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Too little is understood about these matters. Saintliness is present in everyone. It can even be found in the worst of the worst. While I would not characterize Alois in this manner, he is looking, nonetheless, to feel beatitude on the cheap. Offering his nerves and skin to the rhapsodies of small torture, he is pretending it is a matter of import. .

Nonetheless, men like Alois, even if undeserving, can be as complex as saints. This is due to the D.K. His generosity is often no more than Divine Negligence, which, the Maestro declares, is by now nearly equal in immensity to His Godhead.

All the same, Alois has come close to the mark. The Dummkopf did establish a system—His System!—for judging moral behavior.

It is a vast system! Replete with rewards and punishments. Out in the empyrean, many divine offices had to be developed to serve judgment on humans who had just died. The extent of the project was vast. It puts to shame the largest corporations, governments, and legal systems that would develop in its wake here on earth. Indeed, if the Lord's system of Judgment on the value of those who have just died had worked as well as the Lord intended, all souls, worthy and unworthy, would have deserved the justice they found.

Yet from all the signs available—or so the Maestro assures us—these Grand Offices are now in disarray. Some of the Dispositional Angels who calculate future placements for the dead, are corrupt.

I see that I am now obliged to speak of reincarnation (or, of Karma—a popular word in America these years). The Maestro has no affection for Karma. Truth, he loathes it.

Let me attempt, however, to offer my comprehension. Karma does exist. Indeed, it is the measure itself. It is God's substitute for heaven and

hell, His Relative Judgment! God's evaluations and disposals of recently expired humans has nothing to do with popularly accepted notions of Heaven and Hell. Those two concepts are, in fact, our major contribution to human misunderstanding. Indeed, they are our most effective, even eloquent instruments for dominating the minds of men and women. Into their needy hearts, we implant one germ which leaves them permanently infected with a false notion. It is that in death, you will go to Heaven or you will go to Hell. How this concept has served us! The majority of people in Europe, Russia, and the Americas believe it for the most part (or—at the least!—feel too weak to detach themselves from this psychic fever.) So they pray, they pretend to believe, they hope that they are going to Heaven and their enemies will go to Hell! They believe that each of these imaginary kingdoms is a real and ongoing eternity. What a folly! Such categories not even suitable as intellectual entities. My proof is that neither Heaven nor Hell has been able to offer any kind of secure foothold to the human imagination. Heaven proposes eternal bliss; Hell condemns the sinner to unending torture. Where is the human who can comprehend either condition? In life, neither state is present for long. Bliss, particularly, is brief. So, few minds can muster even

the sketchiest notion of Heaven. (What, indeed, does one do with oneself all day?)

Hell, given the prevalence of timidity, cowardice, treachery, and inanition, does inspire more belief. Of course, no divinity could afford such an ongoing, endless extravaganza. Besides, there is no need of it. Given envy, misery, pain, and illness, simple human suffering is hell enough.

The Maestro, however, has become a mighty impressario concerning these misrepresentations. Using the name of Jesus, attaching ourselves to the churches and their preachers, we have managed to subvert God's mercies into inflexible moral dictates. These well-advertised moral demands are, however, so inadequate at dealing with the ever-proliferating complexities of human emotion that rebellion is quickly incited in the best of His human creatures. That does keep us working to shore up all the old varieties of misbegotten belief, and we depend on the illustrious patina of the centuries, church music, and gothic architecture, to support these transcendental lies. So, it is not difficult for us to exhort believers to prayer. Pray all the time, we tell them. Go to your knees. Praise God. In truth, such praise is often boring to the Lord. It is so repetitive! The D.K., despite all, remains

creative. To some degree, at least. So, dull prayer roils His Patience. How we encourage people to pray for what they have not earned. Or, do not deserve. Such beseechment invariably returns a quick profit when God does not respond.

Therefore, we are the ones to advertise the Lord. We look to establish Him as fearsome and mysterious—All-Good and All-Powerful.

From what we have been told (only by way of our need-to-know) the Dummkopf was formerly a true Creator. Yet His resources, once prodigious, have in good part been wasted. Now, through reincarnation, He hopes to use what is left. Given all He bequeathed to mankind by way of Free Will, His remaining Creativity is given over to what are, at best, the witty judgments of reincarnation.

Let me offer the outline I perceive. Many who die, do indeed cease to exist. They have exhausted their souls even before they perished. Others, however, meet their deaths with souls that are still viable. So, they are born again. They take up new residence in an embryo.

The heart of the process comes then to this: How well or how badly is the reincarnated soul able to live with his or her new family? Soon enough,

this question becomes a test. Does the reborn soul respond with art to its situation in its new part of the world? That now serves as the measure. The only similarity this process bears to Heavenly or Hellish judgment comes by way of the opportunities offered in the new life. Will one be more or less vital, better or worse situated than the last time out? Will one be wiser or less imaginative? Braver or more timid, greedier or quite generous, colder or more compassionate? These are the means of being rewarded for former virtue, or paying for past errors. Now reborn, one can improve one's soul or allow it to deteriorate further. Which last will bring a harsher situation for the next life.

How the Maestro hates this system! Karma was designed to defeat us. Indeed, the Dummkopf created these metamorphoses to counteract His limitations as a Deity. Since His Power increases or diminishes in proportion to the success or failure of His Creations, it is His human beings (and His animals) who will determine the Lord's success or failure in the Cosmos. Since He also follows the development of consciousness in His humans, He is wiser as a result, more profound. Ideally, He is strengthened in His Desire to

shape a future that would be larger than the one with which He commenced His Labors eons ago.

