer, a mating box (whatever that was!) a hive-tool, even a honey-stirrer made by Alois himself out of beech-wood. And then

there was a spur-wheel embedder for preparing the foundation of the insertable frames, as well as a capping fork, a slew of details which provided no interest and left me ready to wish I had taken him as a client, after all—a hands-on approach to his thinking might have been more stimulating than all this determinedly second-rate trivia.

Klara, in contrast, knew how to make much better use of Spring in Hafeld. She was not always counting how many of the brood nests were already filled with new pupae, nor was she worrying about the temperature within the hives. Now that it had turned warm on ^a ~~this~~ second wave of sun and undulant air, she was ready to loosen ~~all~~ ^{that} the knots ~~which~~ had coagulated ^{a //} ~~through the~~ winter in her limbs. "God, too, is taking His rest," she said to herself even as she drew in a breath of air through the open window of her kitchen, and then, on impulse, with much left to do in the house, she picked up Paula, four months old, and went out into the meadow. The loveliest of silences prevailed, wholly without sound, no, rather it was a silence that took in the lightest caress of air, and she could even hear the swaying of the grass in the field, and all but hear the curtsies of the flowers. It was as if the sum of these tender sensations ^{was} ~~were~~ there to contain the silence of these

Just like, we
have to decide
whether it will

hills. "Listen to how quiet it is," she said to Paula, "listen, little angel, and you will hear the flowers whisper." And, indeed, it seemed to her as if the nearest ones had heard what she said, for indeed they began to incline toward her, the most cheerful little daisies she had ever seen.

The breeze had not been enough to cause a stirring in these wildflowers. She knelt in the grass, the infant in her arms, and spoke to the daisies, "You are beautiful, all of you," she said, and, yes, there was no mistaking, these flowers were ^{moving} ~~dancing~~ ⁱⁿ for her, the tiniest ^{dance} ~~movements~~, yet with more of a move than the all-but-silent turn of the air. "Yes, Paula," she said, "these flowers love you and love me because we ^{like them so much} ~~care~~ for them. ^{Is this} not so, you little dears?" She was ready to swear to this (although to whom?—certainly not Alois), to vouch that they had heard her, and indeed, they bowed delicately as if she had been waiting on them. "Yes, they are little princesses," she said to Paula, and had to laugh at herself for feeling—was this pure madness itself?—for feeling that the daisies were not only dear to her, but that she was dear to the daisies. "Oh, I am one big silly," she said aloud. But she could not help herself. She still believed that these white petals were listening. The balm of the air was like love, yes, exactly

like the love she felt for the four-month-old in her arms. Klara's body was returning to her, or so it felt. The old poked-out, wounded, bruised and stupid body of all the winter months since Paula was born, now felt sweet with the true beginnings of repair, yes, it was Spring, and nature herself was enjoying a party. Each breath was full of balm. How could it be otherwise? God was near and He was in the air, her Good God, yes, full of radiance. Yet, the air was at peace. It was as if the Good God was resting on His laurels, yes, for so He deserved. He deserved so much. She wanted to pray to Him then, but did not know how since she did not wish to ask for anything at this moment, merely to praise Him for being so good, and that was better done in church. There, everyone else would be doing the same so it could be understood as humble, not vain, whereas here she was all alone with Paula and the flowers, and full of such happiness. She was enraptured, yes. For she was thinking of all the young boys and girls of her childhood and of those rare occasions when they would romp and play just like these sweet crazy bees flying around the house now and so happy to be out in the sun after living in a dungeon all through winter, yes, crazy now with the joy that they could turn somersaults in the air, free of all duties, free

of their tasks for a little while, oh, yes, like Paula they were new to sunshine.

And Klara thought of the years to come when Paula would be ready to play, and that left her full of love for little Edmund who was so kind to the baby, the only one of the children who was. Angela couldn't really care (although she was dutiful enough) and Adi was a worry—once she had seen him pinch Paula's cheek hard enough to make her cry. Klara had spanked him for that, one sharp slap across his little seat, but she wouldn't do it again in any kind of hurry. For he had glared back at her—the prince of princes, you would think!—so strong a look that she had had to take all the strength of her eyes to stare him down. And he was only six years old!

It was too beautiful a day to think of that moment of misery—so intense it had been—no, she would rather thank God for having given her so sweet a baby, a daughter who would yet grow up, so she knew, to be her own good sweet best friend. And she even said as much aloud to Paula. "May the angels hear me," she whispered to her child before she turned back to the house and her duties.

~~-13-~~

To reach into the thoughts of a woman like Klara is not routine for us. Dealing with men and women who are well-protected by the best of the Guardian Angels, we take care not to approach for too little. We wait for openings. Sometimes emotional crises offer us the chance. Hysteria will often crack the door. (That is because many forms of hysteria are bewildering to the Cudgels—their calming arts have, temporarily, failed.) But for the most part, we leave protected people alone, even as the Cudgels usually avoid contact with our clients. Prudence prevails. Forced entrances are rarely attempted.

When, however, we must have an incursion, we wait for the Guardian Angel to be absent. At such times, a small raid is feasible. Many a devil can transform himself for a short period into an angelic presence. Since we are ersatz, we do not try to occupy a protected person's mind, but we do obtain a few gains so long as our presence can inspire a mood of beneficence in the target. He or she may even feel balmy enough to prate and prattle. The vulnerabilities of their heart can be divulged in a flood of laughter and happy words.

Moreover, Klara was hardly strange to us. Once, on the night that Adolf was conceived, she had been catapulted into a high state of concupiscence. Ever since, Klara has had her carnal depths. (Certainly on occasion.¹) A part of herself (usually concealed from herself) is still ready to engage in that fundamental rite of stinks and grunts and glories which does take place whenever God and the devil choose to sweat together in the swamp and paradise of sex. This may be why people who are notably ethical (and clean-smelling) usually do not offer any striking physical appeal. There is not enough of us to be found in them.

Enough. I do not know whether this is of significance, but the beauty of the spring day when Klara felt so happy holding Paula and talking to the flowers, happened to coincide (even to the hour) with the Coronation of Nicholas the Second, and Alexandra. Indeed, the same warm spell was also there in Moscow, and for a number of days. I recall that even when I came back to Hafeld in early June, this fine period continued across much of Europe. Normally, my well-being is not affected by the weather, but these long sunny days enhanced my recollections of the aftermath of the Coronation.

As already indicated, I was one of the first to suggest to the Maestro that a direct attack on the crowning event was not likely to succeed. We could, of course, initiate a number of strikes. Nowhere else in Europe were we able to boast of as many agents and clients as in Russia. A number were of high rank. We possessed more than one Grand Duke and Duchess among the several branches of the Romanov family, including the Governor-General of Moscow. We certainly infested the secret police. (We had more agents in the Okhrana than did the Cudgels!) We also had Ministers of State who were as abjectly loyal to us as hounds slaving over kibble. We

were well-installed in all the royal families of Europe, not to mention the nobility and/or the generals—so often the same! Nouveau riches lay before us like an open whore. Tycoons were among our most valued and protected clients.

When it came, therefore, to calling upon such actors, we knew that if we were ready to accept the cost, we could bring off major disruptions on Coronation Day. Even one of the two Metropolitans who would preside over the theological ceremonies was ours, and indeed, we had many a cohort of half-mad monks in Russian Orthodox monasteries. More than a few would be coming to Moscow on this high occasion, and this is not even to speak of our share of anarchists, nihilists, and terrorists. The more militant among them would certainly be ready to attempt an assassination before or during the Coronation.

Nonetheless, I was opposed to such ventures. They would probably not succeed. I had dared instead to propose to the Maestro that we wait ^{to} ~~several days in apparent quiescence and then attack~~ ^{until} (the Peasants' Festival) ^{after} ~~to take place four days later~~. ^{to take place} To my delight and to my woe, he accepted. I was full of foreboding. What if I was wrong? After

this long period spent upon relatively minor activities ^{so} in many small ^{places} ~~cities~~ ⁱⁿ ~~and towns of~~ Austria, I was poorly prepared to absorb the monumentality of Russia. It was too intense! Not only could we muster hordes of devils to stir the hearts of half the people (half—at the least!), but Mosow and St. Petersburg were occupied by a greater assembly of angels than I had encountered in a long time. You may be certain that these worthies were active! Never had I felt the presence of the D.K. more directly. If He had often seemed disoriented to me by the uncountable number of successes and failures that take place every day in His Creation, He was now in evidence everywhere we turned.

For the longest time, I had been accustomed to thinking of Him as ~~an~~ a near to unmeasurable force ~~Abstract Presence, a force~~ (who might be ugly on occasion (by way of His Cudgels), but was removed enough to enable us to work in relative freedom.

In Russia, however, His Nearness ^{was evident} ~~had become the prevailing factor~~. God ^{He} wanted this Coronation to succeed! ^{He had} ~~He had~~ chosen it as His Battleground?

There was such intensity of dedication among the Cudgels that I knew we would pay heavily for any ^{direct} ~~attack~~. This lay upon my judgment with all the weight of a hard fact—a stone too heavy to lift. Finally, I did. ^{had} ~~I~~ dared to

suggest my plan to the Maestro, and he ^{had} accepted it. ~~That was the boldest~~
~~step I had ever taken in relation to him.~~

Afterward, I knew dread. I was ~~full of foreboding and~~ obsessed with
 one question: What could be God's motive for such unparalleled
 commitment to the success of the ~~Coronation?~~

Until this event, the Dummkopf had invested His Substance in a
 variety of people and causes. He paid attention to Monarchists and
 Republicans, to the most established aristocrats and to ~~the~~ revolutionaries
 who were ready to die for the honor of overthrowing ^{these} ~~their~~ overlords. He
 had also encouraged many a human to offer public service to democracies.
 He hardly ignored the Pope and the Vatican (but then, neither did we!) He
 was open to the calls of liberty and to the injunctions of autocracy. As the
 Maestro once remarked, "It is not difficult to hear the workings of His
 Mind. 'I may make My mistakes,' He says, 'but I do pay attention to who
 wins. That way I can discover what works.' Why, after all," added the
 Maestro, "did He give ~~free~~ ^{Few} will to homo sapiens? Obviously, the poor
 Dummkopf wanted to ^{draw} ~~come~~ closer to obtaining some notion of what He had
~~come up with~~ ^{actually created.}
~~put together.~~

The Maestro ^{might be, but} was enjoying his irony, ^[I was ready, however, to]
 to conclude that the Dummkopf had come over, for the moment at least, to the
 conviction that the well-being of much of His world was going to rest now
~~to a good degree~~ on the need for a good and beneficent Tsar who would feel
^a the closest alliance to the Russian Orthodox Church. So the Dummkopf
 was looking to install Nicholas the Second with an unforgettable ceremony
 and thereby fortify ^{world} the Orthodox Church. ^{fast, both days.} This association of Crown and
 Cross would be guided by Him to govern with authority over the vast ^{the Tsar might even be able} unruly
 energies of the Russian people.

It was more than an amazing decision. If true, it was a staggering
^{worse than unruly, these} choice. Those Russian energies were inchoate. To depend on Russia—so
 invested with corruption! So teeming with injustice! It was what we looked
 to find. We searched for injustice. It was the yeast to inspire hatred, envy,
 and the loss of love. If we had an all-purpose 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 of the flaws of men and women, then the Dummkopf, God, like many another creative artist, had His own vanities in this respect. Doubtless, He would have argued,—if debate between the Maestro and Himself were possible—that the history of human nature had been improved by the brilliant advent of Jesus Christ into the daily life of the world masses.

We were ready to disagree. We saw Christ's immediate efforts as 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~~ ^{God the Lord} recovered quickly ^{that the Maestro claims} enough to claim credit for the very crucifixion. ^{"proceeding"} He had certainly wanted to avoid. "God," our Maestro was always ready to inform us, ^{"was cheating"} ^{to cheat.} ~~on the rules He had formulated.~~ He traduced His own Game! Free Will for humans becomes meaningless once there is divine intervention. But leave it to the Old Goat! Secretly—blind even to 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. Oh, our poor brother Jesus!" And the Maestro laughed. (He had a rich, self-pleasuring laugh whenever he made a remark corrosive enough to leave a scar on ~~the~~ Scriptures.)

Right or wrong, it was becoming evident to me that the D.K. was placing large hopes on the character of the young man who would soon be crowned 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? "Yes. Do what you can," said the Maestro. His readiness to agree aroused my suspicion that I was not expected to play a ^{much of} direct part in the ^{very} events I had proposed.

I did not know whether I was being promoted or abandoned, but I soon learned that, as I feared, it would not be routine to ^{come} get near to this Nicky. (That is how everyone in his large family referred to him). Nicky had two younger brothers and 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 of angels. That was one most discernible impediment. I can detect as much as any animal with keen olfactory senses provided I am able to take in the scent of a human being. And I see with precision. Even from the far end of a large room, I can perceive defects in the corner of a nostril or the ridges of an ear. Subtle ^{flaws} twists of character are thereby revealed to me. Yet, these fine senses I do ^{try to} not ~~must~~ muster for all occasions. As a daily matter, ~~S~~^{so high}atanic existence would be enervating if our sight and taste and smell, our sense of touch and hearing, were always at such a level of ^{exquisite} readiness—no, we call upon these ^{exquisite} ~~fine~~ faculties only when we need to learn a good deal in a hurry about a particular man or woman.

Here, however, I was not able to approach Nicky. So many Cudgels! Once again, I had to rely on the materials that some of our resident devils had picked up from those of our clients who work in the lower and middle reaches of the palaces of St. Petersburg and the churches and offices of the Kremlin.

This, then, is what I learned from such near-to-academic sources.

While I am certainly not speaking of texts or of libraries, there was available a fund of copied letters and diaries picked up by royal valets, chambermaids, and house servants and that comprised a flow of useful gossip and insights. It seemed as if everyone in every royal family of Europe was writing letters to his or her parents, children, aunts, uncles, cousins, and intimates. In addition, they all kept diaries. The Tsarevitch, soon to be Nicholas the Second, had made an entry in his ^{embossed little book} every day from boyhood on, and by the time of the Coronation he ^{felt} was so close to Alix (his Tsarina Alexandra) that she seemed always by his side, and literally! His diary was not only open to her perusal, but received her written additions ⁱⁿ many of his pages. ^{Her language} They seemed with piety and declarations of love.

I was fascinated. This nearness to royalty was stimulating. I have to add that the Maestro warned me about the drawbacks. "Recognize that snobbery is for fools of the highest sort. It distorts every last finding you and your agents can bring in."

Reproof or not, I enjoyed the new work. This royal family was a conflux of the highest monarchs in Europe. Alix, the beloved of Nicky,

might be only a princess from Hesse, but her mother, Alice, had been one of Queen Victoria's three daughters. Alice died when Alix was six years old, but afterward, Queen Victoria paid close and loving attention to the child on her frequent visits to England. Then there was Kaiser Wilhelm the Second, the same Wilhelm who was the German Kaiser during World War I. He was married to Queen Victoria's oldest daughter. So, he was Alix's uncle. ^{She} ~~He was already another royal's nephew (cousin).~~ ^{She} called him Uncle Willy. The English prince who would become King George the Fifth of England was the nephew of Nicky's mother, Empress Marie. In turn, George's oldest son would yet become Edward the Eighth ^{before he} ~~only to abdicate the throne~~ in order to marry Wallis Simpson. Surrounded by our devils, they were to live on as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. (The D.K. did not even bother to assign any angel to that pair.)

If I list events still decades away, it is only to emphasize that half of Europe's highest royalty was closely related to Alix or to Nicky, or to both. ^(Even Alix's ~~cousin~~ Willy, the Kaiser, was by another route, a cousin to Nicky.) In addition—no small addition—Alix and Nicky were in love. They ^{choose} ~~will use~~ the word—desperately in love. If such a passion is obliged to be, in some part, false, as desperate love invariably is, Alix and Nicky had to be excellent actors ^{all the same} ~~with huge respect for their roles.~~ ^{Indeed, many} ~~For everyone~~ ^(deep)

^{did} (believed) that it was ~~indeed~~ a most intense love born of an adolescent
 infatuation when he was sixteen and she was ~~just~~ ^{For certain,} twelve. ~~This infatuation~~
~~his heart felt absorption in each other~~
 managed to endure through many years of separation. Indeed, their
 closeness to one another would later be fortified by the birth of five
 children. I will not pursue it further at this point other than to say that they
 died (were murdered) on the same day, a year and a few months short of
 what would have been their Twenty-Fifth Anniversary.

Yes, by all the evidence, ~~therefore~~ they were very much in love. In
 the weeks before the Coronation, I knew enough, however, not to suggest
 that this might be a true and enduring affection. That would ~~not~~ ^{hardly} be to the
 Maestro's taste. Speaking to a few of us, he said, "Be prepared for the
~~pass without meditating on the Great Swindle,~~
~~greatest swindle of them all~~ (The Dummkopf presents Himself as the
 Almighty Avatar of Love. He is full of Love, and those who Love Him are
 full of Love, and Love itself will solve all human problems. With this
 noxious pomade, He not only gulls a good three-quarters, at least, of His
 walking-and-talking animals, His humans, His creation, but He fools
 Himself. No one believes in Love so much as the Dummkopf."

