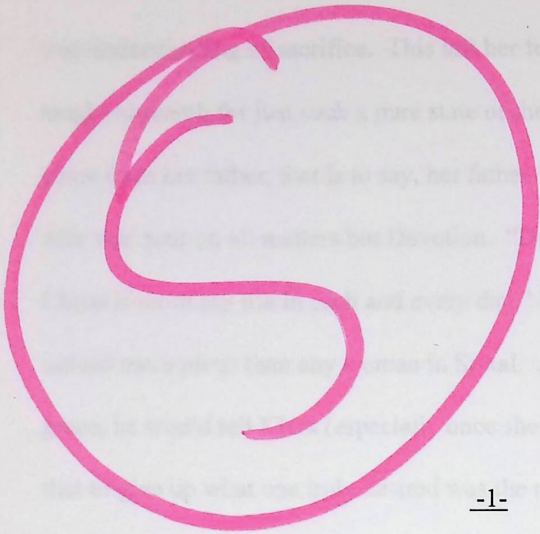




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In those months, Klara visited ^{Fanni} ~~her~~ more often than Alois ^{did} ~~and~~ the wound they had left in each other all-but-healed. On the first visit, Klara had fallen on her knees before the bed where Fanni rested, and said, "You were right. I do not know if I would have been true to my vow." In turn, Fanni wept. "You would have been true," she said. "Now I tell you to give up your vow. He is through with me."

"No," said Klara, "my promise must remain! It has to be stronger than ever." She had a moment when she thought she might at last have a

true understanding of sacrifice. This left her feeling exalted. She had been taught to search for just such a pure state of the soul. Those teachings had come from her father, that is to say, her father-in-name, old Johann Poelzl, who was sour on all matters but Devotion. "Devotion to our Lord Jesus Christ is all of my life in each and every day," he would tell her—he was indeed more pious than any woman in Spital. At many a meal, after saying grace, he would tell Klara (especially once she passed the age of twelve) that to give up what one truly desired was the nearest you could come to knowing the glory of Christ. But to attain to such moments, one must be ready to sacrifice one's dreams. After all, had God not sacrificed His Son?

Klara was soon trying to relinquish her desire for Uncle Alois. That fever had not gone away during the four years she worked for Anna Glassl, ^{not over} ~~the~~ the next four years serving the old lady in Vienna who alternated between doting on Klara ^{and} ~~or~~ counting the silverware. She had the real heat of suspicion—it irritated her when the silver count was correct (as it always was) because paranoia ^{that} ~~which~~ cannot be confirmed is more difficult to bear than outright theft. The old lady was secretly proud of the perfection with

which this young servant kept house for her—it spoke of respect for her mistress—yet the honesty made her irritable.

Years earlier, in payment for her one cardinal sin with Alois, Johanna had turned into a very good housekeeper, and Klara had responded to ^{such} ~~their~~ house duties ~~more than any of Johanna's remaining children~~. It was as if the mother and daughter believed that what was left of the family—given the ghosts of all those dead children—depended on offering ceaseless attention to the daily skirmish against mud, dust, ashes, slops, and all crusted plates, cups, pots, and cutlery.

By now, Klara was never lax. Each household task required respect for the labor even when one knew how to do it well. Sacrifice, however, was different from such work. Sacrifice was an ache she felt next to her heart. If she wanted Alois, if she dreamed of Alois, she was still obliged to find a way (once Fanni's two children had been put to sleep) to keep him at arm's length. There was not a night in the inn, the best inn of Braunau, the Pommer Inn (to which they had moved) when Alois was not staring at her, ^{stet} open-faced and slightly drunk from the three steins of beer he took into himself each evening after work with one or another of the Customs

Officers before returning to the Pommer for the meal Klara had cooked in the kitchen of the hotel and brought up to their lodgings. ^{he} ~~He~~ would eat that meal with full gusto saying not a word, just nods to demonstrate his enjoyment. Then he would stare at her in the privacy of their sitting room, his eyes open as if to share his thoughts. The recesses of her body ^{were soon} ~~felt~~ fingered by his imagination. Her thighs burned, her cheeks burned, her breath wanted to inhale his breath. If one of the children cried out in sleep, she would jump up. The sound was equal to a cry from Fanni come to her all the way from Laughter-in-the-Woods. Afterward, however, a cramp of disappointment would be sure to follow.