In turn, recognizing that reincarnation will not disappear, the Maestro looks to play a role. So often we are there at the moment of conception. I think this is one of the reasons that the Maestro never shows a loss of confidence. He believes the ongoing faults of the Dummkopf will offer us eventual victory. We are always reminded that the D.K., subject to His vanity as an artist, has been ready to muck up many a karmic reassignment. He has such excesses of compassion! The Maestro would argue that the D.K.'s generosity derives from self-indulgence. He keeps too high an opinion of His Works. He does see every human as potentially splendid. Or, at least by His Original Intention!

Waste, however, predominates. (Should I offer Der Alte as one example?) The Maestro will declare that the D.K. is so afraid of losing the loyalty of His subjects, that He strews forgiveness willy-nilly. (Indeed, He has to—He has so little control over earthquakes, volcanoes, and floods!) So, He spends His compassion like a damned fool. All too many humans are invested in too heavily. Often, we pick them up for next to nothing.

Given our ongoing skirmishes with the Cudgels, it is agreeable to have these pickings. The Dummkopf does not give up, however, on those who come to us. Often, He will forgive them. Then, He uses reincarnation to send them out again. When we manage to locate a former client—we call them Retreads—we pick them up, as I say, for a song, a kiss, a one-night stand. Some are so easy, we do not even stop to congratulate ourselves. It is just one more reassuring reason for us to keep calling Him the Dummkopf.

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Allow me to go back to Alois and his preoccupations. Given his readiness to brood on all that can go wrong, he is now full of paternal concern. Since he has just come all too near to an acknowledgment of his own acts of incest, he back to acting like a policeman. When an officer of the law detects a vice in himself, he knows enough to look for its presence in others.

So, he began to worry about Alois-Junior and Angela. Was there something worthy of his attention in that quarter? He did not like the curious conflict developing between the boy and the girl over who could or should ride Ulan. Or when.

To the father's surprise, young Alois was not looking to keep total possession of the horse. On the contrary, he was always offering to teach Angela how to ride. The father had to see this as a danger sign. At the tavern, Senior had already picked up a few rumors about a girl named Greta-Marie Schmidt—nothing to insult him or his son personally, but it seems Junior had been teaching Greta-Marie to ride bareback.

Now it was Angela's turn. She kept refusing. Junior kept teasing her.

"You are simply afraid to get on Ulan's back, " he would say.

"No, I am not."

"You are. Admit it."

"No. I swear I am not."

After several repetitions of such false testimony, she was driven to offer new remarks. "It is simple," she said, "I do not want to get up on Ulan. What for? If I learn, and am good at it, what then? You will still keep the horse to yourself. I will have to beg for rides."

"I will let you get on him as often as you wish. All day, if it comes to it."

"No. You will try to drive me crazy. I know you."

"This is an excuse. What you fear is obvious. You are afraid of being thrown."

"I am not."

"Yes, that is it."

Finally, she said, "Have it your way. So, I am afraid. Why not? That horse is strong. And so high. He will throw me, and I will break my neck." She was ready to start crying out of annoyance itself. "You are so sure of yourself. You ride around wherever you want, but I know what will happen. I will get up on him and he will gallop. He will throw me off. I will die of a broken neck."

"Never. Your neck is just as stubborn as you are."

"Oh, yes, you are so funny. But I will die. What will you care? You have girls all over the place. I hear about them. You are always kissing them, and then they kiss you back. But I am thirteen years old this week and I have never been kissed. So, I don't want to die before I even know what it is like to be kissed." Now, she did burst into tears.

Alois-Senior heard the end of this conversation. As he approached the barn, he was in time to witness young Alois' reaction. The boy found her last speech so comic that he was unable to stop laughing. Finally he rolled on the floor of the barn.

At that moment, Alois told himself that if the boy spent too much time out there riding the hills, maybe it was for the best, yes, better for all if he was carrying on with some farm-girl out there, than fooling about with Angela. That must not be! She was not even a half-sister. She was a full sister!

Now, Alois-Senior began to wonder if the two had ever been together. Was it not likely that they had just seen him approaching the barn? If so, this overheard conversation—was it all for him? Were they capable of such subterfuge? Why not? Their mother had been. Himself as well. Of course.

Over the next few days, Alois-Senior tried to observe Angela closely. But, he had spent too many years putting people ill-at-ease through the intensity of his gaze. No surprise, then, if Angela was unsettled by her father's attention. She began to wonder if he was interested in her. At school, she had heard such stories. One girl had even been named by the

other girls. She did things with her father. So everybody said. Ugh, thought Angela, disgusting, so very disgusting.

Now, whenever Alois-Senior was near, Angela would slide around him, drawing her hips in toward her belly as if to make certain nothing brushed.

This upset Alois. She was too artful at keeping her distance. He certainly did not approve of female sophistication in girls as young as Angela. The manner, indeed, by which she drew in her hips. Where had she learned to do that?

Klara now took a hand. If her distrust of Alois-Junior remained, she also knew that they could not send the boy back to the Poelzl farm. Therefore, they must do something with him here. She had learned one lesson from life, after all. It was that most situations were not comfortable. Often, a poor solution to a problem proved better than no solution. She had learned from her father and mother. If the Poelzl children kept dying, her parents had managed at least to love the few who were left.

While she could not even bring herself to like Alois-Junior, and no solution was in sight, still she must decide upon one. Her husband was not

going to plant potatoes again next summer. That was obvious. And putting in beets might prove just as unsuccessful. His bees, however, had been acceptable. Maybe even more good than bad. So perhaps they should expand.

Klara fixed on this possibility. An imperfect solution—to repeat her wisdom—had to be better than no solution. Idleness was equal to the boy riding horses up and down the hills and getting into trouble.

So she suggested to Alois that perhaps they should build a bee-house like Der Alte had. They could install ten or fifteen hives. A real business. That would keep them busy. And, she added, it would be good for Junior. Alois could make him a young partner. A small share of the profits could even go to him.