^{such a}
 I was ready to accept ~~this~~ premise, indeed, I saw it as the heart of the
 Dummkopf's intense concern that the Coronation be a great success. Had
^{unbalanced}
~~He~~ returned to the unbelievably ~~romantic~~ assumption that ^{now at} ~~even by the end of~~
 the Nineteenth Century, a revival of ~~respect for~~ monarchy might offer again
 the best foundation for society? Did He suppose that should a handsome
^{magnificently}
 young king and most attractive young queen be ~~profoundly~~ in love with
 each other, and wholly devoted to their faith, and—the first of loyalties—
^{also} believed in His Power and His Goodness, then these rare conditions
 satisfied, He could have the pleasure of initiating a very bold experiment?
 Would it turn out more happily than some of His other ^{ventures?} ~~extravagant~~
^{Perhaps, it could}
~~ventures?~~ After all, it was possible that most monarchies had failed in the
 past because there was so little love at the top.

I was relieved. I now had a premise. Long ago I had learned that the
 study of new material was lifeless whenever one was lacking a vital
 hypothesis. Possessed of one, however, each new piece of knowledge was
 ready to contribute to the premise, or deny it. Now, one's studies could
 come alive. One's acumen was there to be enriched by every addition.

My question, then, had come down to this: Was the D.K. in full possession of His Faculties? Or was He growing senile?

2
~~-14-~~

The boldness of such an assumption was disturbing. How could He be senile? When, on occasion, I find myself near the sea, it is difficult to believe that God is suffering any loss of His powers. Indeed, similar anxieties can be aroused in me by a fine field, a rocky crag, or the retort of the heavens when lightning is followed by thunder. A similar conclusion arises at the sight of a peerless sunset. One could even speak of dazzlements of light on wet grass when morning dew is on the ground.

Of course, He could have fashioned all this eons ago, yes, back at the peak of His Creative Powers when He was Young, and the skies and waters were not yet fouled by exudate. Did He now brood on the possibility that

these human Creations had become His least successful animals? Were we now awash in the dithering of a divinity who felt that His powers had gone askew? This Nicky and Alix—they seemed so naïve, so unfitted for the vast project they were to expedite. While I had not been able to get near to their living presence, I had certainly absorbed the tone of their love, their philosophy (such as it was!) and, over and over, their piety, their innocence. They actually believed that Nicky's diary, as well as their letters to each other were well protected from scrutiny when, in fact, a copy of the key to this diary—courtesy of a royal valet—had been in our possession for years, ~~and, now that she had joined him, I could even peruse their old letters,~~ Indeed, they even put numbers on the envelopes—Letter 96, Letter 109, et cetera. It never occurred to Nicky or Alix that it took no exceptional skill to make a wax impression of a key ~~or a lock~~, any more than we were in need of high competence to find the maid or body-servant who was ready to betray a trust.

So, I knew how they spoke to each other. I had read copies of their loving communications back and forth, hundreds of them. If I now present a small record of the missives passing between them and their relatives or

close friends, it is to give a sense of how trivial were most of these responses to the size of the royal dilemmas awaiting them. Indeed, I had to wonder all over again—why was God giving so much importance to Nicky and Alix?

Be it said, they were not altogether without attainment. Back in 1889, when she was seventeen, before they were ready to speak of their love for each other, Alix sent this missive on March 17:

*See must
desiring
the capacity*

It was so good of you to write and it gave me great pleasure. My mad letter amused you then—well, I have been cracked enough to write another. We went last night to see the "Rheingold" and I hope next week to see "Walkure's Siegfried."

} Close-up to double

His response came two weeks later:

Thank you so much for your dear little letter which was such an agreeable surprise to me . . . We also saw "Siegfried." I like it so awfully, especially the melody of the bird and the fire!

^{But they}
 Young Wagnerites! ~~At the edge of love!~~ They write to each other in English. He has been tutored in the tongue since boyhood and she, after all, has been so close to Queen Victoria, ~~her favorite grandchild, indeed.~~

By June, 1894, five ~~full~~ ^{passed} years later, they ~~even had to pass~~ through a large theological ~~and emotional~~ obstacle. To become betrothed, Alix had to give up her Lutheranism. ^{when she was as} ~~This did stand very much in the way.~~ She was as good as wed to it. Of course, theology is usually ^{ready} ~~able~~ to offer astonishing exits from philosophical cul-de-sacs. ^{Eventually,} ~~In time,~~ Alix agreed to accept the Russian Orthodox Church, and so the news ~~of their engagement~~ ^{of their engagement} could be given out to the royal families of Europe. In June of 1894, when their engagement is just two months old, Nicky is passionate in his declaration of happiness:

I love you too deeply and too strongly for me to show it:
 it is such a sacred feeling, I don't want to let it out in
 words that seem meek and poor and vain! But now I will
 try to break the habit of hiding my feelings, because I
 think it wrong and selfish in some occasions. You also
 do not know, my precious one, how long my whole heart
 belonged to you and what sufferings it has gone

**through these dreary years! Darling primrosy-mine, I
love you my darling!!!!**

Be it said, I took pains to count the exclamation marks. Is it not, after all, a point of kinship I can feel with him? The observant reader may have noticed that I, too, am fond of such punctuation, particularly at the end of a parenthesis!! (Interruptions of attention should pretend, at least, to be vital!)

Four months later, Nicky's father is grievously ill. Alix, writing in Nicky's diary, offers this:

Sweet child, pray to God, he will comfort you don't feel too low, he will help you in your trouble, Your Sunny is praying for you and the beloved patient. Darling Boysy, me loves you, o so very tenderly and deep. Be firm and make the Doctors come alone to you every day and tell you how they find him, and exactly, what they wish him to do, so that you are always the first to know. Don't let others be put first and you left out. You are Father dear's son and must be told all and be asked about everything. Show your own mind and don't let others forget who you are. Forgive me lovy.

Two days later, she enters his diary again. She will share Nicky's anguish. She writes:

Tell me everything, dushka, you can fully trust me, look upon me as a bit of yourself. Let your joys and sorrows be mine, so that we may be ever drawn nearer together. My sweet One, how I love you, darling treasure, my very own One.

Dushka, when you feel low and sad, come to Sunny and she will try to comfort you and like her namesake warm you with her rays, God helping.

Only yours, quite your very own little spitzbub, Pussy mine!"

see p 444

There is an entry next day by Nicky, 18 October:

A terrible, sad day! Dear Papa did not sleep at all, and felt so unwell in the morning that we were all woken up and called upstairs. What a trial! Then Papa became a little calmer and dozed fitfully throughout the day...

In the evening, Papa appeared a little better—but terribly weak! Our only reliance and hope is in the Mercy of the Lord, let His will be done!

I had to
~~I could not help but~~ note how completely royalty ^{is} was groomed to rely
on the Lord's will. But then, royalty needs such belief. Their lives are ~~so~~ ^{that}
peculiar. They live, after all, in near to total isolation from common
experience. Moreover, they are obliged to be painfully sensitive to the
constant need for proper conduct (and so are invariably drawn to its
opposite—especially with the carnal opportunities they are provided!) How
then can they not believe that the disruptive events which occur ^{so often} in their
lives are a product of the Lord's will? All the same, Nicky is not ready for
his father, Tsar Alexander III, to be so close to death.

} Close-up

Nicky's diary, 20 October, Livadia:

My God, my God, what a day! The Lord has called
unto Him our adored, dearly beloved Papa.

My head is going round, I cannot believe it—
it seems inconceivable, a terrible reality.

It was the death of a Saint! Lord, help us in
these terrible days!

Later, I learned that Nicky was thinking of the hour in his childhood when a nihilist had succeeded in planting a small bomb inside the railroad car in which his father had been travelling with his family. When the explosion went off, given its inexpert placement, the blast ^{blew} ~~spewed~~ the roof upward rather than crashing it down upon them. As a result, no one in the royal family was critically injured. Right after, however, the roof ^{began} ~~did begin~~ to ^{settle} ~~come~~ down ~~slowly~~ upon them. Tsar Alexander III, a giant of a Romanov, used the holy and unholy strength of his arms to hold up the beams of the ceiling long enough for the family to be rescued. Only a saint was capable of such strength, declared his wife, a small and beautiful woman.

So, too, did Nicky believe that his father was a saint. Nicky was short like his Danish mother, and revered Alexander's physical power. All through his adolescence, Nicky had worked at body-building. He also excelled at horsemanship and at hunting—a point of honor to him—he grew a fine brown mustache and beard, yet he never grew large enough to look like a Romanov. Now, ^{on his father's death,} ~~he would be the Tsar.~~ Nicholas II, Nicholas the Second.

Here, I must introduce some written comments by Nicky's cousin Sandro who is married to Nicky's sister, Xenia. A bit of a firebrand, Sandro is Nicky's closest friend:

"Sandro, what am I going to do," he exclaimed pathetically. "What is going to happen to me, to you, to Xenia, to Alix, to mother, to all of Russia? I am not prepared to be a Tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling. I have no idea of even how to talk to the ministers."

*{ double-sure speed? as, diary
at the house*

Nicky, Diary, 21 October, Livadia:

In the midst of our deep sorrow, the Lord has sent us a quiet and radiant joy: at 10 o'clock in the presence of the family, my dear darling Alix was anointed with the holy oils and after the service we took communion together, with dear Mama and Ella. Alix repeated her responses and prayers wonderfully well and distinctly!

After luncheon we held Prayers for the Dead and again at 9 o'clock in the evening. The expression on Papa's face was wonderful, smiling as if he were about to laugh!

22 October.

Last night we had to carry Papa's body downstairs, as unfortunately, it has rapidly begun to decompose. Thank God, dear Mama is completely calm and is bearing her sorrow in a truly heroic way! I did nothing but answer the pile of telegrams.

24 October.

The day was grey—as it was in our hearts! I still cannot bring myself to go into the corner room where dear Papa's body is lying—he is so changed since being embalmed. I cannot bear to dispel the wonderful impression of the first day!

Actually, they soon had to cover the Emperor with a large imperial cloth for his hands and face were turning black.

It may be worth including a letter from Kaiser Wilhelm II ^{*(Caution last letter)*} to Nicky, which was sent on 27 October from the Neues Palais, Potsdam:

My dear Nicky,

May Heaven comfort you in your grief and give you strength for your heavy duties, and may a long and

peaceful reign give you the opportunity of looking after the welfare of your subjects. The sympathy and real grief at the so untimely end of your lamented father in my country will have shown you how strong the monarchical instinct is and how Germany feels for you and your subjects. As for me, you will always find me the same in undiminished friendship and love to you.



It would, of course, be twenty years before they went to war against each other.

On the seventh of November, one of our English agents intercepted a communication from Lord Carrington to Queen Victoria, which offered a detailed report on Tsar Alexander III's funeral. It was obvious Her Majesty was attracted to details.

Lord Carrington to Queen Victoria:

The service was choral without organ—the Empress and Princesses standing or kneeling the whole time. The mass continued for an hour and a half, plaintive and monotonous and then the usual daily funeral service was gone through. Tapers were lighted and handed round, but in consequence of the crowd, no ladies took any and

so accident from fire was averted. At 12:30 the terrible ceremony of paying the last farewell took place. The Empress with heroic courage walked up steadily, knelt, and then took a last look at the late Emperor and kissed the sacred picture on His Majesty's breast, and then kissed his lips. The Emperor supported and took great care of Her Majesty and all the Royal Personages present kissed the sacred picture.

Like most English diplomats, ~~he took pride in his literary style and~~
~~was ready to add a fine note to the Queen's vanity:~~
nourish a monarch's
he was ready to ~~add~~ a fine note to the Queen's vanity:

All the ladies in Russian costume, some with fine diamonds but hardly any pretty faces; indeed, the absence of beauty as compared with that seen at one of Your Majesty's drawing rooms struck the Lord Chamberlain very much.

The wedding of Nicky and Alix was obliged, of necessity, to come a few days after the funeral. It would hardly do for the Tsar of all Russia to be an unmarried man. If the Tsar was the nearest Russian to God, then what

could be of more importance than for this divine adjunct to commit to a wife who would bear His sons?

~~The marriage~~ ^{large event}
I was, of course, a ~~huge display~~, and on my arrival in Russia, I was ~~able to experience the event, being~~ offered many accounts by our resident Russian agents. So I had an all-but-complete recapitulation of how it had been back on November 14 of 1894, when the nuptials took place. To those of us who were in need of such background, our resident devils did offer a set of images vivid enough to inspire something like the confidence that we had been there. I do feel free to describe it as if I had been in the great rooms of the Winter Palace. On this occasion, over 10,000 people were there in all their finery. Mind you, there were ~~no~~ ^{without} chairs. The Russians seem to believe that devotional services should exact ~~some~~ ^a penance on the body. So the mighty had to stand in ~~place~~ for three hours while ~~the~~ liturgies were recited. All the while, choral music continued, sad, and in its way, majestic, due to the length of the occasion. It is as though the deepest groans of Jesus ~~were to~~ ^{were to} Christ ~~could~~ be heard again.

Yes, He was a presence to be meditated upon. Ten thousand of the powerful and the wealthy stood in place, an assembly of high generals,

admirals, field and staff officers, as well as each and every last lady of St. Petersburg (as well as many from Moscow) who had ^{also} ~~ever~~ been presented at Court.) Also present was every dignitary from the First, Second, Third and Fourth Class of the bureaucracies, and many of the mayors ^{of} ~~from~~ cities and large towns, as well as ^{countless} ~~many of the~~ new Russian businessmen and their wives. Plus one hundred maids of honor.

Lord Carrington has a comment here:

One maid of honour was so old that she was propped up against a wall and finally a chair was brought for her in which she was placed until required.

One of our English clients, well installed in Victoria's court, reported that the Queen on reading this was heard to exclaim, "Oh, these Russians—animals all! Poor Alix will need every bit of the fortitude we have implanted in her!"

related to Victoria's family pride
Carrington proved his sense of pomp by describing the climax of the *when he described the Bride*
~~wedding~~

~~The Emperor in a very plain uniform walked~~
~~with the Bride who looked simply magnificent--on~~

her head she wore a circlet of diamonds with a diamond top which made it into a crown, a splendid necklace, and an enormous mantle of cloth of gold lined with ermine. She was the perfection of what one would imagine an Empress of Russia on her way to the altar would be and moved along quite simply and with great dignity. She makes very marked bows with her head when she greets anyone, and this is much noted and appreciated.

Our devils, not in the least generous about such matters (except when protecting a client) remarked that this bobbing of her head was reminiscent of ^a ~~the~~ pouter pigeon!

The ring was placed on the Bride and Bridegrooms' fingers, and then they walked 3 times around the altar, and knelt in front of it--gold crowns being held over their head the whole time. The Bride was proclaimed Empress at five minutes past one.

I now had a slightly better notion of why the D.K. had so committed Himself to Russia. How these ^{Russians} ~~people~~ believed in Him! ^{I had to worry} ~~One could say the~~



same for many a church group in America, but the differences were significant. In the U.S., even in that period, all the emphasis was on the Son. Americans seem to live, dream, argue, and search for a closer relation to Jesus. (It is as if He is out there awaiting their approaches.) And the Father, thereby, is to some subtle degree, superannuated. His name was not that much invoked except at funerals or in the obsequies that follow catastrophes. Otherwise, it is all about Jesus. In America, even now, I can say it remains the same for a good half of that vast, inchoate, endlessly patriotic land. "Boy," say half the Americans, "if your faith is not in Jesus, your ass is in jeopardy."

Of course, I also felt out of my element in Moscow. Russians were not for me. They were so much more intense than the Germans and

Austrians with whom I was, of late, familiar. One need only return to that

nuptial ceremony when Nicky and Alix circled the altar three times. They

might as well have been paying homage to the great beasts who prowl through Russian dreams.

3
~~-15-~~

I was soon able to read all the letters supplied to me in the period after the wedding. A close study opened ~~however~~ a few curious questions. Just a few days later on the 17th of November, Nicky wrote,

I am unbelievably happy with Alix, it's only a pity that my work takes up so much of the time I would like to spend exclusively with her!

On the 26th of November, off by themselves in Tsarskoe Selo, he remarks,

Such a dear place for us both; for the first time since our wedding we have been able to live alone and live

truly soul-to-soul.

Immediately this is followed by Alix's reaction to reading these words .
~~of love.~~ She adds to his diary:

*Never did I believe there could be such utter happiness
in this world, such a feeling of unity between two mortal
beings. I love you—those three words have my life in
them.*

On the next day she adds,

*At last united, bound for life, and when this life is ended,
we meet again in the other world to remain together for
all eternity.*

I was overcome with her ignorance, and her confidence. She was so
certain they held ~~with~~ a joint passport to the Eternal! Yet, on December 14,
a bit more than two weeks later, he wrote:

**Today it is one month since we married—strange to
say, I am only just beginning to get used to the idea!
My love for Alix keeps growing!**

Rarely had I encountered newly-weds who were as infatuated. They ^(inclined) obviously did not seem to distinguish between the wild honey of first sex ^{from} and the nectars of true love. ^{Vet} But Nicky, after all, was twenty-six, and no neophyte, not to sex. (His military days had offered ^{the expected} female bounty.) In contrast, Alix had been ^{so complete} very much a virgin. ~~Burdened with the usual fears,~~ ^{Moreover,} she had also grown up with the woe of losing her mother at the age of six. Then add her piety. ^{So,} I was not ready to accept ^{her entries} as whole truth ^{as whole truth} her romantic entries in Nicky's diary. ^{and much too full} To me, they seemed overwrought with the necessity to be absolutely in love.