Alois was often on the point of describing to his drinking associates how he loved her eyes. They were so deep, so clear, so full of the desperation to have him.

Why not? Alois kept to his view that he was one exceptional fellow. Whom did he know besides himself who was as ready to claim his indifference to religious fear? That was its own kind of bravery. He often made a point of declaring that he never went to church. Nor would he confess to a priest. How could a run-of-the-mill priest be equal to him? He

had his allegiance to the Crown and he needed no more than that. Would God be about to punish those who served the State so well? ~~Hardly!~~ 

Just the week before, a cousin had inquired whether his son, now of age, would be happy working on the Finance-Watch. Alois had written back, "Don't let your boy think it is a kind of game because he will be quickly disillusioned. He has to show absolute obedience to his superiors at all levels. Second, there is a good deal to learn in this occupation, all the more so if he has had little previous education. Heavy drinkers, men who get into debt, and gamblers and those who lead immoral lives cannot last. Finally, one has to go out in all weather, day or night."

Naturally, he felt equal to the sentiments in the letter, nor did he have to think about "those who lead immoral lives." Immorality, Alois knew, was not to be confused with the details of your private life. Immorality ~~was~~ ^{was} might be taking a bribe from a smuggler, ~~but~~ ^{whereas} private life was too complicated for judgment. He did not know to a certainty that Klara was his daughter—after all, he did not have to trust Johanna Hiedler Poelzl's word. What, after all, was the point of being a woman if you could not lie with skill? Sie ist hier! True, or not true?

All the same, she might be his daughter.

Alois knew why he didn't have to go to church, ^{nor} to confession, he knew why he was brave. He was ready to take the same forbidden road that drunken peasants and adolescents blundered into while sharing a bed. But he, unlike them, would not look back in fear and penitence. He would just do it. Yes, he would fuck his daughter. Yes.

Which he finally did at the end of a short evening that had been much like all the other dinners when he had looked at her with no deceit in his expression and no activity but to stand up now and again with his pants in full profile thrust forward, his proud bulge always ready to speak for itself. Then, he would poke the fire and sit down and look at her again. On this one night, however, he did not say goodnight as she put her hand on the door to the children's room where she slept, but instead, he strode forward, caught that hand, kissed her on the mouth, and brought her to his bedroom and his bed, even as she begged him in a low uncertain voice to do no more, "please, no more," whereupon he proceeded to lay a track with his hand, so veteran at insinuating his fingers through the defenses of ~~inner~~ ^{and} garments, ~~all~~ ^{corsets all} the way to the nest of hair she had so long concealed. And there it was,

much like feathers—downy—much as he had expected. Half her body was on fire, but half was locked in ice, the bottom half. If not for the Hound, he might have stalled at the approach to such a frozen entry, but then her mouth was part of the fire and she kissed him as if her heart was also in her lips, so rich, so fresh, so wanton a mouth (and all despite herself) that he exploded, exploded even as he entered her, ripped her hymen altogether, and was in, deep, and in, and it was over even as she began to sob with woe and fright and worse—in shame for the one throb of exaltation that shivered through her at a bound and was gone. She knew that this had been the opposite of sacrifice. Nor could she stop kissing him. She went on and on like a child raining kisses on the face of the great adult beloved, and then there were other kisses, softer, deeper. He was the first man she had ever kissed as a man rather than as a relative of the family, yes, the wrong kind of exaltation. She could not stop weeping. Nor could she stop smiling.

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So, Klara was now his lover, his cleaning woman, and the nursemaid to Alois-Junior, and to Angela. On many a night she was also his cook—unless (having hired one of the hotel maids to sit with the children for an hour) they went downstairs to the dining room of the Pommer Inn, there in full display as uncle and niece, the middle-aged customs officer in uniform and his demure young mistress. No one in Braunau was fooled, no matter how often she might call him Uncle. It was enough to stir a boil of outrage in the onlookers that he could sit there as if he were Franz-Josef himself, ready to claim, “In company with the Emperor, I, too, have a lovely mistress.” On any night that he took her downstairs to dine, it never

failed—he would make love as soon as they came back, his voice so hoarse he could hardly speak. “I am your bad uncle,” he would say in the thick of the embrace, “your very bad uncle.”

“Yes, yes, my bad uncle,” and she would cling to him, hardly able to distinguish pain from what was seeking to become pleasure—a most unholy pleasure—“Oh,” she would cry out, “we will be punished.”