"Take him on as a partner? You don't even trust him. So you have told me again and again."

"I said all that, yes," she had to agree, "but I do understand your son."

"You do? I would say you make a lot of remarks. And they are contradictory."

"I understand him," she said. "He is ambitious. And he doesn't know what to do with himself. But, I can see. He wants to make money. For now, he is a little wild, but. . ."

"He will always be wild," said Alois.

"Maybe so," she admitted. "But boys change. If we do nothing. . ."

"I must think about this."

The notion did appeal to him. Hitler and Son, Apian Products. If that crybaby, Adolf, and the snot-nose Edmund ever developed, it could be Hitler and Sons.

That had to be down the road. But Klara was correct. They must do something. The boy's ambition had to be put into focus. At present, he looked upon work as virtually ignoble.

Alois went back to his books. Over a few afternoons, he studied the history, culture and ancient traditions of apiculture in the several tomes he had collected on the subject and soon decided that he would give a small lecture to the family, designed for Junior, of course. Something like his old speeches in the taverns of Linz and Fischlham, yes, but now an exposition that might even be worthy of Der Alte.

He would tell Junior about the endless strife between bees and bears in the Middle Ages. That, decided Alois, could be a good story. Give the family a taste of such culture. He would even list all the lands where the bear and the bee struggled with one another. He actually memorized a few of the Latin terms. Selenarctos thibetanus for the Asiatic black bear. And Ursus arctos—the brown grizzly bear of Europe and America. Helaretos Malanus, the Malaysian sun bear. He decided to content himself with these three names. They would be enough. Too much memorization could wear you out. It was the stories he could tell. Why, even as recently as one hundred years ago, beekeepers would climb high trees to get to hives that the bears could not reach. "This was a common practice in northern Spain and in southern France," he would tell Junior. "One had to know one's trees then. Which were most congenial for good nesting. I can tell you. It was alder and ash, beech and birch, and most certainly, honorable elm trees, maples as well, oak, and willows. Lime trees," he could hear himself declaring, "those have always been great favorites for bees and for us as well, even to this day. Such honey retains the finest aromatic traces of the skin of the lime. Yes," said Alois, addressing Alois-Junior in his thoughts, "this love of the bee for

the lime-tree goes back to the very end of the Neolithic period, close to five thousand years ago. And the bees certainly knew how to build honey-combs in those days. North of here, up in Germany, they found one honey-comb recently, a fossil, that may have been bigger than any man who ever lived. Unbelievable. An eight-foot-long honey-comb. They found it, yes.

He was prepared to give whole funds of new information at the midday Sunday dinner. Get into the Greeks and the Romans. Since he rarely spoke at such times, as if to rebuke Klara for going to church, and the meal was generally consumed under the overarching profundity of his silences, he had a sense that a full exposition would impress Alois-Junior. If nothing else, he would witness the respect of the others. The number of countries involved would be enough to startle them. He would have stories to tell them about the Bassari in Senegal, the famine in Kilingula, practices in Madagascar, bee wasps shimmering in the intense light of Swaziland. He could speak of the Mbuti of the Ituri forest and the honey hunters in southern Sudan, the Ndogo people. All that about Africa alone. He had stuffed these facts into his head like a bear gorging on honey.

He had read enough to be able to quote a line from Homer, and of how Israel right there in the Hebrew scriptures had told his sons to bring honey to Joseph in Egypt. To which Alois was prepared to add, "And this reminds me of the Egyptian god Min who as far back as 3000 B.C. is referred to as 'master of the wild bees,' while the great writer, Pliny, speaks of the Sabaei to the south. Strabo quotes Erastosthenes on the abundance of honey in Arabia."

Since he had memorized all these names, he could have gone on and on. He was ready to tell them of crazy drinking bouts in Poland, the Ukraine, and in Russia from mead made of honey, the revels—although he must speak carefully of revels before his own family, yes, the wild habits of the Cossacks in the Urals and the Hungarians in the Carpathians.

Yet, when it came to deploying these findings, he decided to give it up. Perhaps he had crammed too much knowledge into himself. Klara kept nodding with approval, but whether it was for his words, or the apple strudel she had made, he could not really say, and Angela kept nodding with an expression that spoke of school-house miseries. The three younger children

were completely out of it, and Alois, Junior, who had shown a bit of interest, began to wilt. His eyelids closed for longer and longer periods.

Alois-Senior had to contain his temper. It had gone wrong. He simply did not have the eloquence of Der Alte. "You," he said at last to Alois-Junior, with an address as direct to the youth as a poke in the ribs, "You and me—let us go for a walk."

What a mistake to give such a lecture at a midday meal. It was obvious. The boy had a visceral distrust of any knowledge he could not use immediately. And when he was eating, he did not like to think. Could he be just like his father?

Alois did not take him far from the house, but sat him down on a bench near the hives and spoke instead about the money that was there to make by working together. "It is even possible that we could bring in Der Alte. He has made hints. He would be happy to work with us. That leads me to believe we would have much the better of the bargain. In a few years, you could be a prosperous young man, yes, most prosperous. And let me say to you, good-looking young fellows like you are able to marry to advantage when it is seen that they are also able to make a fine living. We give it three

years of hard work, and you will be sitting on top of a pretty good heap. Especially since you have a sharp sense of what is what. Believe me, you will be able to take your choice of some very good matches."

The afternoon sun was hot, and the boy was dispirited. Greta-Marie had been unavailable that morning—she, too, had been in church with her parents, and so he had visited Der Alte, and on this occasion, he may have been too greedy. Now, he felt stripped of vigor, and Der Alte's bad odor was in his nostrils. What a joy to work every day for three years with these two old men! Der Alte would be full of secret signals that his father might pick up, and it could be guaranteed that Alois-Senior would find something to yell about every day.