Of course, I could not be certain. He was the Emperor of a vast land teeming with ~~deep~~ spirits and ~~untameable~~ barbarians. Whenever he passed by a fine copse of forest, he could remind himself that this loveliness was his land. His Land. He was one of the chosen of God. And all the while he was short in height compared to his dead father and ^{his giant uncles} the Grand Dukes ~~etc~~. ^{all he could} He felt unready. How, then, could he (He?) fail to make much of Love itself? ~~I had to assume he was not unlike a man who will go mad if he cannot find a drink.~~ ^{Reason} Love was a vertiginous ascent and you kept your balance by climbing upward, always upward.

Nonetheless, I could come to no firm conclusions, not from this study of their writings. The damnable question was still pending—what was the Dummkopf up to? Was it not conceivable that in His Desire to make their marriage beatific, ~~and so effective~~ ^{also enriching} for His Purposes, God was ~~supplying~~ them with physical ecstasies? How could I know? I could not come near. I had only these stolen fragments from their letters, and the reasonable assumption that if God was going to choose a Tsar, He would be ready to offer His wisdom and strength—against, of course, the no small skills of the Maestro ~~to subvert His Plans.~~

4

~~-16-~~

As has been indicated, Nicky was all but totally unprepared to become the Tsar. Everyone in the Court had assumed that Alexander the Third would rule for another generation at least.

Nicky, Diary, 17 January 1895, St. Petersburg:

An exhausting day. Went with Alix to the Winter Palace. I was in a terrible state about having to go to the Nikolayevsky Hall and deliver a speech to the representatives of the nobility, the *zemstvos* [local councils] and the town committees.

He had been closeted with the Grand Dukes before he gave the speech. They had assured him that he must follow in his father's footsteps. He must be absolute! His grandfather, Alexander II, had been assassinated, and his father had had a very close call. Russia was so vulnerable to grand mal that one misstep could release a frenzy. Absolute allegiance to autocracy ~~must~~ ^{— nothing other could} be proclaimed.

From Nicky's speech to the representatives of all estates:

17 January 1895, St. Petersburg:

I am aware that recently in some *zemstvos* there have arisen the voices of people carried away by senseless dreams of taking part in the business of government.

Let everyone know that I will retain the principles of autocracy as firmly and unbendingly as my unforgettable late father.

All the same,

~~A strong speech,~~ but his official duties continued to oppress him and

~~His~~ repetitive lament is that he cannot spend enough time with Alix.

Then, as the first winter of their marriage came to an end, ^{she} began to develop symptoms. We counted on that. Symptoms were our stock-in-trade. Proper Victorian women were never easy to invest, but we could

always send a shiver into their corseted defense of personal virtue by tainting their dreams with one or another smelly thought. That was enough to spoil many an hour in their marriages.

Nicky's diary, 9 April, 1885, St. Petersburg:

Unfortunately, dear Alix's headache continued all day. She did not go upstairs at all—neither to church nor to luncheon.

Nicky's Diary, 10 April 1895, St. Petersburg:

Dear Alix still has an unbearable pain in the temples and she was obliged to remain in bed, on my advice.

Indeed! An ongoing headache! When intense enough to be characterized as migraine, these headaches ^{spoke} ~~spoke~~ to us of a clear desire to commit murder. I ^{do} ~~did~~ not believe Alix had such sentiments toward her husband, but it was doubtless another matter with her mother-in-law, the Empress Marie. That beautiful little brunette had adored her poor dead husband for the best of reasons and one of them was that she had been the Empress. Already, the two women were developing ^{animosities} ~~impulses~~ toward each other they could not be ^{afford} ~~ready~~ to recognize.

By June, Alix was free, however, of her worst headaches. She was also pregnant. I suspect that her mother-in-law was, in consequence, less of a pressure upon her temples. In an entry to Nicky's diary on June 10, she writes:

My sweet old darling manykins, Wify loves you so deeply and strongly, you are my one and my angels, what intense happiness. . . ours. . . our very own. . . what happiness could be greater; only Wify must try and be as good and kind as possible lest another little person suffer for it. A big kiss.

This is June, but the baby will not be born until November. Is Alix suggesting that they have no ~~low~~ ^{down there} contact ~~with him~~ until the baby arrives?

I felt ~~no advance in~~ ^{was not advancing} my comprehension of their love. How much ~~of their~~ ^{of them} adoration was ~~being~~ ^{active} exaggerated? None of us were ready to admit as much to ourselves (and never, certainly, to the Maestro) but the presence of real love often blurred the clarity of our ~~powers of~~ analysis. We could penetrate every aspect of false love; we had, for that matter, not even the ^{impulse} need to ~~capture such~~ ^{to} lovers as our clients. ~~being in love~~ ^{For, not only} leaves the average man or woman ~~not only~~ ^{much too} open to angels and demons, but ~~to transports and to~~ ^{also to}

when we do take direct interest,
 suspicions, beatitudes and heartbreaks. ~~Some of the sharpest~~ engagements
^{are}
 ever fought between the Cudgels and ourselves involve the ecstasies and
~~vicissitudes that swash through lovers in the early stages.~~ We are demonic
 at converting the sensitivities of love to the all-out imperatives of lust,
 except for those special occasions when God decides ^{that} (lust will be beneficial
 for one of His chosen, yes, there is Godly lust as well.

It is a curious contest. The angels have powerful sweets to offer, and
 we know how to inspire jealousy, doubt, ~~distrust~~, even momentary revulsion
 toward the beloved. I would say ~~that~~ we possess more improvisational
 skills than ~~even the most gifted of~~ the Cudgels, but we do lack ^a ~~one~~ quality
 which I ~~hesitate to confess, even here~~ ^{do not wish} to confess, although I must, or what I
 offer will make no sense. It is that I know everything about love but Love
 itself. I can hardly bear to make ^{this} ~~such a~~ confession. Yet, it is true. I can
 recall nothing of my existence as human, not even whether I ^{even} ~~actually~~ did
 exist in that state, (although for some unlocatable reason I feel that I was
 indeed, at one time, a man.) This, however, I can say—I have never known
 Love. I can expatiate upon its properties and tendencies, its dilemmas, its
 dissipations, I can delineate most of the reasons for its augmentation or

disappearance, I can tell you everything about Love except for some knowledge that is apparently missing at the core. It is that I cannot distinguish true love from its most developed and artistic substitutes.

Witness, then, my confusion concerning Alix. I could begin to comprehend Nicky. Given his situation, he needed love the way others require ^{drink,} blood.

But Alix? I could not say whether she was a rare if somewhat tasteless princess (when it came to writing ^{(her billet-doux), or} prose), but ~~was~~ truly in love, ~~or~~ ^{Or, was her} whether this amorous hysteria might be her ^{no more than her} special way of supposing that ~~the Tsarina~~ she felt heights of passion, pleasure, and devotion.

Given, however, that curious line in her letter, "Wify must try and be as good and kind as possible lest another little person suffer for it," I came to a conclusion. She was ~~indeed~~ ^{any} declaring a temporary moratorium on sex. On many a milk-run, I had watched ^{any} a number of pregnant women enjoying the act ~~even~~ ^{even the} in the eighth or ninth month. Of course, Alix was preparing for the next Tsar to be born, and one wouldn't dare to bruise the development of that royal head, but still! ^{was there to be} no sex on the schedule from June to November! I leaned now to the hypothesis that Alix had strained mightily to rise to the

passionate heights she deemed necessary for this first period of their marriage, but that accomplished—at least in part—and the heir-to-be now in place, she was ready to take a rest. Yes, we must not do it "lest another little person suffer."

5
~~-17-~~

If the Romanovs are now at the center of my interest, this is no more than a temporary matter. To understand Adolf Hitler will remain the core of my motive for writing this book. Nonetheless, there are a few interesting if attenuated connections between that same Kaiser Wilhelm II who was always impressing his family weight on Nicky's mind, and Hitler himself (who, by the way, would yet condemn ~~Uncle~~ Willy as the fool who had helped to lose World War I for Germany.) Nonetheless, ^{both men had} ~~they both, at~~ ^{at} wholly separate times, ~~had~~ cordial relations with an English philosopher named Houston Chamberlain. The latter was so devoted a Wagnerite that he even dared to marry Wagner's daughter, Winifred, and Hitler, a devout

Wagnerite himself from the age of sixteen ^{chose} ~~on~~, would in 1923 at the ^{in 1923, to} Bayreuth Festival ^{though English} meet Houston Chamberlain, ^{was} and the latter, ^{it was} an intense believer in the putative superiority of the German soul, ^{was} was happy to pass on his baton to Hitler. What Chamberlain had envisioned in his master work—Foundations of the Nineteenth Century—might now ~~as he saw it~~ ^{actually} come to pass through the exceptional ~~most uncharacteristic~~ ^{had even arrived} figure of this new leader, this young Hitler, who ~~was even ready to~~ pay a bit of homage. Chamberlain's vanity was still intact, but he was virtually on his death-bed for this encounter. Nonetheless, his support offered political substance to Adolf. Chamberlain had been, in his time, the intellectual who had been most favored, honored, and respected by Kaiser Wilhelm whose own ideas (as will be suggested in the next two letters) were waiting for a philosopher to ^{amplify} ~~enrich~~ them.

In September and October of 1895, on the 14th of the first month and the 13th of the next month, Uncle Willy wrote to the new Russian Tsar. His English ^{might be} ~~was~~ not perfect, but his ideas were ~~obviously~~ important to him.

**Kaiser Wilhelm II to Nicky, 14 September 1895, Jagdhaus
Romingen**

Dearest Nicky,

God knows that I have done all in my power to preserve the European Peace, but if France goes on openly or secretly encouraged like this to violate all rules of international courtesy and Peace in peacetime, one fine day, my dearest Nicky, you will find yourself nolens-volens suddenly embroiled in the most horrible of wars Europe ever saw. Which will by the masses and by history perhaps be fixed on you as the cause of it. Pray don't be angry, if I perhaps hurt you quite unintentionally, but I think it my duty to our two countries and to you as my friend to write openly. Think of the awful responsibility. . .

**Now goodbye, dearest Nicky, best love to dear Alix, and believe me ever your fond devoted and faithful friend,
Willy**

Kaiser Wilhelm II to Nicky 13 October 1895

Neues Palais, Potsdam

Dearest Nicky,

That it is not the fact of a "Rapport" or friendship between Russia and France that make me uneasy—every sovereign is sole master of his country's interests and he shapes his policy accordingly—but the danger which is

brought to our Principle of Monarchism through the lifting up of the Republic on a pedestal. Don't forget that Faure—not his personal fault—sits on the throne of the King and Queen of France by the grace of God whose heads Frenchman Republicans cut off. The blood of their Majesties is still on that country!

Look at it, has it since then ever been happy or quiet again? Has it not staggered from bloodshed to bloodshed? Nicky, take my word on it, the Curse of God has stricken that People forever! We Christian Kings and Emperors have one holy duty imposed on us by Heaven, that is to uphold the Principle "von Gottes Gnaden." [by the grace of God.]
Your most devoted and affectionate friend and cousin,
Willy

There is no record of any reply by Nicky to these weighty warnings. It is possible that the new Tsar is paying no attention. After all, Uncle Willy, according to Alix, is gloomy and always full of foreboding. Moreover, Nicky is concerned about Alix. She is more than pregnant. Her belly is huge. It is no common anxiety to await the birth of an heir—the

young bouncing male baby who will become the next Tsarevitch to Nicholas II.

It is the mark, however, of Romanov breeding—indeed, it is part of their honor—that no disappointment is mouthed when the infant is born. A strapping ten-pound female has come forth.

It does not matter to Nicky. His love is so direct that his relief is pure. No matter the sex of the infant—Alix is safe!

Nicky's Diary 3 November 1895 Tsarskoe Selo

A day I will remember forever. At exactly 9 o'clock P.M. a baby was delivered and we all breathed a sigh of relief. With a prayer we named the daughter from Almighty God "Olga!" When all the anxieties were over and the terrors had ceased, there was left simply a blessed feeling at what had come to pass. Thank God Alix came through childbirth well and felt quite alert in the evening.

By the morning of the next day he is rhapsodizing.

Nicky Diary 4 November 1895 Tsarskoe Selo

**I can hardly believe it's really our child! God,
what is happening? There was a mountain of
telegrams**

And by the following day, Nicky is fascinated by a few unexpected aspects of infant nutrition.

**Nicky, Diary 5 November 1895 Tsarskoe Selo
The first attempt at breastfeeding took place and
ended up with Alix successfully feeding the son
of the wet-nurse while the latter gave milk to Olga.
Very funny!**

6 November 1895

**Thank God, all is well, but the baby does not want to
take her breast so we had to call the wet-nurse again.**

I was not surprised. I ~~cannot speak for the Maestro~~, but devils at my level can interpret the sentiments of an embryo in the final months. These creatures do express themselves (in the last trimester) through their mothers' dreams. It seems evident that most babies come into the light of the birthing room with an affection or an antipathy toward the benevolent

caretaker (or the surly warden) who so recently constituted the walls of their womb. That is exactly why women feel ~~so~~ desolate when their milk is refused by their ~~own~~ babe. ~~Their~~ his guilt is aroused. They know how mixed were their feelings.

Nonetheless, these two, the wet-nurse and the young Empress, are doing their best to avoid ~~such~~ ^{this} recognitions. ~~As~~ ^{So} is Nicky, ~~who~~ ^{he} is quick to declare that yes, it is very funny indeed. I expect Nicky is ready to tell himself that huge little Olga has the sturdy instinct to wish to smell and taste the paps of a strong Russian woman, even as the wet-nurse's suckling will be intimate with a slim and lovely queen at least once in his young life. And I, from my funds of cynicism, think that the two women, so profoundly different, and never by any other means to know cohabitation, (or even suggest it!) can, nonetheless, enjoy this open (yet surreptitious) connection of the flesh.

Less than half a year later, Alix has certainly resumed relations with Nicky.

29 March St. Petersburg [in Alix's hand]

sweet precious Nicky mine, no words can express

*how deeply I love you--more and more, day by day,
deeper--truer. Lovy sweet do you believe it, do you
feel hearty throb so quickly, and only for you, my
husband*

~~She has sent a new message to him:~~ Nicky has been so good about
the birth of a princess rather than a prince, that Alix to her sweet surprise
has had a "hearty throb" on the moment he entered her, a novel event, or, at
least, ~~as~~ I assume, ^{as much,} Let me admit that being obliged to see them only at a
distance ~~across a crowded space, or else limited to~~ ^{and therefore to} the close study of their
letters, I do have to take ~~a few~~ ^{Then,} chances to arrive at an interpretation. ~~Certain~~
^{certainly} conclusions ~~have to alter~~ ^{therefore} with time. Olga, for instance, has come
to accept the given. Once a day, she ^{feeds at} ~~accepts~~ her mother's breast. ~~She feeds~~
while Alix takes ~~her~~ morning coffee with the Emperor.

Actually, I could feel a shift within the court. The Coronation of
Nicholas II was approaching. It is safe to add that there could have hardly
been a devil present who was not stirring with elation and dread. There is
never a time when we devils can feel as human, and crowds feel as demonic

as in the presence of a great occasion, especially if there ^{will be} is a massive ceremony to accompany it.

6
~~-18-~~

Festivities for the Coronation would take place over six days from May 9th to May 16th, and the preparations in Moscow ^{became as} were so extensive as a city beneath the city. ~~One small sign of the extent was the number of new, installations.~~ ^{over had to be} Countless numbers of platforms ~~had, for example, been~~ erected for the spectators, and ^{there was a} to no one's surprise, a great plethora of patriotic displays. Many false fronts now hid the uglier buildings on the route. ~~And again, everywhere one kept seeing two~~ ^{saw (a-ge)} letters "N" for Nicky, and "A" for Alix painted on walls. Holy patriotic words accompanied them. "God Save the Tsar," and "Glory to our Russian Tsar, Glory, Glory, Glory!" were the most popular.

One of the Russian authors I had read in preparation for understanding St. Petersburg and Moscow was Maxim Gorky. Like any good radical of this period—and we were on close terms with many—sometimes I did not know whether we were looking to monarchists to do their utmost for us, or might it be their enemies? In any event, Maxim Gorky, was infuriated by such an over-froth of patriotism. Moscow, he told his friends, was like a salacious widow, who has bedizened her crotch with French lingerie—old lady Moscow on the hunt for a new bridegroom!

I was not assigned to Maxim Gorky, and so did not have the pleasure of following him through his day. But the streets were exceptional. These days, the people of Moscow could have been mistaken for denizens of St. Petersburg. There, up north, if you saw 100 men passing, at least ten were in uniform. Now, here, on the best street, Kuznetsky Most, Moscow was awash in officers come to the city from many a nation, speaking many a language. A world congress ^{could} ~~might~~ have been in progress.