“Who the hell cares?” he would growl, and that brought her closer to the unholy pleasure.

Invariably, she would weep when it was over. It was all she could command not to scream at him. Inside her was all the over-squeezed congestion of all that had not quite come to pass. Besides, she was so guilty.

Now, it was Klara’s turn not to go to Mass. She was working for the Devil (so she knew!) She felt as if her finest impulses were now bringing her nearer to the Evil One, yes, even the loving care she gave to Alois-Junior, and to Angela. The more she adored them, the worse it must be.

Her tainted presence could pollute their spirit. ~~By her presence itself!~~ And

when she thought of her dead brothers and sisters, she had to fear what she might now be doing to them, ~~wherever they were!~~

Then, there was Fanni. Klara had not told her and knew she must.

Because if Fanni did not know now, she would certainly find out so soon as her life ended and she ~~had travelled to~~ ^{could watch from} the other side. Fanni would be left with the intolerable thought that Klara never cared enough to tell her.

Yet, in the last week of Fanni's illness when Klara did confess, the answer was brief: "This is my punishment for sending you away four years ago. That is fair."

"I will take care of the boy and girl as if they were mine."

"You will take better care than I would," said Fanni, and turned her face away. "It is all right," she said, "but you must not come to see me any more."

Then Klara knew once again that she lived in the grip of the Evil One. Because if at first she was hurt, she soon felt furious that Fanni could send her away this time as well, and the anger was still present on the day that Fanni was interred, a very long day, since Alois did not bury Fanni in Braunau. He had chosen Ranshofen ("On-the-Brink-of-Hope") where they

had been married. This was not from sentiment but annoyance. The word in Braunau was that he had bought Fanni's coffin months before she died. The townspeople were saying no less than that he had found a true bargain in advance (a mahogany job confiscated from a smuggler at the Customs gate.) In truth, he had only bought the damned crate ten days before her death. He had not sat on it for months but for days. So, he could not forgive the gossip. Moreover, the tragedy of death was overrated. So many times, it was like saying goodbye to a friend who has outworn every welcome. In truth, he did not plan to visit the cemetery too often. His eyes were on Klara for tonight. By evening, after the funeral, he could not stop looking at her. Those blue eyes ^(so) ~~so~~ much like the diamond in the museum!

In bed on that hot August night, Klara's life received another life. She felt it travel directly to her heart, or so she felt. For her soul seemed ^{now} to reside right there beneath her heart, and she came close to falling into darkness from the pleasure. ~~But~~ ^{except that} the pleasure went on and on. Now, it did not stop. She belonged to the Devil. ~~Completely!~~ ^{SC} He had dug into her ~~loins~~ ^{and so her} with the most evil enjoyment she had ever known. ~~Her~~ ^{her} guilt in the morning was as heavy as a water-logged tree. She had a dreadful moment

~~for~~ ^{only} realizing that ^(part of) her delight had come because Fanni was gone. Yes. All the love she had felt for the long-sick friend had vanished into this unholy glee, this long-withheld and so nasty joy that she could at last release because the woman who banished her for four years was dead. Now, she could be the wife.

She became pregnant. No surprise.

She never indicated that she wanted him to marry her, but he knew.

"A man can be a fool," Alois liked to say, "yet even a fool must be able to learn from experience. Only by this, should he be judged." So Alois knew that he must be responsive to this new duty.

Besides, he wanted to get married. The displeasure of the good people of Braunau had begun to itch. Literally. An intolerable itch now bothered him ~~(even on duty)~~ and sometimes would last for as long as an hour. It had to be the thoughts of the townspeople. For the first time, he considered the possibility that all these anonymous letters they were writing to the Finance-Watch were not ^{necessarity} going to be thrown away by desk officials, ~~so~~ ~~not~~ Inquiries could well ensue. Such matters moved slowly, but now that Klara was pregnant, it could prove an offensive sight if, in four or five

months, she could not step into the street due to the size of her ~~unmarried~~ belly. That would put no honey into the letters sent to the Finance-Watch.

He could also say to himself that for the first time he did have some liking for the woman he would marry. Anna Glassl had satisfied his sense of rank—no question there—but he did not enjoy the pale smell of her perfume. ~~That could remind him in advance of the coffin waiting for her.~~ And Fanni, to say the least of the worst, was like a wild woman in her shifts of mood. Klara, however, was calm and knew where she came from. He had to like how she took care of his children, and if she gave him a big family, well, nothing too terrible about that. It would shut the mouths of the townspeople.