Now, all this sweet talk from his father, so full of fraud. He had no desire to work like a slave. Not for three years. Too many good things were waiting. The moment he was ready, he would leave them and go to Vienna. The more suddenly, the better. He had hardly forgiven Klara for being so rude last week. No, he would never forgive that.

"Good and honored father," he said, "I appreciate your concern for my future. I, too, think about it, and often. I have come to certain conclusions."

"Yes," said Alois, "that is the first step to making a life for yourself."

"So true. You speak with the knowledge of your gifts. I can say that I am full of respect for them."

He had now arrived at the obstacle that stood between them like a fence. Yesterday, for the first time, he had taken a jump with Ulan. It had been a low hedge, but not that low. It could have thrown them. But he had known. He had had to take the jump. Now, he did again.

"Everything you say is so correct, Father, but. . ." He hesitated just long enough to repeat it, "but, what you say is true for a person like yourself who is not exactly like myself. I have other gifts. So, I believe."

Alois nodded profoundly in order not to show his annoyance. "Perhaps you will tell us what these gifts can be."

"I would say I have a gift for dealing with people." His father nodded again. "When I think of what I will do in years to come, it will be to make my living that way. By dealing with people."

At this point, he chose to stare into his father's eyes. It was no mean feat, but he held the glance.

"Do you wish to say that farming is without appeal to you?" said Alois-Senior.

"I must tell the truth. It is."

"But you wouldn't go so far as to say our little apiary has no appeal."

"I like the taste of honey. That is true. But I think I enjoy talking to people more than listening to our bees."

Now, Alois dipped into a reservoir of wisdom. "Son, I am prepared to let you in on a secret that will save you a few years. Maybe more. One cannot charm people for long. Not if you have nothing but words to offer. People must respect you. If they do not, they will laugh with you, yes, they will sing with you, oh, yes, and then, poor boy, they will laugh behind your back. Hard work is the only basis of a good solid exchange between two serious people. A man who tries to get by on good talk is nothing but a fiddler."

"I respect hard work," said Alois-Junior, "but not the kind that calls for being a farmer. I like riding over the land, but I do not like working on it. A young man who works on the land all his life is, in my opinion, an idiot. He is as dumb as the earth. That is not for me."

"I do not think you understood what I have said. It is not the earth I am asking us to use but the air. I am thinking of the little creatures who fly through the air. Plus Der Alte. Let me put him into our discussion. I see the most profitable use we can make of him."

"Father, in all respect, I cannot agree. You have said it yourself. He knows more on this subject than we do." The illumination that came from vaulting the hedge with Ulan was with him again. A direct sense of exultation. It was as if his blood not only insisted that he speak, but that he be ready to insult his father. That would be equal to taking your horse over a real big jump. "You must face it," he said, "we are not ready for Der Alte. He would steal us blind."

"What are you saying? Do you insult me as a beekeeper?"

"Well, you are always getting stung."

"That happens. In this work, it always happens."

"Yes, and for those who know how, they can say, 'Oh, I had a little accident today,' but for you, not so. Every day is an accident. You are full of bites. Always."

Now, Alois lost his temper, that valuable but dangerous temper he had schooled himself for forty years to keep locked within himself. Now, there was no help. His temper was out of the gates and on the loose.

"Boy," he said to his son, "you are not equipped to go out in the world. You have no schooling. You have no money. And you think you will be able to talk your way into money? That is rotten nonsense. All you can do is to get your ugly little farmgirls to flap their tits at you and spread their legs. Why? Maybe they believe they will get lucky and pick up a husband as lazy as themselves. Maybe they will, and then I will have to look at grandchildren as ugly as your girlfriends, and you will have to work on her father's farm."

He had gone too far. He knew it. The fear he had been forming, that fear which he had been storing in every center where fear is secreted all the way from the mind down to the bowels, there in the midst of the heart, in the lungs and the nerves of the stomach, each developing their own particulars of fear, even an overall fear that seeped into his pores and sweat, was loose by now as his temper. It had been a large mistake to speak his mind.

Alois-Junior was even more vain, however, than his father. To speak of the children he might yet have as ugly—outrageous. "Yes," he said to his

father, "I have worked with you. I have seen you as a farmer. Your knowledge is out-dated. Even Johann Poelzl, stupid as he is, knows how to farm. You don't."

"So, I am now stupid? Is that what you are saying? Maybe I am," he repeated. "Like father, like son. You flunked out of school. Then you lied about it. What a stupidity! I have lived with this foul and rotten news for too long. I can come to only one conclusion. The only answer to why you lied to us and wrote your counterfeit letter is that you are indeed an idiot."

"Yes," said Alois, Junior, "and you are different. You have beautiful children. Do you know why?" The boy's breath was coming so quickly that his voice went up in pitch. He was all but singing his (high-pitch) way through the next words, "Yes, you find your women, you fuck them, and then you forget them. And my mother dies. Maybe I am just like you."

The father's reflex was faster than his mind. His fist struck Junior on the side of the head hard enough to knock the boy down.

13.

ff Allow me to move back to
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~~may be a poet's interest~~
Hereafter, I think it is time to move back to some closer interests. Alois, for
example, I will move back to my
pre-occupied interests. Alois still
pre-occupied me.
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"Never. Your neck is just as stubborn as you are."

"Oh, yes, you are so funny. But I will die. What will you care? You have girls all over the place. I hear about them. You are always kissing them, and then they kiss you back. But I am thirteen years old this week and I have never been kissed. So, I don't want to die before I even know what it is like to be kissed." Now, she did burst into tears.