I made a point of studying the city. I hardly needed the knowledge for my particular mission and yet, it is dangerous to prepare for a large ^{move} ~~stroke~~ when one is unfamiliar with the terrain. So, I set out to learn as much

as I could, and thereby noted that many of the local merchants and residents *who lived on old business* *(They sold space in their* on the route were profiting by opening their abodes to spectators. Anyone

who had a window on the street was able, for example, to rent out a room *any one of the days from May 9th to May 14:* for 200 rubles from dawn to sunset on May 9th. Carriages with their coachmen cost 1200 rubles for the month. Useless to argue that one only

wanted the coach for *the week* a few days, or that one could buy ten good horses for such an amount. 1200 rubles! Even to *find a limited view* ~~be allowed to stand in~~ a narrow space ~~with a limited view~~ on a flimsily-built platform came to 10 or 15

rubles—woe to those who were obese. Woe to all ~~who were~~ standing next to such a fat one. And that was all you got for fifteen rubles. To afford a balcony you had to spend 500, which was the equal, I suppose, of purchasing four or five good horses. Those who belonged to the English Club fared a little better. Since it was the English Club, each member had an eye for the ladies, and was allowed therefore to bring as many as four lady guests. Being English, however, they were quick to instruct their members that on procession day, May 9th, all must be in their places by 8 in the morning. They would not be expected to stand on the newly-constructed balcony of the Club until the parade was commenced, but they

had ^{to be} ~~at least~~ on the premises. Since that would entail a two and a half hour wait, breakfast was served, a most special English breakfast—kippers, sausage, bacon, porridge and eggs—and the men, whether English, or looking to be taken for citizens of Great Britain, all wore early-morning tail-coats. ~~The ladies were in party dresses~~ The only contretemps occurred when the police insisted on examining every nook of the club. Even the janitors were cross-examined by the police. The managers of the club did their best to mollify members and guests by explaining how each and every building on the route had been examined in similar fashion. Indeed, here, out of respect for Great Britain, there had been a minimum of this necessary disruption.

Those who had come from far-off parts of Russia or from abroad but were wealthy enough to rent apartments overlooking the parade, had to pay a rent of up to 2500 rubles. Good ^{hard} hotel rooms were ~~barely possible~~ to find. The government had occupied most of them. Whole floors were needed for foreign princes and princesses, diplomatic representatives, noblemen, or honored artists, and needless to add, honored tycoons. The French, being determined for diplomatic reasons to leave their imprint on the occasion,

would spend 200,000 rubles. That would help to fortify their position as the great, ^{and} good, ~~loyal~~ ^{Tsar,} and immovably of the Russians. Since that had once been the Germans' role, ^{Cousin} ~~Uncle~~ Willy's diplomats responded by moving out of Moscow to a palace in the woods costing only 7000 rubles, a modest gem, but then the Germans did not even give a ball, just a musicale. They may also have been gambling on bad weather. However, the procession on May 9th had beautiful skies, and the heavens stayed open and sunny all week, a rare sequence for Moscow.

The procession itself was judged by most to be comparable to the ~~highest and~~ most splendid formal events of history. ~~The visitors, after all,~~ had gone through no small pains to arrive here. Nicky and Alix would make their entrance into the Spassky Gate ^{at the Kremlin} ~~from a temporary residence in~~ Petrovsky Park, some miles away. The parade route would extend from the northern outskirts of Moscow to the Kremlin itself, and a quick sense of the occasion can be glimpsed in the diary of Konstantin Romanov, a cousin of the Grand Dukes (~~who wrote in far better style than they could muster~~)

~~KR Diary May 9~~

KR Diary May 9

What exultation! The first salute sounded signaling that the Tsar had left Petrovsky Palace, the bells rang out even more joyfully. Everyone removed their hats and crossed themselves. And then through the Spassky gates, the head of the procession came into sight, His Majesty's own escort, then the sovereign cossacks, behind them the Tsar's hunt, the court musicians and finally the golden coaches. The procession stretched for a long, long way, the golden coaches and carriages, the embroidered uniforms, the horses covered with golden cloths. The Emperor appeared on a white horse holding his hat in his hand. Without waiting for his greeting, the troops welcomed him with an enormous roar.

In the crowd, many were praying, many made the sign of the cross as the Emperor passed. The Empress Marie cried the whole time in her golden carriage. It was too painful for her to remember how 13 years ago she had participated in the same celebration with her beloved husband.

does not of course
 I will say that the above ~~would satisfy me more if it included~~ the calculations ~~and anxieties~~ that had gone into each detail of the ceremonies on that day. High ministers of state had debated among themselves as to which diplomatic and economic elements were to be most respected. Half

of the uniformed and ambassadorial cadres of the world had come to Moscow. Delegations not only arrived from every European country but from Asia as well, ^{if one starts in} and that was no mean trip out of Korea or Siam. Of ^{it was no secret that equal} course, this Coronation looked to offer its parallel to the majestic entry of Louis XIV into Reims in 1654. So, on the morning of May 9th, came a ^{host} great series of processions in full panoply, there to exhibit to the world all the exceptional resources and ^{varying} peoples of the Russian Empire. ^{First} On came the Cossacks with their tunics, in ^{scarlet} scarlet, their silver epaulettes, their blue pants, ^{and} their black boots; ^{Asian} their black and silver caps; on came Asiatic princes from ^{remote and} remote and unpronounceable regions, wearing costumes of a variety beyond description, representatives of all the ^{distant} far-off barbarians whom the Russians had conquered ^{over the last} through several centuries. They were followed by ^{close to} a regiment of Court footmen, courtiers, and imperial huntsmen. ^{Then, a} A toffier note was struck by a procession of the two Grand Masters of the Coronation Ceremonies, the Arch Grand Master and his court, twelve Chamberlains and twenty-five Gentlemen of the Chamber, plus the Marshalls of the Court, and all the members of the Council of Empire followed in succession by the regiments of the Royal Army, then

Nicky himself, born, as all too many were whispering, on the sixth of May.

Thousands of ^{Russians} ~~onlookers~~ were passing such information to each other,

~~Russians most of all~~, for May 6 was ~~nothing less than~~ the Orthodox Feast

Day of St. Job the Sufferer, ~~It can be taken for granted that we had no small~~

~~hand in reminding many an onlooker that May Sixth was one of the most~~

sinister and ~~foredoomed~~ dates to occupy on the calendar. Who could ever

wish to repeat the ^{Sordid} sufferings of St. Job?

Nicky was aware of this omen. In the first weeks of their betrothal,

he had ~~even~~ felt it was his duty to warn Alix. He could do no less. And she

replied that it would now be her duty to stand beside him. In union with

each other, they would overcome any and all ^{of such} ~~fire~~ signs. This was ^{then} a test

received from God. So she saw it. Yes, God ~~had~~ wanted them to love each

other so well that they could incarnate ^{His Powers} ~~the power~~ (of transcendence. They

would not have to suffer ^{therefore} like Job. They were ready to love God even more

than St. Job had loved Him.

Just so much did I learn on the day they entered the Kremlin. I had

been able at last to enter Nicky's mind. Very much to my surprise, I must

also admit. Never, as I have related, had there been in my experience so

great a cordon of ^{angels} divine security surrounding any other human being. Just
 so closely were ~~Nicky and Alix~~ ^{did the Cudgels protect} ~~protected by the Cudgels~~. Yet, on this day,
 when he rode his English mare all the way from Petrovsky Park to the
 Spassky Gates of the Kremlin, I was able to approach ^{the entrance to} his thoughts. Be
 certain, it was but a minor entry. Nonetheless, the Maestro had not been
 wholly barricaded. ^{approaches were not} ~~Not every route into Nicky's brain had been blocked by~~
^{leave it to the Maestro} ~~the Cudgels~~. Ten years ago when the Tsarevitch was an eighteen-year-old
 cadet, he had ~~had~~ a short but agreeably lustful set of encounters with one of
~~the Maestro's~~ ^{our} long-term devils. She had coupled with Nicky in the form of a
 gypsy prostitute, a ^{years} ~~tsvigane~~. It was all accomplished ^{before the Cudgels had}
 begun to devote ^{these} ~~their present and~~ massive efforts to protect him. So the
 Maestro had succeeded in obtaining some ingress into Nicky's soul. Be
 certain!—many skirmishes and small wars have ^{taken place} ~~been conducted~~ since
 concerning this modest and ~~now hard-maintained~~ ^{route} and most narrow. (The
 D.K. had sent a cohort of angels to seal it off but the Maestro had
 succeeded ~~nonetheless~~—with what skill!—in keeping it open.

My honor—which is to say, my now much-improved sense of my
 importance ^{the Maestro} ~~for the Maestro~~—was that ~~he had~~ invited me to use this

invaluable passage during the two hours it would take for Nicholas the Second to parade his horse up Tverskaya Street to the Kremlin. Who else among our ^{us} group was included, I cannot say. I may have been the only one. We ~~did not dare, after all, to attract attention.~~ In any event, my orders were ~~explicit.~~ ^{tell} I was ^{to} initiate nothing. I was ~~there~~ ^{the} to pick up whatever passing thoughts ~~or memories were~~ in Nicky's head, but I was not ~~to~~ undertake any ~~effort whose exercise might incite a headache in Nicky.~~ ^{our subject.} ~~(That would alert~~ the Cudgels.

I obeyed. It was ~~indeed~~ a privilege. On the other hand, there were few surprises. ^{Nicky's} ~~His~~ letters had prepared me for the quality of ~~most of the~~ passing moments in this young ^{his} ~~Tsar's~~ mind.

All the same, I was disappointed. ~~even if that was to be expected.~~ ⁷ I knew that ~~our~~ Nicky was ~~no extraordinary fellow~~ ^{future eminence,} decent within his limitations, but in no way, remarkable. When in the military, given his ^{obvious advantages,} he had risen to the rank of Colonel in the Life Guards. ^{Now, I did find it interesting} All the same, I found it curious ~~(that as he set out on the Processional, he saw~~ himself again as just that, a very young Colonel. I must say he knew his own desires sufficiently to recognize that he would have been happier if he

at that rank. Certainly, could have spent his life as an officer of such middle rank. Indeed, the ^{with a great roar} ~~rearing~~ enthusiasm of the troops as they saluted him on this day of parade, provided him with not only a joy, but a pang. The Crown was going to be placed on his head in five days. After that, he would ^{have} ~~be~~ obliged to give a full farewell to ~~host of~~ old but rousing memories. In no way could he ever see himself again as a young Colonel.

I did have one surprise. His recollections ^{now turned} ~~were~~ openly libidinous. ~~Even on this day~~. If the Maestro had installed one devil of a whore in his heart, she was still calling to him. He could not ignore the direct physical ~~reaction~~. Each great cheer from the troops immediately stirred a tumult in his groin. His English mare, so elegant, so pale in color, ^{also} seemed alert to his ^{prurish} excitement. ^{now began} She began to offer a new set of fancy steps, his wonderful horse with her exquisite sense of dressage. ~~How she pranced!~~ ^{How she pranced!}

Yet, after no more than another minute, these good spirits, ^{however} ~~so~~ shared by horse and rider, were thrust back into gloom. ^{One thought and quick} What quick woe! To be born as a future monarch on the Feast Day of St. Job the Sufferer! What, indeed, had God intended? Why had He scourged poor Job's body? Job had prayed to God with saintly intensity yet his suffering had not abated.

And in five days, ~~in his turn~~, he, Nicky, would be obliged ^{in his turn} to look to God for comparable guidance.

Yet, just as quickly, Nicky's good mood came back. I could only do my best to follow. I will confess that his thoughts came to me in confusing bits and bursts, ~~and~~ with stops, full of clatter and echo, but then, even his dark mood could not remain morose in the face of this promenade. So many decorations had been hung upon the facades of the homes and buildings on Tverskaya Street. Moscow, on this morning, ~~had~~ ^{that contrary to Gorky's view} the radiance of an old lady ^{face} who had never been as beautiful before. A rare beauty. On most mornings, the face of Moscow could be ugly, but on this day of extravagant good weather, Moscow was so bright that it occasioned Nicky to think of glorious hunting days. Even Alexander III, ~~his own great father~~, had seen fit to compliment his son's prowess in the forest. Nicky blushed on receiving so rare a compliment from his ^{parents} father, and proceeded immediately to give the credit to his hunting dogs. Whereupon, Tsar Alexander the Third had said, "One can measure a man by his dogs."

Yes, let the Almighty see him as the loyalest of His dogs. He knew animals, indeed, he knew them. Almost always, when drinking the blood of

a stag just hunted down, the echo of the last shot still alive in the forest, he would feel close to God. The stag, so immaculate in form, had just sacrificed its existence. Why? For Nicky, the answer was ~~simple but~~ profound. This death of a beautiful beast ^{would} ~~was there to~~ deliver closer understanding between God and man. For it was God who had given human beings the right to take the lives of lower creations despite their exquisite beauty. And, at this moment, in full parade, Nicky remembered a blasphemy that once had burned in his throat. It came as he drank his first cup of stag's blood. He had thought: "Is this blood not like Christ's blood? How else can it taste so pure?" Remembrance of such a blasphemy made him wince. It also made him think of ^{which} ~~his~~ duties yet to come. ~~That~~ occasioned his sense of dread. For duty was like a cocked trap. He might feel close to God, he could certainly feel close to beautiful animals, but there were always ministers around, looking to use him. The loyalty of those ministers ^{would never} ~~did not~~ go to him but to the aggrandizement of their office. Deceit was at their fingertips. Self-interest was in their skin.

He could withstand them. So, he told himself. He had a supreme trinity with which to protect himself. It had been his father's guide. Three

principles—Honor, Tradition, and Service. ^(not routine,) ~~Yet~~ ^{All the same, that was} to remain faithful to three

such demanding principles demanded a strong ruler, ^{great purpose, unyielding strength,} Otherwise, Honor

~~would~~ could turn into dishonor, Tradition stiffen into inflexibility, and

Service ^{be} ~~was~~ there to wear one out. Yes, ^{these} his duties were detestable. ^{And yes,} Yes, it

could all go down to disaster. He was not equipped to deal with ~~these~~

endless intrigues. ^{Keeping up} ~~Dealing~~ with his ministers was like falling through space.

Whereas to kill an animal, yet know compassion for the beast—such an act was marrow for the soul.

At this moment, his mare must have felt near enough to her master's thoughts to rear up. Had she just had a sight of the stag's blood? A cry of fear rose from the spectators as the mare stood on her hind legs. The crowd gasped, ^{And} then it applauded. All who were lining the streets, or perched high above up on the roofs of Tverskaya Street—~~at~~ those tens of thousands who witnessed the moment—^{to} offered a great wave of applause at Nicky's grace in restoring the confidence of the horse. ^{A less skillful rider} Another man could have been thrown, but he had steadied the beast. ^{high} ~~A sense of~~ elation traveled through the crowd all the way up to the Spassky gate of the Kremlin. There were tens of thousands of spectators too far ^{ahead} ~~away~~ on the route ~~ahead~~ to have seen it and

so they could not know why they had heard such ^{an oncoming} ~~a roar~~ and roll of applause, but they too ^{began} ~~were in a rush~~ to applaud, ^{even} ~~as~~ as they heard the sound of approbation ^{moving} ~~coming~~ toward them. And Nicky was flushed with pleasure at ^{how} ~~calming~~ his horse. How nicely ^{he calmed his horse} ~~it~~ had all been brought off. Had God been at his side? That was the place where he ~~always~~ ^{was just as} wanted Him to be.

No matter, his sense of doom ^{was just as} ~~also~~ reliable and soon returned. His future duty ^{before him} ~~was~~ still there. He was doomed to aid and abet the projects of his ministers. Yet, ^{to him} ~~to him~~ they were as flimsy as a house of cards, one spineless construction perched on top of another. ^{Now would they ever} ~~And they would never~~ respect him. They were accustomed to the force of his father.

Already, their opinions had been ^{perfectly} ~~able~~ to override his own desire. He had not planned this procession. They had. Over and over, they had told him that this promenade ~~on May 1~~ would be his introduction to the world.

In consequence, the length of the procession ^{toward} ~~itself~~ was itself crucial. It must become the longest parade in history. And he must be seen ^{at the front of} ~~at the front of~~ these many miles of procession. His mother and Alix, however, ^{must be} ~~were to be~~

^{placed} ~~placed~~ ^{They would ride} ~~They would ride~~ at the rear ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ two separate golden coaches. This arrangement, the ministers

insisted, would be ^athe most dramatic way to demonstrate how great,
~~comprehensive~~, and near-to-endless was the extent of Russian power.

Alix had wanted ^{however} to be seated next to her Lovy. Nicky tried to explain
the intentions of the ministers. Her criticism, now silent, remained in her
eyes. It was one matter to feel like a dog before God, but quite another to
suffer that sentiment ^{when} with one's wife. Nothing is worse for a hound who
would be brave than to be told by the eye of the beloved that he is no more
than a timid and conceivably ^{ignoble} ~~odorous~~ creature.

7
~~19~~

Over the five days from May 9 to May 13th, Nicky was engaged in the worst sort of duties. On the 10th of May as well as on the 11th, he held ceremonial receptions, ^{that} which required Alix and himself to stand in one place for hours. This ability to remain affable while not shifting one's feet, nor indicating strain, was ^a ~~one critical~~ measure of royal competence. As each ambassador and celebrated envoy was presented, he had obliged himself to memorize who ^{was} ~~had~~ to receive ^{which side of his} ~~his~~ finest attention. As he complained afterward to Alix and to his mother, his cheeks were sore from being kissed by plenipotentiaries with stiff mustaches ~~and harsh beards~~. Of course, he smiled gaily even as he complained to his women-folk. He would suggest

that this was the laughable part of the endless ironies of social life. But his face did smart. ~~How~~ [≡] his legs ached!