In any event, what with children dying ^{so often,} ~~all the time,~~ a large family was ^{the} ~~the~~ ~~Da most~~ necessary insurance against tragedy. Lose a few, and you still had others.

On the other hand, technically, they were cousins. When Alois made his first inquiries at the Braunau parish house, he discovered that he would have to file an application.

Now, Alois had to worry about the lie that had been certified near to nine years ago on the day when he had travelled to Strones with Johann Nepomuk and the three witnesses. Could that day stand in the way of a quick marriage? On official paper he was Johann Georg Hiedler's son, and therefore, Klara's cousin, one-step-removed. By Church ordinance, that might be too close. If he would now claim that Johann Georg was in no way his father, he would have to go back to being Alois Schicklgruber. Not to be contemplated! So, he and Klara would have to take the long step of asking for an ecclesiastical decision.

In Braunau, the incumbent of the parish church, Father Koestler, proceeded to study the problem. After a month, came a discouraging response: The power to grant dispensations in cases such as Herr Hitler's did not reside in him. Klara and Alois would have to apply to the Bishop of Linz. Father Koestler would help him to write the letter.

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Most Reverend Episcopate:

Those who with most humble devotion have appended their signatures below have decided upon marriage. But according to the enclosed family tree they are prevented by the canonical impediment of collateral affinity. They therefore make the humble request that the Most Reverend Episcopate will graciously secure for them a dispensation on the following grounds:

The bridegroom has been a widower since August 10th of this year, and he is the father of two minors, a boy of two and a half years (Alois) and a girl of one year and two months (Angela), and they both need the services of a nurse, all the more because he is a customs official away from home all day and often at night, and therefore in no position to supervise the education and upbringing of his children. The bride has been caring for these children ever since their mother's death, and they are very fond of her. Thus it may be justifiably assumed that they will be well brought up and the marriage will be a happy one. Moreover, the bride is without means, and it is unlikely that she will ever have another opportunity to make a good marriage.

For these reasons, the undersigned repeat their humble petition for a gracious procurement of dispensation from the impediment of affinity.

Braunau am Inn, 27 October, 1884

Alois Hitler, Bridegroom
Klara Poelzl, Bride

Alois had become friends with Father Koestler's housekeeper, a plump middle-aged woman with a light in her eye.

Given the matching light in his eye, he showed her the letter and said, "There is no mention of a very important reason for our marriage. The bride is pregnant."

"Oh, we know that," she said, "but it is not a good idea to leave a stone in the envelope."

After a digressive pause, Alois said, "That is fine advice. It is well-seated," and he put his hand on her behind as if to test the center of her wisdom. She gave him a crack across the face.

"How could you do that?" he asked.

"Herr Hitler, don't you get slapped a lot?"

"Yes, but I also receive ^{nice} ~~some~~ surprises. From good women who are not as high and mighty as you."

She laughed. She could not help herself. The cheeks of her face must be as red as the place where he had left his compliment. "Good luck with the Bishop of Linz," she said, "he is a timid fellow."

Word did not come back from Linz until a full month had passed. The Bishop of Linz would not grant the dispensation.

If Alois had had little liking for the Church, he could now despise it. "Churchmen wear black cassocks," he said to himself, "to cover their lily-white asses."

To Father Koestler, he asked respectfully, "What, then, Father, is the next step?"

"The letter containing your plea must now be translated into Latin by the diocesan scholars in Linz. That would allow us to send it to Rome. I think the papal court will be more receptive. They usually are."

Yes, thought Alois, they will be far enough away not to worry about an Austrian man and woman. To the priest he said, "I thank you for your wisdom. I learn much from you, Father. I think in Rome they will see that the act of providing a decent mother for my two children will constitute good Catholic virtue. That is a virtue I seek to acquire."

His hints were not small. He was one sinner who might be ready to return to the mother fold.

Father Koestler was sufficiently pleased to offer good economic advice. Since the translation into Latin could prove expensive, it might be wise to sign a Testimonium Pauperatis.

"That is, a declaration of poverty?" Alois had certainly picked up enough Latin to translate that for himself.

"It will remove the obligation, Herr Hitler, to pay for the translation."

Herr Hitler restrained himself from remarking that as an officer of the Crown, he considered himself well-to-do, thank you. Instead, he accepted the advice. He was not so removed from the wisdom of the earth as to wish to pay a tithe that he could avoid.