Alois-Senior heard the end of this conversation. As he approached the barn, he was in time to witness young Alois' reaction. The boy found her last speech so comic that he was unable to stop laughing. Finally he rolled on the floor of the barn.

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capable of such subterfuge? Why not? Their mother had been. Himself as well. Of course.

Over the next few days, Alois-Senior tried to ~~be sly about it. He~~ observed ^{putting} Angela closely. But, he had spent too many years ^{intensity} getting people to feel ill-at-ease through the ~~clarity~~ of his gaze. No surprise, then, if Angela was unsettled by her father's attention. She began to wonder if he was interested in her. At school, she had heard such stories. One girl had even been named by the other girls. She did things with her father. So everybody said. Ugh, thought Angela, ~~as~~ disgusting, *so very disgusting*

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with him here. ^(after all, it) If she had learned one lesson from life, it was that most situations were not comfortable. Often, a poor solution to a problem proved better than no solution. She had learned from her father and mother. If the Poelzl children kept dying, her parents had managed at least to love the few who were left.

While she could not even bring herself to like Alois-Junior, and no solution was in sight, still she must decide upon one. Her husband was not going to plant potatoes again next summer. That was obvious. And putting in beets might prove just as unsuccessful. His bees, however, had been acceptable. Maybe even more good than bad. So perhaps they should expand.

Klara fixed on this possibility. An imperfect solution—to repeat her wisdom—had to be better than no solution. Idleness was equal to the boy riding horses up and down the hills and getting into trouble.

So she suggested to Alois that perhaps they should build a bee-house like Der Alte had. They could install ten or fifteen hives. A real business. That would keep them busy. And, she added, it would be good for Junior.

Alois could make him a young partner. A small share of the profits could even go to him.

"Take him on as a partner? You don't even trust him. So you have told me again and again."

"I said all that, yes," she had to agree, "but I do understand your son."

"You do? I would say you make a lot of remarks. And they are contradictory."

"I understand him," she said. "He is ambitious. And he doesn't know what to do with himself. But, I can see. He wants to make money. For now, he is a little wild, but. . ."

"He will always be wild," said Alois.

"Maybe so," she admitted. "But boys change. If we do nothing. . ."

"I must think about this."

The notion did appeal to him. Hitler and Son, Apian Products. If that crybaby, Adolf, and the snot-nose Edmund ever developed, it could be Hitler and Sons.

That had to be down the road. But Klara was correct. They must do something. The boy's ambition ^{had to} ~~should be~~ put into focus. At present, he looked upon work as virtually ignoble.

Alois went back to his books. Over a few afternoons, he studied the history, culture and ancient traditions of apiculture in the several tomes he had collected on the subject and soon decided that he would give a small lecture to the family, designed for Junior, of course. Something like his old speeches in the taverns of Linz and Fischlham, yes, but now an exposition that might even be worthy of Der Alte.

He would tell Junior about the endless strife between bees and bears in the Middle Ages. That, decided Alois, could be a good story. Give the family a taste of such culture. He would even list all the lands where the bear and the bee struggled with one another. He actually memorized a few of the Latin terms. Selenarctos thibetanus for the Asiatic black bear. And Ursus arctos—the brown grizzly bear of Europe and America. Helaretos Malanus, the Malaysian sun bear. He decided to content himself with these three names. They would be enough. Too much memorization could wear you out. It was the stories he could tell. Why, even as recently as one

hundred years ago, beekeepers would climb high trees to get to hives that the bears could not reach. "This was a common practice in northern Spain and in southern France," he would tell Junior. "One had to know one's trees then. Which were most congenial for good nesting. I can tell you. It was alder and ash, beech and birch, and most certainly, honorable elm trees, maples as well, oak, and willows. Lime trees," he could hear himself declaring, "those have always been great favorites for bees and for us as well, even to this day. Such honey retains the finest aromatic traces of the skin of the lime. Yes," said Alois, addressing Alois-Junior in his thoughts, "this love of the bee for the lime-tree goes back to the very end of the Neolithic period, close to five thousand years ago. And the bees certainly knew how to build honey-combs in those days. North of here, up in Germany, they found one honey-comb recently, a fossil, that may have been bigger than any man who ever lived. Unbelievable. An eight-foot-long honey-comb. They found it, yes.

He was prepared to give whole funds of new information at the midday Sunday dinner. Get into the Greeks and the Romans. Since he rarely spoke at such times, as if to rebuke Klara for going to church, and the

meal was generally consumed under the overarching profundity of his silences, he had a sense that a full exposition would impress Alois-Junior. If nothing else, he would witness the respect of the others. The number of countries involved would be enough to startle them. He would have stories to tell them about the Bassari in Senegal, the famine in Kilingula, practices in Madagascar, bee wasps shimmering in the intense light of Swaziland. He could speak of the Mbuti of the Ituri forest and the honey hunters in southern Sudan, the Ndogo people. All that about Africa alone. He had stuffed these facts into his head like a bear gorging on honey.

He had read enough to be able to quote a line from Homer, and of how Israel right there in the Hebrew scriptures had told his sons to bring honey to Joseph in Egypt. To which Alois was prepared to add, "And this reminds me of the Egyptian god Min who as far back as 3000 B.C. is referred to as 'master of the wild bees,' while ~~Ramses III is quoted as speaking of his honey gatherers.~~ The great writer, Pliny, speaks of the Sabaei to the south, and Strabo quotes Erastosthenes on the abundance of honey in Arabia."

Since he had memorized all these names, ~~after all~~ he could have gone on and on. He was ready to tell them of crazy drinking bouts in Poland, the Ukraine, and in Russia from mead made of honey, the revels—although he must speak carefully of revels before his own family, yes, the wild habits of the Cossacks in the Urals and the Hungarians in the Carpathians.