On the 12th of May, the banner of state had to be consecrated, which called for ~~an intricate service~~ ^{the}. The royal couple ~~had~~ to practice each step, ~~and every~~ ^{in an intricate service,} verbal response. ^{(Between such moves, they stood in place,} unmoving, ~~limbs aching~~, regal.

On May 13th, ~~other royal~~ ^{sacred} ornaments were transported ~~from the~~ ^{He did not know why but} ~~armory~~ to the throne hall of the Kremlin Palace. ~~Now,~~ ^a host of anxieties rose into his mood like a pestilence of small insects. He had been told ~~in~~ ^{advance} that it would be an easy day, and the ceremonies were, by now, familiar, but he felt as if hell itself was waiting. He wanted nothing to go wrong on the 13th. For he ~~saw the end of~~ ^{By its end, he} the 14th as deliverance. He would be rid of his present condition. He would no longer be ~~the~~ acting Tsar, but ~~no less than~~ the consecrated Tsar. Himself! Wholly consecrated! Gloom descended. Something was bound to go wrong!

^{Having entered his mind once, I could now gauge many of his thoughts by satisfactions in} I began to think these sentiments were not wholly misplaced. ^{It was his expression and I did not think} ^{I suspect} as if he knew that something malign was in the works. Did he ^{feel} sense that we were near? What he had no instinct for, was ^{what he did not think} the date. Each day from the

tenth to the thirteenth seemed as dangerous to him as the next. He suffered through ceremony after ceremony, ^{and was finally} confused by the ^{misplaced} certainty of his intuition that the bad hour was near. Yet it did not arrive. Dread swells from a lack of corroboration.

For that matter, he was hardly alone in ^{his} these dire anticipations. Given the firm Russian expectation that nothing good ^{will} can prevail for long, there were many who were certain that ^{all} the good weather would disappear by the morning of the Coronation. May 14th would see rain. Instead, Moscow was ^{early morning} alive with sunshine. All ^{any} the morose predictions had to be amended. ~~The~~ ^{scars of Moscow, which is to say, all that} number of women who had been quick to predict floods of downpour (that would ~~definitely~~ be the fault of the new Tsarina) could now do no better than ~~to~~ shake their heads. It would still go wrong. After all, Alix had been converted to Russian Orthodoxy ^{so soon} ~~immediately~~ after the demise of Alexander III. ~~So,~~ ^{these} women now said, "She comes to us behind a coffin." Nonetheless, given the beatitude of this exceptional day, a counter-sentiment soon arose. Many were now saying, "We are close to the end of the century. Maybe the new one, this Twentieth Centure, will be different. Let miracles of beauty and comfort come to us."

8

-20-

Soon enough, I will be able to speak of the preparations ^{we} put together ^{our} for the episode which would occur ^{on the 18th of May, (four days later)} but concerning the Coronation itself, I am not able to offer much ^{that} which is my own. ^(skilled group we had) Given the number of our agents who were on hand, I did, of course, ^{a few} receive further insights on what passed through the mind of Nicholas II. ^{prevailing} But this time, the most direct view still comes ~~nonetheless~~ from diaries. Even earlier, on the 29th of April, a good fortnight before the Coronation, but already steeped in unhappy anticipation, Nicky had written to his mother,

It seems to me that we should look upon all the difficult ceremonies in Moscow as a great trial sent to us by God. . . The only thought that consoles me is that we will never have to perform the same rite again in our lives and henceforth, our existence will be smooth and even, I truly believe this, God will help us!

Not a good deal to go by. If I did not know better, I would have been vexed that the Maestro did not include me in the rare cadre of devils who would be present to infiltrate the Coronation. But I knew that the quickest route to his favor was to accept ^{whatever} ~~whatever~~ position had been assigned. Folly to ^{beg} ~~wish~~ for more. Besides, he had even commended me privately for the action I had suggested, and added, "In the grand scheme of things, the ~~Coronation is a petty event. You will miss nothing.~~" ^{5th}

~~I saw it all, therefore, from a distance.~~ ^{therefore} I was not present in any of the cathedrals, not the Assumption, the Archangel, nor the Annunciation. I did not attend the banquet at the Kremlin Palace. ^{In place of all} ~~All of that came to me from the observations I could have made,~~ ^{qualifying from the} ~~other devils, which is why I am now reduced to describing most of the~~

Diary
 occasion by way again of Konstantin Romanov. Unlike the other Grand

Dukes, he lives in a small palace, not a large one, ^{but} although it is most

elegant, and ^{he certainly keeps a better} ~~no one among these close relatives keeps~~ as I have noted a

Journal ~~than any of them~~ ^{his relatives} better diary. Here, for instance, is his entry on the eve of the Coronation:

KR Diary May 13, 1896, Moscow

So the great day is at hand. The heart beats in anticipation as at something out of the ordinary, significant, full of deep meaning.

This is followed by a full account on May 14, 1896.

There was not a single cloud in the sky. The cathedral square was flooded with bright sunshine. High up in the blue skies, the swallows darted with shrill cries. It was already hot. The troops were forming up, the spectators taking their places in the stalls.

A roar from the square heralded Their Majesties procession. The priest went out to greet and asperge them with holy water. Then Their Majesties entered and bowed to the cathedral icons. The Emperor was concentrated. His face had an

expression of piety and supplication. His whole countenance expressed majesty. The young Tsarina is the embodiment of kindness and goodness, and the Dowager Empress looked as young as she did thirteen years ago on the day of her own Coronation.

When the Emperor and His Consort mounted their thrones, the attendants carrying their regalia blocked my view so I could not see anything. I could only glimpse the Emperor with difficulty as he recited the Credo. His assistant, Vladimir, helped him put on the large purple mantle. At this point, his large Andreev chain with the diamonds, broke.

The chain broke! I queried the devils, but was unable to determine ~~whether~~ ^{whether} ~~anything~~ ^{anything} how much we had to do with that little rupture. Given the number of Cudgels surrounding this ceremony, was it possible that we had ~~been able~~ ^{managed} to ~~cause~~ ^{induce} a chain so sacred as the Andreev to break? Or, was this a gift of chance ~~that we had not designed?~~ [?] Like humans, devils will speak of ~~their~~ ^{their} nerves, of good and bad nerves, of happy resolutions to serious questions—happy, at least, for us—and small dilemmas that can prove as unyielding as a burr you cannot locate in the seat of your garment. For us, the secret to

keeping one's nerves ~~freely~~^{freely} in balance is to live with no unnecessary questions.

Since I will not know the answer, let me go back, at least, to KR's description:

I could just see as He raised the crown onto His own head and took the orb and the sceptre; but I could not see anything of the Empress kneeling before Him, for I was only able to catch sight of Him raising Her to Her feet, kissing Her. I could hardly hear the speech of the Metropolitan. I could hardly hear the prayers read by the Emperor as he kneeled. It was only when everybody went to their knees and the Emperor alone was standing, that I was able to gaze . on Him.

A little later, when the ceremony was over, KR added this line:

The Emperor embraced me; I nearly burst into tears and said, "Christ be with you."

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~~-21-~~

"Christ be with you," KR had said, and there was everything to contemplate concerning those few words. There is, after all, such a labyrinth of relations between the Maestro and the Dummkopf, so many endless compromises, brutalities, games, ^{and} ~~(deceits, reversals, and outright~~ ~~treachery~~ on both sides. With it all, ongoing negotiations do continue between our best devils, and the Lord's most superior Cudgels, who, given the local case, are often His Russian Orthodox priests, still alive, still human, but wholly committed in advance to become Cudgels so soon as they pass out of their mortality. Such is the unwavering intensity of their living oath. Among our own schools of diabolical scholars, there is much

contemplation of the mysteries of priestly behavior, and the value of their ceremonial procedures fortified with their relics, their icons, their instruments of ascension such as the Chain, the Cross, the Crown, ~~their Standards~~, the Sceptre to be placed in the Tsar's right hand, and the Orb in his left, yes, all of that, and the Throne itself, resonant with blessings and curses ~~from the Two Kingdoms~~, that same Throne upon which Tsar Michael

Fyodorovitch sat in the year 1613. Who, then, can disavow the intensity of belief ~~in most of these humans?~~ ^{that is present?} Who among them ~~does not believe~~ ^{these humans, (at the crown)} that an

indispensable magic power bestowed by God has just entered the pores, the flesh, and the heart of the Tsar? ~~I could not even state to a certainty how~~ ^{But I would not}

~~much of this immanence belonged to the Dummkopf Himself, and how~~ ^{that all/ emanated from} ~~much derived from the Maestro's pride at smuggling his wares into God's gifts.~~ ^{I gasped} ~~There was no question in my mind that the Maestro did want Nicky~~ ^{look! I knew in/ in a way} ~~to have total belief in the God whom he expected was out there for him,~~ ^{At this moment, every one in the} ~~was waiting to bless the him and his bride even as they and everyone else in the~~ ^{and the expectation that he}

Cathedral heard the hundred and one bells above and the hundred and one salvos fired outside by cannon to herald the perfection of the Unction. ~~And,~~ ^(all of this) ~~yes, we recognize that indeed, there are hours when these well-guarded~~ ^{Of course, we were also present. This} ~~we are obliged to recognize that there are~~

~~Each of these ceremonies would not only~~
~~bring indeed when~~ ^{set}

~~instruments and relics can intensify an awareness of the spiritual, but then~~
~~instruments would not only~~

they also carry our spells. The two reside together even when mismatched.

(An unhappy marriage is still a marriage! The union ^{proves} even more binding

but
would
carry
our
spells.

than the disharmony. So, I can say that we were not opposed to the force

with which Nicky believed in His God. ^{The Maestro, I knew,} We wanted him to believe that God
~~was prepared to turn that yet to our advantage~~
~~was there, and helping him. We, too, were involved, if in a manner more~~
~~if not on this day then over the years~~
~~complex than any of us but the Maestro could comprehend for all the details~~
~~to come. But for now, let me~~
~~of this ceremony had evolved through centuries of the most delicate and~~

~~incisive infighting and negotiation between the Lords of the Two~~

~~Kingdoms.~~

~~Let me see then if I can suggest the sacerdotal atmosphere~~
~~sacerdotal events on this unique day~~
~~now on May 14th. The procession had set out from the Palace at half past~~
~~7. The procession set out~~ ^{step}
~~ten on this brilliant morning, every inner silence~~

thousand church bells, some as light as the rustle of leaves, others as heavy

~~as groans~~ ^{that would issue} from the heart of the metal itself. All the priests and dignitaries

inside Assumption Cathedral came out to the paragon to welcome the

Monarchs who were sprinkled with holy water as they entered and ^{presented} offered

^{which they kissed} the Holy Cross ~~for kissing~~. Once within, the Trinity was invoked—three

times were prayers repeated, ~~and~~ three times were the holy icons kissed,
In the wake of this royal embrace)
 Only then could Nicky and Alix ~~ascend~~ ^{ascended} the steps of the dais in the center of
 the cathedral. ~~That eye of the holiest within the holiness of the cathedral.~~

We had had ~~as~~ much to do with the building of every church here ~~as~~
 the Cudgels. We were even ~~there~~ ^{present} when Michael Fyodorovitch, the first Tsar
 of the Romanov dynasty, ascended to ~~the~~ ^{this} same Throne, so I will not ~~bother~~ ^{elaborate}
 to describe how the Imperial Regalia were placed at their side, ~~even as the~~ ^{now repeat}
~~Metropolitan of St Petersburg importuned Nicholas II to make his public~~
 confession, ~~(as if he would not!)~~. And Nicky did make his ~~public~~ ^{such a} confession
~~but~~ in a voice spoken so low and with such ~~intent and with such~~ brevity that no
 one could hear. Upon which, having concluded, the Tsar ~~about to~~ took
 the Holy Book and read the prayer for the day, to the chorus of the
 Metropolitan saying, "The blessing of the Holy Spirit be with thee. Amen."

All this would be tiresome to describe unless one is able to feel the
 approach of the Holy Spirit. (On many an occasion, however, His ~~Blessing~~
~~contains~~ ^{as well,} ~~becomes~~ ^{this Blessing is} our gift. Or at the least—let me use the word—~~is~~ ^{infiltrated with}
 our spirit.) ~~I think~~ ^{Indeed,} it was at this point that the Chain of the Order of Saint
 Andrew broke ~~at the exact moment when~~ ^{even as the Tsar} His Majesty bowed his head to

receive it. Of course, the priests ignored ^{that} ~~this~~ small disaster. It was a rule of
 order among these Metropolitans never to indicate that any element in ~~so~~
 a sacred ~~a~~ service has gone awry. Without pause, therefore, the Metropolitan,
 made the sign of the cross, laid his hands on the Tsar's head, and proceeded
 to enunciate two prayers. ^{after which} ~~It was at this moment that~~ Nicholas the Second
^{was able to take} ~~reached out his hands to the arms of the Metropolitan, took up the Crown,~~
~~and placed it upon his own head,~~ ^{and proceed to hold} ~~After which came the Sceptre to his right~~
~~hand and the Orb to his left. He proceeded to establish~~ ^{then introduced} ~~his royal~~
^{to} ~~hindquarters on~~ the seat of the throne of Tsar Michael Fyodorovitch.
^{ancient (I R conceivably intimate)}
 Whatever he felt from such contact, he rose but a few moments later,
 handed over the Regalia to his attendants, and beckoned to Alix, who knelt
 before him on a crimson cushion, its border of golden lace. ^{I will say that} ~~And this lace~~
^{subtle}
 even trembled delicately from the ~~(weight of her knees—the light, I was told,~~
 reflected itself all the way out to the walls of the cathedral. Whereupon
 Nicky touched the Tsarina's head, just a touch, as if to anoint her.

The choir of the Cathedral possessed voices as close to the human
 notion of heaven as is attainable by a chorus. They sang, "We praise Thee,

O God," and again cannon sounded—one more ongoing salvo ^{from} out of one hundred and one guns!

It continued. Such service ^{On the day of} was never permitted to be short. To many, who were illumined at the commencement, weariness of the limbs ^{did creep} crept in.

Boredom, profane boredom, entered the Divine Liturgy. No, not all were ready for Holy Unction, and yet I have to wonder if ^{that (part of)} just there is not the

genius of Russian ^{worship.} Orthodoxy. For the length of the service captured many in the congregation who ^{were without} had had small real interest at the ^{commencement} start. It was as if

one never knew for certain when a heart was there to be captured by the ^{There is no real need, therefore, for} D.K. or, by our Evil One. So I will not enumerate all the steps taken by the

Tsar and the Tsarina after their descent from the dais. A measured three ^{thaps} paces here, and three there, the Trinity to be commemorated again and ^{once} once

again. For those who believed in the Father and in the Son could never be ^{all together at ease} certain about the Holy Ghost. ^{On such} Of such ^{CAG} was our assumption! (The Maestro ^{I have indicated} often hinted that the Holy Ghost ^{was not} was not exclusively the reciprocal love of the Father for the Son, and the Son for the Father, but that we were in the embrace as well.) I know the Maestro always spoke well of the Trinity as if he knew something others did not. I have seen the best man at a wedding

who, unknown to all but the bride, has had carnal knowledge of the lady,
and there is a subtlety in the posture of such a fellow that I do not find
dissimilar to the nuance of appreciation our Maestro is always offering to
the Holy Ghost.

10
~~22~~

On it went, the Tsar and his retinue moved from Assumption Cathedral to Archangel Cathedral where, with a few variations, the service was repeated, and then on to the Annunciation Cathedral. As much again.

I was told that after all this, the Tsar and Tsarina were in need of rest, but were facing a ceremonial meal in the Hall of Facets. In his diary, he would write that night, "All that happened in the Assumption Cathedral, though it seems but a dream, is not to be forgotten for life." To that he added, "We went to bed early." Whether this was from fatigue, or a resurgence of lust from the good and happy sense that it was done, and they would never have to do it again, I could not begin to say. How I would

have liked to have been in their room! At the least, I would have learned how much the corrupt sanctity—I use precisely those two words—the corrupt sanctity of these holy and possibly captured Metropolitans had to do with Nicky and Alix's raptures, ~~nor how powerful had been our emanations from those relics on which we had established our purchase.~~ No matter the extent of my desire, I could not learn how much the ceremonies performed by those most accomplished priests, had been able to serve some sweet, ever-soaring bubble of concupiscence between Nicky and Alix. I would not

know, and so suffered all the pains of a devil. We are frantic when ~~we feel~~ *we feel* excluded from knowledge of the humans ~~we watch~~ *to whom we have been assigned,*

If it seems strange that I am always hungry to learn more, ~~if this~~ *and/* seems at odds with the more common ~~notion~~ *assumption* that God and the devil have all the knowledge they need ~~already~~ *most elementary*, I would suggest that the ~~handiest~~ *handiest*

approach to comprehending my powers, is to assume that I am as much ~~brighter than~~ *advanced beyond* an accomplished scholar as he ~~will be~~ *is* more knowledgeable than a clod in a poorly-endowed school, ~~which is to say, he is much more~~ *ratio* learned. Yet, this ~~distance~~ *ratio* established, I still do not begin to command

answers to many a question that bedevils humankind. I, too, can be unmanned by the extent of all I do not know.