Yet, when it came to deploying these findings, he decided to give it up. Perhaps he had crammed too much knowledge into himself. Klara kept nodding with approval, but whether it was for his words, or the apple strudel she had made, he could not really say, and Angela kept nodding with an expression that spoke of school-house miseries. The three younger children were completely out of it, and Alois, Junior, who had shown a bit of interest, began to wilt. His eyelids closed for longer and longer periods.

Alois-Senior had to contain his temper. It had gone wrong. He simply did not have the eloquence of Der Alte. "You," he said at last to Alois-Junior, with an address as direct to the youth as a poke in the ribs, "You and me—let us go for a walk."

What a mistake to ^{give such a lecture} ~~talk to them so~~ at a midday meal. It was obvious. The boy had a visceral distrust of ^{any} ~~knowledge~~ he could not use immediately.

And when he was eating, he did not like to think. Could he be just like his father?

Alois did not take him far from the house, but sat him down on a bench near the hives and spoke instead about the money that was there to make by working together. "It is even possible that we could bring in Der Alte. He has made hints. He would be happy to work with us. That leads me to believe we would have much the better of the bargain. In a few years, you could be a prosperous young man, yes, most prosperous. And let me say to you, good-looking young fellows like you are able to marry to advantage when it is seen that they are also able to make a fine living. We give it three years of hard work, and you will be sitting on top of a pretty good heap. Especially since you have a sharp sense of what is what. Believe me, you will be able to take your choice of some very good matches."

The afternoon sun was hot, and the boy was dispirited. Greta-Marie had been unavailable that morning—she, too, had been in church with her parents, and so he had visited Der Alte, and on this occasion, he may have been too greedy. Now, he felt stripped of vigor, and Der Alte's bad odor

was in his nostrils. What a joy to work every day for three years with these two old men! Der Alte would be full of secret signals that his father might pick up, and it could be guaranteed that Alois-Senior would find something to yell about every day.

Now, all this sweet talk from his father, so full of fraud. He had no desire to work like a slave. Not for three years. Too many good things were waiting ~~for him~~. The moment he was ready, he would leave them and go to Vienna. The more suddenly, the better. He had hardly forgiven Klara for being so rude ~~to him~~ last week. *No, he would never forgive that*

"Good and honored father," he said, "I appreciate your concern for my future. I, too, think about it, and often. I have come to certain conclusions."

"Yes," said Alois, "that is the first step to making a life for yourself."

"So true. You speak with the knowledge of your gifts. I can say that I am full of respect for them."

He had now arrived at the obstacle that stood between them like a fence. Yesterday, for the first time, he had taken a jump with Ulan. It had

been a low hedge, but not that low. It could have thrown them. But he had known. He had had to take the jump. Now, he did again.

"Everything you say is so correct, Father, but . . ." He hesitated just long enough to repeat it, "but, what you say is true for a person like yourself who is not exactly like myself. I have other gifts. So, I believe."

Alois nodded profoundly in order not to show his annoyance.

"Perhaps you will tell us what these gifts can be."

"I would say I have a gift for dealing with people." His father nodded again. "When I think of what I will do in years to come, it will be to make my living that way. By dealing with people."

At this point, he chose to stare into his father's eyes. It was no mean feat, but he held the glance.

"Do you wish to say that farming is without appeal to you?" said Alois-Senior.

"I must tell the truth. It is."

"But you wouldn't go so far as to say our little apiary has no appeal."

"I like the taste of honey. That is true. But I think I enjoy talking to people more than listening to our bees."

Now, Alois dipped into a reservoir of wisdom. "Son, I am prepared to let you in on a secret that will save you a few years. Maybe more. One cannot charm people for long. Not if you have nothing but words to offer. People must respect you. If they do not, they will laugh with you, yes, they will sing with you, oh, yes, and then, poor boy, they will laugh behind your back. Hard work is the only basis of a good solid exchange between two serious people. A man who tries to get by on good talk is nothing but a fiddler."

"I respect hard work," said Alois-Junior, "but not the kind that calls for being a farmer. I like riding over the land, but I do not like working on it. A young man who works on the land all his life is, in my opinion, an idiot. He is as dumb as the earth. That is not for me."

"I do not think you understood what I have said. It is not the earth I am asking us to use but the air. I am thinking of the little creatures who fly through the air. Plus Der Alte. Let me put him into our discussion. I see the most profitable use we can make of him."

"Father, in all respect, I cannot agree. You have said it yourself. He knows more on this subject than we do." The illumination that came from

vaulting the hedge with Ulan was with him again. A direct sense of exultation. It was as if his blood not only insisted that he speak, but that he be ready to insult his father. That would be equal to taking your horse over a real big jump. "You must face it," he said, "we are not ready for Der Alte. He would steal us blind."

"What are you saying? Do you insult me as a beekeeper?"

"Well, you are always getting stung."

"That happens. In this work, it always happens."

"Yes, and for those who know how, they can say, 'Oh, I had a little accident today,' but for you, not so. Every day is an accident. You are full of bites. Always."

Now, Alois lost his temper, that valuable but dangerous temper he had schooled himself for forty years to keep locked within himself. Now, there was no help. His temper was out of the gates and on the loose.

"Boy," he said to his son, "you are not equipped to go out in the world. You have no schooling. You have no money. And you think you will be able to talk your way into money? That is rotten nonsense. All you can do is to get your ugly little farmgirls to flap their tits at you and spread

their legs. Why? Maybe they believe they will get lucky and pick up a husband as lazy as themselves. Maybe they will, and then I will have to look at grandchildren as ugly as your girlfriends, and you will have to work on her father's farm."