That night, occupied with my own preparations for the Peasants' Festival to take place four days later, I missed the banquet ~~that evening~~ in the Palace of Facets. It was the event of the season for Moscow and for Russia—one of those social occasions that can offer great profit for the future if one has been invited—an orgy of social advancements ~~at the least,~~ for the richest of the nouveau riche.

Of course, there was also some detectable curdling of spirit among ~~these~~ many of the ~~more~~ ambitious souls. They were not always happy with where ~~they had been placed~~ ^{they were seated}. This night took place, of course, before any notion of the A-list versus the B-list was introduced to present American society. Yet one certainly knew on taking one's ~~seat~~ ^{place} and studying the rest of the room exactly how high was one's status in the world—at least as Moscow saw it. Indeed, only the most elevated of the guests were fortunate enough to be placed in the same room as the Tsar and Tsarina. The cream of the diplomatic corps was there, the high clergy, the Holy Synod, the very highest of the court ladies, the Grand Marshal and the Grand Master of

Ceremonies—they were all granted such a privilege. The others, the B-list, had been sent to the Hall of Saint Vladimir. Nonetheless, a blunting of ambition is the last punishment even the most naive of monarchs would ~~wish to arouse~~ ^{think of arousing} among dinner guests, and so Nicholas made a point, in company with Alexandra, of visiting every table in both rooms, followed by the Dowager Empress Marie, the Queen and Prince of Naples, the Duchess of Edinburgh, the Crown Prince of Sweden, Duchess Elisabeth and Grand Duke Alexei, yes, ^{to} after ~~some proceeded~~ ^{they} table by table they went all the way through the Hall of Saint Vladimir, and were in turn greeted ^{at each table with a special} ~~with an ovation that could come~~ ^{the kind of happy ovation that could come} only from the parched throats of people who had been ready to assume that ^{no matter what} ~~after all~~ they had gone through to obtain a high invitation, they were to be ^{than to see} ~~ignored, after all~~. What applause when they saw the Tsar and Tsarina approaching,

I will not describe the meal. ~~Since I do not need to eat except when~~ ^{occupying} ~~installed in human form,~~ ^{carry on a hunt} ~~it would give me pleasure to describe the gold~~ ^{categories} ~~plates, the French dishes, the species~~ ^{hands} of caviar, the wines (French and Crimean), the vodka, the champagne. All banquets, no matter how fancy, succeed finally in generating the same gastric acids in those who have been

blessed by an invitation. (Be it added that those who were not used to being ^{personally} served individually by three waiters in red coats with gold trim, ^{didn't keep} certainly enjoyed the repast.) The menus were ~~lavishly~~ illustrated, the Imperial Band played throughout dinner, and the Palace of Facets sparkled. ~~It was the~~ ~~culmination of the Feast of Lights.~~

In that era, journalists were not encouraged to speak ill of the great and mighty, ~~certainly not on formal occasions~~. So they all declared that this ^{a culmination of the Feast of Lights,} banquet in the Palace of Facets would never be forgotten by posterity. The Palace of Facets was, after all, renowned for the rarity of its celebrations. Only the most important events in Russian history could open such ^{ancient} doors. Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great ^{help} ~~had~~ had their Coronation banquets here. One of the reporters from America, bewitched by the honor of attending (although I never learned whether she was in the front room or ^{near} the back) concluded her piece by adding:

So ended the greatest day of our lives, the one to be remembered for years. We all felt that we had seen the grandest sight that could possibly be

**imagined and we were pretty lucky mortals,
everything had gone so beautifully.**

She all but said, and then she did say, that such beauty introduced one "to the realm of the gods." Another American reporter, John Logan, stated that he now believed not only in Russia's immense potential for grandeur, but in Nicholas' legitimacy. If there were those who would challenge his opinion, he, for one, would add that Russia was more prosperous and more peaceful than she had been for years.

**The restlessness of the radicals seems to be
soothed, let us hope permanently, and let us hope that
all friends of true reform may find in the reign of
Nicholas II the completion of all that is noble in
Russian history as well as the dawn of an era of
development and advancement. . .Nicholas II begins
his reign with the good wishes of the entire world.
Monarchies, empires, and republics alike united to
wish him 'bon voyage' on his momentous journey.
From Germany, from France, from a venerable
Queen who has reigned longest in the history of
England's throne, from our own President, and from**

many other rulers of nations great and small, he received messages of warmest greeting, and above all, the great heart of the common people with a single impulse felt that it has in the kindly, smiling face of this youthful Tsar the promise of a reign beneficial and just.

I had to wonder
 Passage into Nicky's mind was, of course, not open to me at this hour, but from a few of my colleagues, I learned where everyone sat, how they dressed, what they put into their stomachs. That, however, told me nothing about Nicky's future dilemmas. The people who surrounded ^{Nicky} him were so wealthy, and the multitude of peasants who had swarmed into the city were so poor, that I could not determine whether Nicky felt at all near to this ~~colossal separation~~ ^{his sensitivity to this}, this schism in his realm. I felt as if ^{how much better} a valuable opportunity had been lost. I had not come near enough to Nicholas the Second to be able to approach some understanding of why the Dummkopf placed ^{His} so many hopes in ^{the} that young man. I was hungry indeed for more. One of the ~~damnable~~ disadvantages of being a devil is the manner in which we become obsessed, just so, with ^{the need for insight} details.

11
~~23-~~

Certain aspects of the Coronation, however, were becoming more *comprehensible* tangible to me. I could see why so many of the Nicky's most influential advisors had come to the conclusion after Alexander III died that ~~the~~ ^{this} Coronation of his son had to ~~be presented as monumental~~ ^{It must} surpass all remembrances of former grand celebrations in Europe. After all, ^{The} ministers were facing ^{gigantic} problems, ^{after all,} (Russia was immensely rich, ~~and~~ ^{and} it was also extraordinarily poor. If the country was ever to become an economic power *comparable* ^{equal} (to Great Britain or to America, then huge ~~incoming foreign~~ ^{and a good scale} investments were needed for this period, and at a prodigious rate. Yet, to attract such involvement, the rapid completion of the Trans-Siberian

Railroad, begun some years earlier, was paramount. ^(in order to open) Open trade to the Far
~~East would develop Russia's economic relations with Europe. To amass~~
~~enough foreign funds to keep building that railroad, however,~~ ^{find} Russia had
^{Needing a huge inflow of} been obliged to export most of its grain to the West. The Minister of
^{Constructing} Finance under Alexander III, Ivan Vyshnegradsky, declared that the country
 had no other choice. Grain was the only commodity Russia ^{could} was able to
 offer in bulk. So, ^{enough of the} the greater part of their harvest was exported. ^{to bring} That
~~decision brought~~ on the famine of 1891. Millions of peasants died of
 starvation.

Now, five years later, hundreds of thousands of the descendants of
 these peasants had come to Moscow ^{from} from hundreds of miles away. ^{Once} To the
^{arrived} surprise of many Muscovites, they congregated at the various railroad
 stations in the city. ^{Many} Half of them ^{Many} seemed to be sleeping there. This
 occasioned a mordant comment from the Maestro: "Of course the peasants
 are fascinated by railroad stations. Five years ago they watched all their
 grain being taken away on freight cars. Now, they wait at railroad stations
 to see what will come back."

Be assured, the peasants were of interest to us. Without their allegiance, ^{How could he retain his} ~~Nicholas II would have little~~ legitimacy? He could not count on the cities. The proletariat (so recently peasants themselves) now lived ~~for~~ ^{with} the most part in a sordid state. Overcrowded housing ~~was~~ accompanied by cholera, typhus, syphilis, and tuberculosis. Alcoholism ^{was} ~~had been declared~~ the leading social problem, followed by prostitution.

^(much, however, ~~not~~ fulfilled)
Vishnegradsky's measures ~~served~~, however, their economic purpose.

~~Because of the Trans-Siberian Railroad,~~ Investment in heavy industry did triple from 1890 to 1900, ^{In balance to such growth,} ~~even as~~ the sewers of Moscow were still flooding ^{& loaded} ~~(slum streets in summer and workers were freezing to death in winter—to be replaced by other workers. Peasants kept leaving the land to come into the~~ ^{free froze} ~~emigrating from~~ ^{the} city.

^{There}
These peasants who stayed back in their villages lived in one-room log cabins ~~with no more for furniture than a stove~~. The insides had long been blackened by smoke. There were benches along the wall. There were also icons on the wall, cheap reproductions, long-faded, yet a visitor who came into the house would bow first to these holy representations. Only then would he greet the master of the house who was usually the oldest

peasant in the room. As a master, he had the best place to sleep, which was on top of the oven, still warm from the remains of the fire that had heated the evening meal. The rest of the family slept on the floor. To undress was unheard of. When the room was not too cold, the men might take off their boots before lying down. They had a saying: "The reek ^{of} from your feet will shoo the flies." ^{but} All the ~~same~~, mothers lived in terror that newborn infants ^{could} might be driven into madness by horse-fly bites ~~before they could say their~~

first word. Who knew? These flies were termed devils. A canard. They are part of the Dummkopf's Creation. One of His Errors. (In the beginning, He had been much too fascinated by their agility.)

Nonetheless, there was a quality in these peasants that I found moving. I respected them more than I thought I might. The women particularly—they were all old before their time, lined, misshapen, and yet many were as strong as draft animals. And at the main railroad station, through which I passed for a look, I was struck by how they rarely moved, neither men nor women. They ^{bore no resemblance to city} ~~were not like other~~ people who wait at the station—no, at their worst, at their least, they still showed the marks of the famine of 1891. They had so little sense of their importance that one could

not even speak of them as humble. Rather, they had the patience of cattle.

Yet, this ^{did give an} ~~all gave~~ me a first intimation of why the Dummkopf ^{was} seemed to believe He could regain some of the powers He had lost to us by now,

devoting His attention to Russia and the Russians. In all these poor, ugly,

big, strong, dumb men and their plain sturdy mates, ^{there was still} there was an

^{a sense of future potential,} ~~undercurrent~~ ^{reduce} ~~fine could feel much potential.~~ Since our aim is to traduce

^{possibilities,} human nature, ^{our perception of} we also look to develop the acumen to see future potentiality

^{promise} in those humans in whom ~~might~~ might be buried. So, I will repeat: There was ^{an interesting undercurrent} ~~something extraordinary~~ ^{these peasants} to be sensed here. ~~They might be mean, small-~~

minded, ignorant, bewildered, even stupefied, but all that might amount to

no more than ^{protective} ~~the wax that protects~~ ^{over} a fine jelly in a jar. Beneath their torpor,

behind their stupidities, I could sense a capacity to be strong, wise,

generous, fair, loyal, yes, even understanding. Was that why Tolstoy and

Dostoyevsky ^{so} ~~had~~ [?] harranged their readers ^{was there} ~~to pay attention to the~~ buried

genius to be found in the peasantry of Russia? We had even been ordered

by the Maestro—the best of us, at any rate—to read Tolstoy and Chekhov

and Dostoyevsky, and do so with large respect for their product. "Good

writers are the only humans we are obliged to tolerate," the Maestro was

fond of saying. Neitzsche was another of his favorites. He was fascinated by Nietzsche.

These days, however, the Maestro pays greater attention to the stars of television and the movie screen. Certainly, this is true in America.

12
~~24~~

My day was arriving—the event that was to be our contribution to the festivities. *As we knew, his ministers*

~~While Nicky's Coronation, designed to arouse the respect of the, world, could be seen as a success, Russia's internal problems did remain.~~

~~For years, the Okhrana had been collecting reports on the violence of the, sentiments among a small but most concentrated section of the working~~

~~class. So, the ministers had advised Nicky that a show of generous concern~~

~~for the peasants ought to be undertaken.~~ Very soon after the Coronation, a

~~vast peoples' fete would, therefore, take place.~~ *It would be vast* Meanwhile, Nicky and Alix,

In the interim,

~~Following the 14th of May,~~
 would be busy, hour after hour, day after day, ~~every day after the 14th,~~
 visiting ^{military} with the foreign ~~generals~~ and statesmen still present.

So, it was not until May 18, that ^{an} ~~a~~ grand and immense gathering in Khodynskoe Field would honor all the peasants now in the city, a convening for those who had traveled hundreds of miles and, for a few, more than a thousand miles by railroad, by wagon, even on foot in order to be in

Moscow when the Tsarevitch became the Tsar. ^{The} ~~This~~ event could

demonstrate, therefore, the extent of Nicky's love for his peasants. It ^{would} ~~was to~~

celebrate their value. It ^{would} ~~was to~~ entertain them. There ~~would be~~ ^{would appear} circus

performers, singers and dancers, ^{would appear and at} as well as numerous stands and kiosks for

~~the distribution of gifts offered by the Tsar and Tsarina,~~ ^{would be distributed} The great open

stretches of Khodynskoe Field were ready to receive half a million souls.

Four hundred thousand iron mugs, painted in red and gold, ^{bearing Nicky's initials,} would be given

~~out free for the peasants, their to keep as commemorative trophies. These~~ ^{to the peasants,}

~~mugs would bear the initials N H embossed in gold above a double-headed~~

~~Russian eagle.~~ There would also be silk scarves for the women, ten

thousand gallons of beer, and ~~hundreds of thousands of finely wrapped~~

packages of food containing Russian bread, walnuts, sausage, cookies, and

jams accompanied by a small book about the Coronation wrapped up in an embroidered handkerchief with the Tsar and Tsarina's initials.

We had done our best ~~already~~ to tarnish the charm of some of these gifts. Our Russian agents, having worked for years with venal caterers, saw to it that many packages of food would be spoiled. ^{That} ~~It~~ was an old practice.

To face the horde in the field, Nicky, Alexandra, and members of the court would arrive around midday prepared to sit in state on a Royal Pavilion ^{most recently} erected at one end of the parade ground ~~for just this purpose~~. This Royal Pavilion, ~~flanked on either side by two large stands~~ ^{either}, would offer places ^{to} ~~for over~~ a thousand notables. Nearby would be another pavilion with seats for an additional thousand men and women who would pay handsomely for the privilege, middle ~~class~~ ^{people} ~~for the most part, and of no particular standing other than they were there with the money for entrance to the stands.~~ ^{really}

Among a few officials, there was concern that there might not be enough police or the occasion. Only three officers had been assigned to oversee a total of one hundred and fifty Cossacks ^{who would serve} ~~serving~~ as enforcers. Needless to say, these three officers, being stalwarts in command of

~~felt some unhappy~~ ^{They had no} security, possessed already the unhappiest anticipations. ~~No~~ more than one

hundred and fifty Cossacks to control half a million people! ^{Yet} But when their

^{had} commander applied for more guards, ^{but} he received no help from the authorities. There ^{is} was a shortage of available police, he was told. ^{that} It was

true. ^{They were} The bulk of them had to be stationed at the outskirts of Moscow,

guarding every approach to the city. After all, the police had already

expelled more than four thousand suspected radicals. ^{Other} Moreover, large sums

had already been spent upon the costs of security during the processional

into the city on May 9th, the ceremonial ^{occasions} days that ensued, and then the

Coronation on the 14th. Now, it was the eighteenth of the month. ^{The} Funds

^{money available} assigned for security were depleted. ^{was depleted} Any precaution that did not concern

the immediate protection of the Tsar was obliged, therefore, to receive

^{small} minimal attention. ^{Of course, when at} So soon as the Tsar arrived at Khodynskoe Field, there

^{there would be} would be companies of soldiers to protect him, but such a guard was not

required ^{would be arranged} there on the night before. Police would be needed elsewhere in the

city. One could not have thieves running wild.

So, we were ready to take advantage. Thirteen years ago, following the Coronation of Alexander III, Khodynskoe Field had been the site for a

Several unhappy episodes had
 peasants' festival. In the course of several disorders in the throng, thirty
~~taken the lives of twenty peasants,~~
 peasants had indeed lost their lives, but that was ~~taken as~~ an acceptable loss.
~~One could not be held accountable for every~~
 Large crowds were not wholly controllable.
~~lost money mishap in so large a gathering.~~

Indeed, it was Nicky who decided to hold this open-air celebration in
 the Peasants' Festival in ~~to initiate~~
 the same place. He wanted this Peasants' Festival to be seen as the

confirmation of a new tradition. "From what you tell me," he said, "we need
~~and use of such~~
 more traditions, do we not?" A murmur of approbation came up from his
 ministers at this remark and that was most agreeable to him.
~~determined the matter~~
~~for him.~~

One problem that had not been examined ~~sufficiently~~, however, was the field

itself. Khodynskoe was ~~no longer as usable as it had been in 1883.~~ By

In 1891, a large exhibition had been held ~~on that land,~~ ^{there} and a good deal of
~~many a~~ temporary construction had ~~taken place.~~ ^{been put up.} Afterward, no funds were available

in the city treasury for restoring the excavations ~~and~~ ^{so} the surface of the
 field was now scarred with sand pits, sand holes, and un-capped wells.

~~Some of the larger sand pits had widened into ravines.~~ Some of the pits

were fifteen feet deep. Others were small chasms. A few gullies had been
 boarded over with planks ~~that~~ ^{which} could yet prove a hazard. ~~Broad paths had~~ ^{They were flimsy,}

been laid out between these obstacles and it was ~~supposed~~ ^{assumed} that people might ~~would~~

Prudently,
 move along with safety, indeed, there was enough level ground for half a million visitors, ^{since} but there no allowance had been prepared for unruly movement. Nonetheless, Khodynskoe Field was the Tsar's preference, ^{no} No minister was ready ~~then~~ to dwell on its drawbacks.

In truth, there ~~did seem to be more~~ ^{were other} immediate concerns. How were the multitudes who were to come to Moscow ^{would} for the events, ever to be sheltered? Particularly the ~~peasants~~ ^{peasants}. Some might have family members who ~~now~~ ^{go} worked in factories, and could take them in. ~~They~~ ^{peasants} were used to sleeping on the floor. The odor of old blouses and old pants, ~~the grease of~~ ^{Moreover,} sheep-skin jackets and sweat-ridden capes, caftans, and black woolen coats, might add to the reek of the tenement, but what was new about that? ~~On the~~ ^{Moreover,} other hand, there was not a monastery in Moscow which would not offer food to the pilgrims. And, of course, there were the railroad stations. In any ^{case, wherever they had been sleeping} case, on the night before the Festival, a great number of poor visitors came early to the field. ^{so many as} By evening, hordes were already installed on the ground. Some said these early arrivals added up to one hundred thousand, other officials estimated ^{so many as} three hundred thousand. There was drinking, there was singing, there were bonfires. Balalaikas were played. And the word was

out. Gifts would be given out early. We had disseminated a rumor that the ~~best~~ presents would be set out for distribution at dawn. Thousands of peasants

moved up, therefore, in the middle of the night. Wooden barriers shielded the huts and kiosks and counters ~~where the gifts were to be displayed but~~ *that would show the gifts,*

but before long, many of these *began* pressing on these barriers, *and in turn,* were being pushed *should* from behind. ~~And~~ then, a couple of hours before first morning light, some good part of the working populace of Moscow began to arrive. The slums were marching in. *They had also heard the rumor.*

Back in the city on this night of the 17th, a gala took place at the Bolshoi Theatre. *There were so many ladies* ~~So many ladies were in~~ (their finest diamonds that the glow

of the gems—as many remarked—could compete with the sparkle of the footlights. Yet, *interest* ~~during~~ *at* intermission, *many of the gentry were* the gentry were talking about the Field. *It was said that one million souls would throng to* ~~Who could believe how many would be at Khodynskoe?~~ Some said one

~~million.~~ One million souls! "Yes," was the word at the Bolshoi gala, *of the common people* "Never before have so many turned out to offer their reverence to the Tsar."

~~Never so many of the common people.~~

Actually, the distribution of the gifts *was not* ~~had been~~ scheduled to begin *at* ~~at~~ *two hours* ten in the morning. *That would take place two hours* before Nicholas II

would arrive with the Tsarina. But the Cossacks ^{plus} and the few police on hand were already concerned about the crowd ^{They were, too hard,} that was pressing against the barriers. There was a dreadful restlessness. Peasants ^{have begun,} kept focking the posts that supported the barriers. ~~Even before daylight, it seemed the fences,~~
~~would not hold.~~ Many in our ~~sizable~~ cohort were at work inspiring rumors.

"The good stuff is gone," we had prompted them to say. ^{So, even before}
^{daylight, it did not seem likely that the fences}
~~Some of this had been foreseen, some was improvised in the light of~~

~~the hour, but so soon as we saw how few police were present, we had,~~
~~known it was bound to work.~~ Rumors ^{now} were piled up like building blocks,
lie upon lie! "The mugs are gone. The beer is gone." "No, ^{it went a} the beer is not
^{Counten rumor, "the beer is not}
~~gone, but there is little left." The further back in the crowd that these~~
~~rumors wandered, the quicker did those at the rear push forward.]~~
~~The first~~
~~barriers began to tilt. Then they were knocked down,~~ ^{The moment} ~~the nearest kiosks~~
~~were instantly overrun.~~ ^{being} Peasants were knocked to the ground ^{as} as they
were reaching for the gifts. Others, rushing forward, stepped over them.

And the crowds kept surging up from the ranks to the rear, ~~compressing~~
^{A compressed}
~~everybody in the middle. An impacted~~ mass of humans was now jamming

^{Somewhat}
~~into the~~ thousands who were up front by the booths. ~~Now, on every patch~~

of ground, a man had no more than to stumble and he could be gone.

Instantly, another would trip over him. A third would fall, a fourth would

be knocked down as other bodies charged forward. Women would scream.

Children would wail. During the first few minutes, countless people were

shoved, propelled, thrust, and driven down into the largest sand pits where

they churned about in a maelstrom of grips and twists and holds as they

searched for enough leverage to climb out of the pit even as others were

falling on top of them, driven from behind. Bodies ground down upon

bodies. I had never heard such a sound of woe. Thousands of throats were

roaring or screaming, and the sounds were soon unearthly. As humans were

propelled forward in rising waves, smaller people were thrown upward like

spray. A few bodies were propelled into the air. Children screamed under

the weight of boots clambering over them. Who could count how many

thousands of heels were trampling upon hundreds of torsos? Some bodies

were even saved. Some! A few women, a few children were lifted overhead

and passed from arm to arm to avoid the crush overtaking them. When the

few who were rescued reached the edge of the crowd, they collapsed like

minnows in the shallows, not able to breathe nor stir, then able to breathe, or

just about. Along the edges, onlookers were braying out the names of family members. Some showed faces petrified by grief. Already!

It came to an end in much the manner that a storm dies down. Those who had broken through to the booths and trampled over the kiosks continued to be ~~catapulted~~ ^{mowed} forward by others behind them, until finally they reached one end of the field. Others wedged their way off to the side. Some in the rear, hearing the high note of ~~the~~ screams up ahead, drew back. They pushed no longer. As the storm abated, peasants moved off in four directions. The dead lay on the ground and in the pits.

In these early hours of daylight, the ~~field was~~ ^{fallen wave} still quivering in ~~its~~ chaos, but ~~the~~ disorder had spread already to the streets and avenues of

Moscow. ~~Some~~ ^{to leave} tens of thousands of Muscovites who had been planning to be present at the official opening scheduled for ten in the morning ~~had left~~ ^{chose}

^{to leave} (their homes early. Now, as they approached on foot, ~~they saw~~ ^{were} wagons coming toward them carrying a burden of the dead, and these bloody

wagons were accompanied by men and women wailing in grief. Relatives who had managed to find ~~any~~ ^{one} of their ~~own~~ fallen now trudged by, weeping.

Some were hysterical. They would laugh at one moment, groan on the next.

Not knowing whether to consider themselves fortunate to have avoided the catastrophe, they also had to wonder if they were in peril of losing their souls ~~forever~~. They kept feeling this unholy readiness to laugh. Yet how could they not laugh if the smallest, meanest part of them had not secretly despised the dead relative for years? Yes, by a little bit. Yes, it had all happened and yet, it could not possibly have happened.

Those who were still coming toward Khodynskoe Field grew bewildered. These faces, all these faces, ^{coming and the fields} screaming and sobbing. ^{came from some of them} Even ^{various stages of} grunts of hideous laughter. ^{still} Every wagon carried bodies in ruined peasant finery. Many of the dead ^{lay on the earth} with bloody noses, discolored faces, broken limbs, twisted bodies near to nude. ^{On the wagons, many} More than a few had been ^{wrapped in other people's} covered with remnants of clothes found on the ground, ^{was} or torn from the ^{cover} body of one corpse to hide the nakedness of another.

Later came estimates of how many lives had been lost. ~~The best guess was three thousand~~, Nicky, when first told, heard that the number was three hundred, but his minister was well known for his habit of reducing any volume of bad news by ninety per cent. Later, come nightfall, Nicky was told that it was 1300 people. ^{The final toll was} closer to three thousand,

Earlier, the
 The first wagon-loads of unidentified dead bodies *had been* taken to Vagankovsky Cemetery. Until this hour, that ground had been *kept on* restricted for centuries to followers of Orthodoxy. On this morning, however, it could hardly be determined whether a given victim was certifiably Orthodox, and the first impulse *of* the police officials *of the burial squads*, formed before *before* the dead had even been counted, was to get these bodies out and away. Quickly! ~~Get it done~~ before the Tsar arrived.

The impact of these promiscuous deliveries of unidentified corpses gave a further profit to our purpose, *It proved* a benefit not yet comprehended to its full extent by us *until* we come to the mass graves of the Second World War. But, I anticipate. It is too soon to speak of the Maestro's *disruption of* subsequent ventures into the convoluted process of infesting reincarnation *by* with confusion, collision, ~~and~~ disorder *except* and an excess of deaths too mingled with *too* another to permit *any* *kind* of judgement. Along the route, *many* the burial wagons took Tverskaya Street. The morning was reaching into its full glory. It was the tenth extraordinarily fine day in a row. The onion domes of the forty times forty churches of Moscow were resplendent in the sun. The domes, covered with gold leaf, glowed as if they belonged to the sun, and their bells, celebrating this much-

awaited peasants' event, offered their ^{variety of} clangor, loud or delicately toned. ^{But} ~~to~~
^{to} the ears of those walking away from the field, the sound of ~~seething~~
weeping, guttural misery and uncomprehending rage ^{composed} began an unholy ~~feud~~
^{dis harmony} with the bells.

I, however, was in a state of arousal at the extent of our triumph (and
even in ^{some} ~~a~~ small wonder at the size of it). So, my senses ^{were} ~~had become~~
~~extraordinarily~~ ^{see into} keen. I felt as if I could ~~enter~~ the failings of half the people I
passed. So many of them were sick in heart, sick in soul, sick in stomach,
lost in the vortex of a horrible dream that clung like slime to their spirit.
Meanwhile, the sun reflected the gold of the onion domes above each
church. For the past half year, laborers in high peril of slipping off the steep
pitches of church roofs rimed in winter ice had labored nonetheless at
fastening new leaf to these gilded domes.

13
~~-25-~~

At noon, when the Tsar and Tsarina arrived, most of the litter on Khodynskoe Field had been cleared. There was still a scatter of torn clothing that lay ^{on} ~~along~~ the sand and in the pits like a lower order of carnage, but the bodies had been removed, first by the police, and then by a regiment of soldiers quickly brought in, ~~and~~ ^{by} ~~now~~ the last of the dead had been carried off to sheltered areas behind the outlying kiosks and hutches. There, the remains were laid out in orderly rows, there to sit until more wagons could be brought to stack them up for transport to the cemetery. Some relatives did come by before this occurred and there were ~~still~~ ^{at} shouts and screams of recognition but Nicky and Alix were far enough away not to live

^{on sounds,}
 with such sights ~~and sounds~~. Besides, a chorus, long prepared, had been
 installed in front of the Royal Pavilion, and this group was composed of
 more than a thousand singers, ~~and~~ ^{and} for now, their voices ~~certainly~~ prevailed.
 The several viewing stands were filled with ~~their assembly of~~
 foreigners and Muscovites in their best uniforms, the ladies in afternoon
 finery. Colorful ^{Bunting} was arrayed above the pavilion, flowers were
 everywhere, ~~and these hothouse bouquets were equal to~~ bursts of gaiety ~~for~~
^{to} ~~they~~ reinforced the social principle that one must never give recognition to
 unpleasantness during a high and ^{formal} ~~mighty~~ social occasion. I have been
 present at fetes, galas, ^{or} ~~and~~ soirees ~~in the most fashionable rooms~~ when ~~one~~
 of the guests, usually one of ours, unable to control himself, breaks wind.
 Usually, the repugnance of the odor is ^{usually proportion} in direct ~~relation~~ to the involuntary
 nature of the act, (plus the ^{funny} ~~depth~~ of our Satanic investment in the client's
 passageways.) Behold!—the pestilence sits in the air for a few moments.
 Sometimes, longer. No one remarks on it. For the social record, it has not
 happened. This ability to ignore the repellent has always been the ingrained
 strength of the upper classes.

Now, hearing a chorus of gifted voices one thousand strong offering a heavenly vocal collation to ^{several} ~~ten~~ thousand onlookers, no one is about to recognize that but a few hours ago, horrors ~~had~~ occurred. No, the Russians, given their pan-European desire to ape the best manners of the British,

^{now} looked to demonstrate how close they were in kinship to all those English ^{ladies} ~~and gentlemen~~ ^{and gentlemen} select who might be ^{glimpsed} ~~seen~~ on a notable day at the races. The people in the stands looked perfect, and would have been, but for one surprise. An unbelievably strong wind blew up without warning, and it scattered clouds of dust all over the Khodynskoe parade ground. This noxious whirlwind ^{at the edge of Khodynskoe, But} soon reached the pavilions. There should have been no such wind on so glorious a day. All had been still. ^{Yet, just} ~~But~~ the wind had come. I hardly knew if I was witnessing the fury of the Dummkopf or the rage of the dead.

On the tail of this wind, the Tsar and Tsarina arrived. Everything changed. It was as if the gale was ready to be dispelled by an uproar of cheers so loud one could barely hear the band, that immense orchestra of national brass as it played the anthem with stentorian exaltation. The pavilion guests bowed to left and to right, and waved their arms in salute. Khodynskoe Field was now only half visible in the dust as the near ground

began to fill up from all the latecomers arriving ^{safely now} ~~now in safety~~ after the tumult of the morning. Soon enough, Nicky and Alexandra waved to the new people flocking in, ^{and} ~~but~~ shortly after, ~~they~~ left the pavilion to step into their carriage in order to be driven a few hundred yards to Petrovsky Palace where the Tsar was to receive selected groups of chosen citizens. In the glimpse I caught of him, he looked exceptionally pale and I wondered if he knew ^{what} ~~how much~~ had happened. I suspect his information was still highly imperfect, but in any event, the order of ~~the~~ prearranged ceremonies was maintained. Not a quarter mile from Khodynskoe, Nicky and Alix now stood at the ^{Petrovsky} ~~palace gates~~ ^{these} ~~the~~ to receive the new delegations. There were fourteen ~~such~~ in all. As I was later to learn, a special gift from the Cathedral of Christ the Savior was presented to Nicky and Alix ^{first} ~~in~~ a large platter for ceremonial bread and salt. Nine months had been spent by eight men carving this platter out of crystal. Nicky screwed up his buttocks to force a little gratitude into his expression, an act of forced charm detectable only to connoisseurs like myself. Then, he proceeded to thank the eight workers for the splendid niceties of their work. Next came a Cavalry regiment, the Georgiyevsyks. A delegation of peasant women was followed by

distinguished artists of the Moscow Imperial Theater. After which, a delegation from the Moscow coachmen paid their respects. There was even a showing of the Moscow All-Believers who offered a silver platter on which Nicky's initials had been laid out in diamonds. They were soon replaced by an army of contractors who had decorated Moscow with lights and false fronts for the Processional on May 9th. Representatives of the caterers, plus the Society of the Hunt, the Moscow Racing Club, and even (for their centuries of service since the time of Peter the Great) a few of the leaders of the Moscow German colony came up to file by. After this, Nicky and Alix were able to enter the palace and preside over a feast for the common people. That is to say— the honored representatives of the common people. Inserting his remarks between choruses of cheers, Nicholas II spoke to these distinguished plebian elders: "The Empress and I heartily thank you for your expression of love and dedication. We do not doubt these feelings are shared by your fellow villagers. Care for your welfare is as close to my heart as it is to that of our Father and Beloved Savior."

It is not easy to believe, ^{but} I happened to look at the time. To me, ^{this} ~~that~~ is no more than a phrase ^{for} I hardly needed a watch. But then, no devil, clothed or invisible, is ever without a clear sense of the instant. So I can state that at the exact moment when the Tsar was making this speech, an unsavory event occurred at the morgue, ^{(I know they were yes, at this precise instant which I} ~~happen to know~~ ^{Simultaneous events a) the} because another devil reported ~~that~~ ^{the} exact time to me later.) ~~Two of the corpses who had been carried from the transport wagons to be~~ ^{and} laid out on the morgue tables, happened to rise up out of their comatose state. They even cried out in unison. From opposite ends of the room! They had been trampled near to death, and had appeared inert, but now they were obviously alive.

If I mention these upstarts, it is to emphasize the conjunction of the two occasions. I would even learn that Alix was suffering her own climax of foreboding at what had to be near to the same moment. For each of the guests who came forward, she had smiled and bobbed her head, still a pouter pigeon. But she was living in terror. She was filled with a thought that her own death was near and so was Nicky's. In what danger her husband lived! After such a hideous event, would Nicky not have to pay?

And for the first time, she allowed herself to feel an open wrath against the Russian people. Why, she asked herself, had they had to riot? She even said to her husband, "There is so little courtesy among our Moujiks." Nicky did not know whether to be offended or pleased that she spoke of our Moujiks.

These thoughts, of course, I received at second hand from another of our special Russian devils who maintained his entree to one of Alix's ladies-in-waiting.

A half mile away from Petrovsky Palace, some soldiers were laying out the last of the victims, and on those far fringes of Khodynskoe Field, some hundreds of peasants and Muscovites kept searching for the members of their families who had disappeared earlier. Meanwhile, in the palace courtyard, Nicky went from table to table to offer greetings to the villagers as they ate their Poltava Borscht, their veal with fresh greens, cold whitefish, roast spring chicken, duckling, fresh and pickled cucumbers, dessert, fruit, wines.