He had gone too far. He knew it. The fear he had been forming, that fear which he had been storing in every center where fear is secreted from ^{all the way} the mind ^{down} to the bowels, there in the ^{midst of the} heart and the lungs, ⁱⁿ and the nerves of the stomach, each developing their own particulars of ~~the~~ fear, even ^{at} that overall fear which ^{that seeped} had been seeping into his pores, ^{and sweat} was ~~as~~ loose by now as his temper. It had been a large mistake to speak his mind.

^{however} Alois-Junior was even more vain ^{than} his father. To speak of the children he might yet have as ugly—outrageous. "Yes," he said to his father, "I have worked with you. I have seen you as a farmer. Your knowledge is out-dated. Even Johann Poelzl, stupid as he is, knows how to farm. You don't."

"So, I am now stupid? Is that what you are saying? Maybe I am," he repeated. "Like father, like son. You flunked out of school. Then you lied about it. What a stupidity! I have lived with this foul and rotten news for

too long. I can come to only one conclusion. The only answer to why you lied to us and wrote your counterfeit letter is that you are indeed an idiot."

"Yes," said Alois, Junior, "and you are different. You have beautiful children. Do you know why?" The boy's breath was coming so quickly that his voice went up in pitch. He was all but ^{singing (high-pitch)} ~~screaming~~ his way through the next words, "Yes, you find your women, you fuck them, and then you forget them. And my mother dies. Maybe I am just like you."

The father's reflex was faster than his mind. His fist struck Junior on the side of the head hard enough to knock the boy down.

The extent of the project ¹³ was vast, far greater than the ^{expansion of} proliferations of the largest corporations, governments, and legal systems that ^{have also} had developed on ^{this period} earth. (Indeed, if the Lord's means of judging the value of those who have just died ^{only} had worked as well as the Lord intended, all souls, worthy and unworthy, would ^{receive} have ^{deserve} deserved the justice they found.

Yet from all the signs available—or so the Maestro assures us—these Grand Offices are now in disarray. Some of the ^{cadres of} Dispositional Angels who calculate these future ^{births} placements for the dead are even corrupt. (The Maestro exhibits his highest skills ^{doubtless, can} when he succeeds in corrupting angels.)

I am now obliged to speak of reincarnation (or, of Karma—a popular word in America these years). The Maestro has no affection for Karma ~~at~~ ~~it~~. Truth, he detests it, ~~and for good cause~~. All the same, I will attempt to offer my comprehension. Karma does exist. Indeed, it is ~~the measure itself~~.

~~It is~~ God's substitute for heaven and hell—which is exactly why the Maestro ^{would also like it if he could} ~~detests it~~. We have invested so many of our resources in maintaining the mass of humans in a state of belief that Heaven and Hell are ^{the human} ~~predominant~~ ^{reception centers} ~~that~~ ^{investment in} after death, which enables us to protect our ~~major contribution~~ to human misunderstanding. Heaven and Hell are our most effective instruments ~~for~~

when it ^{comes} ~~comes~~ to

dominating the minds of men and women. Into their needy fear-filled ^{chest,} ~~hearts,~~ we implant one mighty germ ^{It then infects} that leaves them ^{polluted} permanently infected.

with a false notion. They think that ^{after} ~~in~~ death, they will go to Heaven or to

Hell. How this concept ^{serves} ~~has served~~ us! (The majority of people in Europe,

Russia, and the Americas feel too weak to detach themselves from such a

psychic fever.) So they pray, ~~and~~ ^{they} pretend to believe. They shout in

unison as they vouchsafe their faith that they are going to Heaven and their

enemies will go to Hell! How they believe that each of these imaginary

kingdoms is there for eternity. Folly! ^{all} ~~For all~~ brouhaha, Heaven and

Hell are numb and null ^{They are} ~~as~~ intellectual ^{nonentities.} entities. My proof is that neither has

been able to offer a ^(refutable) foothold to human intelligence. Heaven proposes

eternal bliss; Hell condemns each sinner to unending torture. Where is the

human who can ^{envision a future} ~~comprehend~~ either condition? ^(in life) ~~In life,~~ such states cannot

^{do not go on} ~~exist~~ for long. Bliss, particularly, is brief. Few minds can muster even the

sketchiest notion of Heaven. ^(How, indeed, does one pass the) ~~(What, indeed, does one do all day?)~~

I will admit that Hell, given the average ^{man or woman's} ~~human's~~ cowardice,

treachery, and inanition, does inspire more belief. Yet where is the divinity

who would bother with the upkeep of such an ongoing, endless

Suditha is followed by [scribble] and then by [scribble]

extravaganza? Besides, there is no need of Hell as such. Given envy, misery, pain, and illness, simple human suffering is hell enough.

The Maestro, however, was equal to a mighty impressario when it came to elaborating these most of all microrepresentations. Wallowing in the name of Jesus, while attaching ourselves to the loudest churches and their

most ambitious preachers, we have managed to convert Jesus's somewhat ~~cast~~ God's mercies into inflexible moral dictates. These well-advertised

(moral demands—Don't you dare to have a dirty thought in your dirty mind or the good Lord Jesus will suffer) —became, however, inadequate at

dealing with the complexities of human emotion. Rebellion was quickly incited in the best of his human creatures. ~~The ascertainable consequence is that rebellion is~~

if in a different manner—we love to loose them onto drugs. In the main, however, we keep working to shore up every misbegotten belief in the

existence of Heaven and Hell. For that, we can even use the best of church music and gothic architecture to support these transcendental lies. Pray all

the time, we exhort all believers. Go to your knees. Praise God. ~~When~~ such praise to be boring to Him. It is so repetitive! The D.K., despite all, remains creative. To some stubborn degree, at least. (Creativity, it is

It is religious will suffer from those in competition. As for the rest of the religiously inclined, the Devil is who they are.

in the best two logical worlds when they attempt to harmonize these creative niceties with all the tragedy and pain of the 19th. The best of the 19th.

Commanded, you need do no more than to keep our preachers exhorting them. To you knees Praise God.

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We will convert We will champion

These inunctions, a said

They are, I said the Maestro, who by wallowing

But the human happy

subliming glory Feel free even to

All the more confusion will be present

~~said, remains God's essence!)~~ So, dull prayer roils His Patience. How we
~~encourage people to pray for what they have not earned. Or, do not deserve.~~
holy intensities. Pray *And never*
Yes

~~Such beseechment returns us a quick profit when God does not respond.~~

~~So, we are the ones to~~ *forget to be who* advertise the Lord as fearsome and

mysterious—All-Good and All-Powerful. "

~~That was the end of the matter~~
 Yet, from what we have been told (by way of our need-to-know) the
 Dummkopf was indeed once a true Creator. But His resources, prodigious
 in the past, have by now in good part been wasted. Yet, He hopes to save
 what is left by way of reincarnation. In the beginning, bequeathed so much
 to mankind by way of Free Will, and this was in such great part abused, that
 by now He uses reincarnation to offer a judgment on the abuse of each
 person's Free Will.

Let me offer the outline I perceive. Many who die do cease to exist
 altogether. For them, death is the end and they are inert. They have
 exhausted their souls even before they perished. Others, however, meet
 their deaths through the failure of their bodies while their souls are still
 lively, so they are born again (which is exactly why so many young soldiers
 are willing to die in combat, if it comes to that.)

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Too little is understood about these matters. Saintliness is present in everyone. It can even be found in the worst of the worst. While I would not characterize Alois in this manner, he is looking, nonetheless, to pick up a bit of beatitude at small cost to himself. Offering one's skin to the rhapsodies of small torture, is, however, not enough.

Nonetheless, men like Alois, no matter how undeserving, can be as complex as saints. He has, in fact, come close to the mark. The Dummkopf did establish a system for judging moral behavior.

It is vast. And it is replete with rewards and punishments. Out in the empyrean, divine offices have proliferated over the centuries with the increase in human population. The extent of the project is vast, far greater than the expansions of the largest corporations, governments, and legal systems that have also developed in this period. Indeed, if the Lord's means of judging the value of those who have just died could work as well as the Lord intended, all souls, worthy and unworthy, would have receive the justice they deserve.

Yet from all the signs available—or so the Maestro assures us—these Grand Offices are now in disarray. Some of the cadres of Dispositional Angels who calculate these future births are even corrupt. (The Maestro exhibits his highest skills, doubtless, when he can succeed in corrupting angels.)

I am now obliged to speak of reincarnation (or, of Karma—a popular word in America these years). The Maestro has no affection for Karma. Truth, he detests it. All the same, I will attempt to offer my comprehension. Karma does exist. Indeed, it is God's substitute for heaven and hell—which

is exactly why the Maestro would abolish it if he could. We have invested so many of our resources in maintaining the mass of humans in a state of belief that Heaven and Hell are the human reception centers after death. That enables us to protect our investment in human misunderstanding. Heaven and Hell are our most effective instruments when it comes to dominating the minds of men and women. Into their needy fear-filled chests, we implant one mighty germ. It leaves their permanently polluted with a false notion. They think that after death, they will go to Heaven or to Hell. How this concept serves us! (The majority of people in Europe, Russia, and the Americas feel too weak to detach themselves from such a psychic fever.) So they pray. They pretend to believe. They shout in unison as they vouchsafe their faith that they are going to Heaven and their enemies will go to Hell! How they believe that each of these imaginary kingdoms is there for all eternity. Folly! Despite this brouhaha, Heaven and Hell are numb and null. They are intellectual nonentities. My proof is that neither has been able to offer a useable foothold to human intelligence. Heaven proposes eternal bliss; Hell condemns each sinner to unending torture. Where is the human who can

envision a future in either condition? Existence in such states does not go on for long. Bliss, particularly, is brief. Few minds can muster even the sketchiest notion of Heaven. (How, indeed, does one pass the day?)

I will admit that Hell, given the average man or woman's cowardice, treachery, and inanition, does inspire more belief. Yet where is the divinity who would bother with the upkeep of such an ongoing, endless extravaganza? Indeed, there is no need of Hell as such. Given envy, misery, pain, and illness, human suffering is hell enough.

The Maestro, however, was equal to a mighty orator when it came to addressing us on these misrepresentations. While it was never his habit to keep us in communication for long, he would offer us an entertainment once a year. He would speak at length in the voice of any one of our most effective clients—our evangelists.

"We will wallowing in the name of Jesus!" he would cry out. "We will attach ourselves to the loudest churches and their most ambitious preachers. We will convert Jesus's mercies into God's inflexible moral dictates. Will champion good Christian moral demands—'Do not you dare to have a filthy

thought in your dirty mind or the good Lord Jesus will suffer.' These injunctions," said the Maestro, "are wholly inadequate at dealing with the complexities of human emotion. The ascertainable consequence is that rebellion is incited in the best of the Dummkopf's human creatures. (We work with them as well. But in a different manner—we will loose them into every wicked exploration.) In the main, however, most of you will keep working to shore up every misbegotten belief in the existence of sublime Heaven and fierce Hell. Feel free even to use the best of church music and gothic architecture. All the more confusion will be present in the best theological minds when they attempt to coordinate these aesthetic niceties with all the transcendental lies. The best of the religions will suffer from those incompatibilities. As for the rest, the religiously needy, the pawns who beg to be commanded, you need do no more than keep our preachers exhorting them: 'Go to your knees. Praise God.' Encourage holy intensities. Pray for what you have not earned. And never forget to be the ones who advertise the Lord as fearsome and mysterious—All-Good and All-Powerful."

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