Back on the field, there were new events to greet the late-comers. Gypsy dancers were performing. Bands. Jugglers. Ice cream was being

sold. And behind the hutches, corpses were still being laid out in rows even

as a few ^{of the desperate} kept looking for lost family, staring into the battered faces of the ^{who had} humans ^{but} perished hours ago ^{despite their disfigurement} who might ^{still} reveal some ~~smashed or ravaged~~ feature that was recognizable. And a few

^{still} even laid a few copper coins ^{And in} on one or another stranger's chest. In some places, ~~however~~, piles of bodies did remain. A heap of fifty here, twenty

there, arms and legs at outraged angles, filthy clothing. Doctors knelt in the dust to see if they could ^{detect whether anyone was still} separate out any person who might be ~~breathing~~.

^{All of a sudden,} Almost at the same moment, ^{was} one of the dead ~~could~~ no longer to be counted ^{upon}

as dead. He rose up. His wife, who had been weeping beside him, began to beat herself on the breast. "God is here!" she screamed, "God is here! God has saved you!" But another family, just fifty feet away, who had been covertly relieved at the demise of their long-lived family tyrant, were now shrieking. ^{that} For the old wretch ^{also} ~~had~~ opened his eyes. "The devil sent you back, you monster!" his wife cried out.

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~~26~~

It is time to explain a little more of my relation to the events at the field. Even as I was not present at the Coronation so was I not a leading actor during the riots just described. I had no more than the satisfaction that I had foreseen the advantages of entering this project and the Maestro had approved my intuition. If I assumed, therefore, that I would be one of the Maestro's field officers during ^{the event} ~~the disruption of the proceedings~~, I was disabused of such a notion before I even came down to Moscow from St. Petersburg. The Maestro stated it directly: I was not sufficiently familiar with Russia to command the Muscovite devils we would use. Better, for you, suggested the Maestro, to keep a close watch on the Romanovs and

these
 their family discords. These are bound to increase after our task is done.
~~But I am~~
 Can I claim to have felt no disappointment at being relegated to a tangential
 proceeding?

Yet, as I studied the letters, and became, to my limited degree,
 familiar with Nicky, Alix, and a few of their relatives, I had to recognize the
 value of the Maestro's choice. But I also knew (and this is where I felt the
 pang) that he had concluded I was not strong enough for the job. Which is
 to say—not pitiless enough. That ^{pinched} ~~interfered with~~ my vanity. I had ^{happened} ~~assumed~~
~~I was~~ ^{I was} ~~seen as~~ ^{capable} of any sort of demanding task, high or low. Now, I had
 to recognize, and should have known it, that my assignment to study the
 letters would remain my basic role in Russia. All the same, this knowledge
^{did prove} ~~could be~~ of use in the aftermath of Khodynskoe. ~~I would be able now to~~
~~present some reactions within the Court.~~ ^{it was} For ~~not~~ only those who perished in
 a muck of blood, flesh, broken bones, torn lace, and suffocation, ^{who} ~~had~~
 suffered depredations, ^{so did} ~~but~~ the Romanovs, as well.

One immediate ~~and discernible~~ result was the lowered efficiency of
 the Cudgels. There were now gaps in the circle of protection they formed
 around Nicky. I was able, for example, to approach within viewing

distance of the Tsar when he and Alix showed up mid-day of May 18th to sit in the viewing stands. Given that passage which the Maestro had succeeded in keeping open to his thoughts, I could detect that Nicky was not only unseemly pale as he approached the pavilion, but that this pallor came from an unruly passion. I could feel its intensity. Some turn red with rage. He was pale with ~~his~~ unspoken fury. Like Alix, his primal displeasure was directed ~~at first~~ toward the peasants. How could they have been so ungrateful, and so self-destructive? Yet—heavy as chains lying upon his heart—was his duty to forgive them. They were his people. Could he call, however, upon himself to feel such a noble sentiment when he was marooned in anger? There were so many aspects to his fury. For he was equally enraged at the ineptitude of the police. And soon enough, he was also furious at himself. He could not be expected to watch over every detail, but nonetheless! Why had he not paid some attention to the arrangements for security? Much of this could have been prevented! Or was that true? Had the events been inevitable? Were his fortunes cursed? He did not know. He could hardly know. Later that night, before he attempted to sleep, he wrote in his diary:

Up till now, thank God, everything went perfectly but today a great sin has taken place. The crowd spending the night on the Khodynka meadow, in anticipation of the distribution of food and mugs, broke through the barrier and there was a terrible crush, during which it is terrible to say about 1300 people were trampled.

The news left an ugly impression. We lunched at 12:30 and then Alix and I went to the Khodynka to be present at the unfortunate popular celebration. There was nothing in particular to see; we looked out from the pavilion over the huge crowd surrounding the platform, where the national orchestra kept on playing the national anthem and "Be Glorified!"

I kept studying the phrase, "a great sin has taken place." I could not determine what that meant. Nor how he would react to his immediate duties. Yet, even on the afternoon of May 18th, Sergei Witte, who was considered to be the most practical statesman Russia could present in those years, sent word to the Tsar: "In respect for the dead, all festivities should be cancelled immediately." Then he added, "Most particularly, the French

Ambassador's Ball." That, scheduled to take place on this very night of May 18th, had been planned as the largest social event of the Coronation.

The reply to Witte came from a man who held no small opinion of himself, nor his power. This was the Governor General of Moscow, the Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, who was married to Alix's older sister, Ella. He had taken over, among his many other duties, the position of Director of the Peasants' Festival. "The Tsar considers Khodynka a great disaster," Sergei Alexandrovitch replied to Witte by messenger, "but would inform you that in effect it was not so great a disaster that it should darken the Coronation holiday."

The older Grand Dukes, this Governor-General's brothers, were in accord. Their conclusion was unanimous. Their sentiments, I soon learned, were not shared by Nicky's cousins, the younger generation of Grand Dukes. Indeed, Nicky's dearest friend—his first cousin, Sandro, who was married to Nicky's sister Xenia—declared that the attitude of his uncles, these older Romanovs, this senior level of Grand Dukes, could only be described as monstrous. His brothers, the sons of grand Duke Mikhail, were in agreement. Passionate agreement. Nicky must not attend the French ball

tonight. What an outrageous insult to the dead! Where was Russia's honor? Sandro said as much to Nicky. Our young Tsar, four days into his Coronation, did feel that he agreed with Sandro, but just then came Uncle Alexey into the room, and this Grand Duke was the oldest remaining brother of ^{his} ~~Nicky's~~ dead father.

"Nicky," said Uncle Alexey, "surely you are aware that your cousins, these Mikhailovichi, and Sandro most particularly, are not people you should listen to. They are young and inexperienced. They are radical. They are silly. They are worse than silly! I tell you, they will never admit it to themselves, but they are siding with unholy forces. They wish to depose Sergei Alexandrovitch so they can put in one of their own as Governor-General of Moscow. Think what that will do to Sergei Alexandrovitch and to Ella. Your wife will be distraught that her beautiful sister Ella has to suffer this disgrace."

As quickly as these opinions were stated, so was I in the chamber to hear them. Again, the Cudgels were not about. Such a host of just-perished souls were in need of succor! (Perhaps the D.K. had dispatched them to the

morgue!) This once, at any event, I found it not at all difficult to stay close to Nicky.

So, I heard Sandro's brother, Nicolai Alexandrovich. He spoke with eloquence so soon as Uncle Alexey had marched off. "Nicky, I beg of you, do not go to the French Ball tonight. Recognize what I am saying. Whether we like it or not, we are still living in the shadow of Versailles. Louis the XVI and Marie Antoinette could dance all night because they were naïve. They could have no sense of the approaching storm. But we can. We know."

"Nicky, search into your heart. What happened, has happened. The blood of those men, those women, and those children will remain forever upon your reign. That is unfair, because you are good, you are kind. I know, if you could, you would revive the dead. But you cannot. So, Nicky, it is crucial that at the least, you must show your sympathy to their families. Your allegiance to them. Your respect. How can you allow the enemies of this regime—who are everywhere—to say that our young emperor danced while his slaughtered subjects were taken to Potter's Field?"

He had succeeded in reaching the center of Nicky's feelings. Nicky did not want to go to the Ball. But this most eloquent cousin ~~was young~~

~~and~~ did not have enough experience to maintain the early edge of his argument. He soon surrendered eloquence to rage. "Why, I would ask," he went on, "didn't Sergei Alexandrovitch anticipate how great was the need for police? Any fool could have told him." Soon enough, he was hinting that nasty tricks had been played with the funds set aside for Coronation events. He did not know exactly what he was talking about, but I had heard as much myself. Could he have been listening to the same rumors I had come upon even before the Processional on May 9th? In Moscow, the word was ~~out~~ that the Governor-General was siphoning off Coronation funds to pay for his gambling debts. It was not true. Sergei Alexandrovitch ~~was not~~ ^{happened}

~~to be~~ guilty of that. It was his assistant. (This assistant was not only in debt to the Crown, and to certain gamblers, but to us—he was one of our agents. So, it was this assistant who had initiated the rumor that it was the Governor-General.)

^{was why} That ~~had been one more full reason why~~ ^{had been} no money ~~was~~ on hand to hire police the night before. Moreover, by way of several Colonels who ^{happened to be} ~~were~~ also our clients, the ~~body~~ of soldiers available for the occasion had been assigned to other gates of the city—of course!

Poor Nicky. If he had one weakness, it was that he could not hold two opposed ideas in his mind long enough to decide which ^{argument} had the most to offer. Just as he was in the midst of giving real attention to cousin Nikolai's fine speech, so two of his uncles came in on the echo. They proceeded to explain, and in the sharpest terms, that it would be an insult of incomparable consequence should Nicky not be present. The French Embassy had made ~~the~~ most expensive preparations. The absence of the Tsar and Tsarina could initiate a ^{serious change of climate} ~~separation~~ between the two nations. "Nicky, we depend upon the French alliance. For that alone, you must attend the Ball. Besides, it would be a sign of great weakness not to appear. How would the French look upon you? The French do measure themselves by the strength of the sanity they ^{must} ~~present~~ in the face of ^{hysterical} ~~heated~~ emotion. They are proud of their froideur! They detest sentimentality. They will not see you as a man, but as a womanly creature, a weakling in the worst way. Foreign policy must not be determined by ^{unfortunate} ~~accidents~~, not even the most unfortunate one of today. One ^{should not} ~~cannot~~ be swayed by compassion. It is inimical to sound diplomacy."

Nicky attended the ball given by the French Ambassador. He had the first dance of the evening with Countess Montebello who was the wife of

the French Ambassador, and Alix danced with the Count. In his diary, Nicky left this comment:

The Montebello Ball was very magnificently done, but the heat was unbearable. We left after supper at two o'clock.

One of the reasons he left may have been the smile on the face of the Governor-General of Moscow. Grand Duke Sergei was enjoying the Ball. He had a favorite saying: "It does not matter how awful the day has been. One must possess the character and the wit, to be able, when the music is lively and the drinks inspire you, to enjoy an evening to the full. That is also our duty."

Sandro and his brothers had long been aware of Sergei's ^{character} ~~ethos~~. He was known to quote himself. On this night, they found his ^{person} ~~presence~~ odious. ^{all four brothers} So, they departed, ~~all four brothers~~—they made a point of leaving at the exact moment that the dancing began. Uncle Alexey spoke out loudly: "There go the four imperial followers of Robespierre."

I was content. The Maestro would be pleased. He would also be amused, I was certain, when he learned that I had been able that night to

insinuate myself into the Royal Chamber. That would hardly be believed. I was in the Bedroom, yes! The Cudgels were in more disarray than I could ever recall.

So, for a few minutes, (before they came back and I had to decamp) I was able not only to peer just a little further into Nicky's mind but to feel close enough for one good instant to report that he felt doomed. Doomed and damned. He knew this with some certainty of vision. His vision, not ours. It would take ^{more than two decades} ~~21 years~~ to confirm what he knew on that night. But that was the night when he knew. If I had it in me to feel sympathy (or for that matter could afford to), I might have been moved by how he suffered. He was truly appalled. He told Alix that it might be his duty to retire to a monastery where he could pray for the victims. It was no way to speak to a wife on a night so full of a sense of future disaster. It may even account for the letter Alix would yet write to her friend, the German Countess Rantzau.

**I feel that all who surround my husband are
insincere. And no one is doing his duty for Russia.
They are all serving him for their career and personal
advantage and I worry myself and cry for days on**

**end as I feel my husband is very young and
inexperienced—of which they are taking advantage.**

How much more she might have wept if she had known what ladies in Moscow were saying about her.

Before the Coronation, she had made a critical mistake. She had confided too much to her closest lady-in-waiting. She adored Nicky, Alix had confessed to her friend. "Not only for his heart, but for the other matters. I love him so much. I call him secret names. All kinds."

"What are these secret names?" asked the Lady-in-Waiting.

"Oh, I cannot tell you. They are secret. I call him many sweet words, usually in English. ^{For me that} That is such a warm language ~~for me~~. So hospitable."

It came out. Bit by bit. At last, it was in the air—her ~~big~~ secret. The ^{big} secret that the Lady-in-Waiting swore she would never pass on to a soul.

And the Lady-in-Waiting did not ^Tnot for a day or two. Then she ~~only~~ told it ^{only} to one trusted friend, and this lady swore in turn that she could be trusted ^{altogether and forever} absolutely.

In the event, this friend to the Lady-in-Waiting did not feel free to give the secret away ^{at once} immediately. It took two nights before she told ^{several} ~~two~~ ~~other~~ trusted friends. They also took a vow of silence. They did not feel they must wait as long, however, to break their oath. Within the week, Moscow's society was snickering over the Tsarina's avowed love of English. Anyone who had a reputation for knowing what others did not know was now familiar with Alix and Nicky's intimate words for each other. "Lovy, Boysy, Sweet one, my soul," (which Alix converted to Russian—dushki—also "mannikins mine, sweetie, pussy-mine."

They enjoyed laughing at Alix but sooner or later, one of the ladies would remind the others, "She comes to us from behind a coffin. She carries misfortune."

For that matter, the Governor-General of Moscow was now called "The Prince of Khodynka."

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~~27~~

In the week that followed the disaster, there were eight days of fetes, dances, receptions, state visits, and musicales. On May 19th, there was a banquet in Alexander Hall in the Kremlin, and on the 20th, Sergei gave his own ball. The 21st brought the Moscow nobility together at the Hall of Columns, Prince Trubetskoi as host. Four thousand guests appeared. On the 22nd, Nicky and Alix made a state visit to the Troisky-Sergeyevsky monastery, and on the morning of the 23rd, Nicky gave 20,000 rubles as a first installment on a children's home for the orphans of Khodynka. That evening, there was dinner with the English Ambassador at a palace ball in the St. Andrew Hall of the Kremlin. Thirty-one hundred guests. The

Germans, laying low, gave no more than a Musicale at their embassy next evening which was followed by a Palace dinner for all the ambassadors on the 25th. For conclusion, they were back at Khodynka Field on the 26th to witness a military review. Many of the ravines and pits had been filled by then. It was another brilliant day and Nicky's carriage was drawn by six white horses. Thirty-eight thousand, five hundred sixty-five enlisted men marched in company with 2,000 officers. Sixty-seven generals watched.

By now, I was awaiting orders to leave. I did not know if I could acclimate myself to Hafeld after these exceptional weeks in Russia, but the Maestro was quick to tell me: "Respect Hafeld. It is more important than you think."

There was no reason to believe or disbelieve him—his real opinion was, after all, concealed behind the mirrors of his impenetrable bearing.

I can say that on my arrival back to Austria, I did feel better than I had in years. Khodynka had come off as the finest major operation I had participated in for a long time. Indeed, I could not recall many times when we had spent our time as efficiently.

It is sad to say, but few devils are permitted to retain much memory—I think the Maestro employs the same principle as intelligence agencies. No one in intelligence is ~~told~~ ^{supposed to know} anything about a project ~~unless~~ ^{until} there is a need to know. We, in turn, are not encouraged to remember what we will not use for a new project.

All the same, Khodynka remained in my memory and my morale was close to excellent. In dealing with this Hitler family a second time, it was less disturbing for me to accept the large interest of the Maestro. Following our success in Russia, I was ready to believe that his aims were large.

Filled now with a lightness of spirit altogether different from the heaviness that is requisite to being loyal without other choice, I felt elevated upon my return to Hafeld, and soon enough did cease to think often about Nicky, Alix, or any of the others. There was no need. If I was ever to be called back to Russia, and I expected that I might be, all necessary recollections would be reconstituted for me.

Let me admit that was how it seemed at the time. I find it interesting now, as I write this book, ^{to recognize} how much I do recall, but then I was indeed sent back to Russia in 1908, and would remain there until the murder of

Rasputin eight years later—that incomparable Rasputin, a most exceptional client! He was ~~not only~~ able to work in the closest union with me, but ^{did} insisted upon continuing ~~as well~~ in the service of one of the D.K.'s most astute Cudgels.

^{yet} I will ^{postpone those exceptional events,} ~~look to tell that story~~ but not until I can record what happened to Alois, Klara, and Adolf through the twelve years until 1908 when Adolf at the age of nineteen went off to Vienna and I, after a little while, was sent back to Russia to commence my exceptional cooperation with a human ^{so} ~~no~~ holy and ^{so} ~~demonic~~ as Rasputin.

That is the route ahead. For the present, we are back at the farm.

From here, I can see the road that leads to Der Alte's house.