Three weeks later, close on Christmas, 1884, Rome granted the dispensation. But Alois and Klara still had to wait. No marriages could be solemnized until two weeks after the anniversary of the Holy Birth. This further delay proved unhappy for Klara; her belly would be up to four visible months by then.

"It's a big fellow we have here," said Alois.

"I hope that is so," she said. What could come out of a mother ~~who~~ *like herself who had felt so near to the Evil One* had been so far away from Devotion on such a crucial night? Or, if the ~~child did live, might it be marked?~~ The thought would haunt her wedding.

Like many of the nuptials of Customs officials, the day was divided into two parts. As Klara would say, ~~later~~ "We were standing by the altar before six in the morning, but by seven Uncle Alois was out there on duty at his post. It was still dark when I came back to our rooms."

That night they had a reception at the Pommer Inn and Johann Nepomuk, now a widower, came all the way from Spital to Braunau in company with Klara's sister, Johanna, named after her mother, Johanna Poelzl. "Little Johanna" was a hunchback. This occasioned some corner-of-the-mouth humor between two of the Customs officials. "Yes," said one, "the question is whether Alois will think it is good luck to rub her hump."

"Don't talk so loud," said the other. "I hear this hunchback has a terrible temper."

There was music. An accordion was played, and Alois and Klara did their best to dance, but Alois was stiff-legged. To stand in one place for hours on a cold day did not make you an artist on the dance floor.

Others followed. Customs officials and their wives. One of them had a son old enough to dance a vigorous polka with the recently-hired maid for the newlyweds, a girl with crimson cheeks and merry eyes named Rosalie, and this Rosalie had also prepared a roast leg of veal and a roast suckling pig to place in the center of the wedding feast.

She had also thrown too many logs on the fire. The rest of the dancers soon gave up. ~~They had to~~. The room had become much too hot. Half in annoyance but half in exuberance, Alois kept teasing Rosalie, "Oh, you are the one who is in a hurry to burn up a man's goods, are you not?" and Rosalie would cover her cheeks with her hands and giggle.

Rosalie's eyes would open wide when she was teased. It was no small matter that her breasts were undeniably full, and ^{now} were heaving in the aftermath of the polka. It did not need even that much to convince Klara. Alois was ready for his next diversion. She would remember this night for all the years to come, those ^{5 feet} years of sorrow, when the child Gustav she was carrying on this night and the two who were to follow, Ida and Otto, were all to die in the same year, Gustav at two, Ida at one, and Otto only a few weeks old.

Johann Nepomuk also noticed the warmth of the room and the look in Rosalie's eye. "Get rid of that maid," he whispered to Klara, but she did no more than shrug. "The next one could be worse," she whispered back.

Nepomuk had a terrible nightmare after the wedding party. His heart felt ready to burst. He could have died that night in his bed but instead ~~he~~ ^{on} lived for three more years. There is no organ more resistant to rupture than the heart of a tough old peasant. Nonetheless, he never felt the same, a cruel punishment for an old widower who was trying to hold on to what was left for him. Death, when it arrived at the age of eighty-one, came by the same epidemic that took away the children.

-4-

Diphtheria had come into their family like the Black Death.

Mucus welled up from the throat of the two-year-old and the one-year-old, an endless up-pouring of green phlegm, thicker, heavier, than the mud of Strones. Noises rasped forth from the boy and girl, sounds uttered with the tortured authority of an old man and an old woman working their lungs like galley-slaves to clear a straw's width of passage. Gustav died first, Gustav, always sickly, a two-and-a-half-year-old who looked like the ghost of Klara's lost brothers and lost sisters, then Ida went, Ida, fifteen months old, certainly the blue-eyed image of Klara, going three weeks after Gustav. Both deaths came back upon the mother in the blow that soon

followed. That was Otto's death—Otto, just three weeks old!—lost to a galloping colic that gutted him. The stench of a baby born to die in its first weeks of life settled into Klara's memory.

She had no doubt whose fault it was. Alois had been close to the Evil One ~~that, for certain! Before she had even been born.~~ But such a matter she could understand. A boy in Vienna all alone and he always wanted so much. Of course! But for herself, there was no excuse! She had desired a family where children did not die but grew to their full age, and yet she had been unfaithful to the Lord God Almighty on the night Gustav was conceived, yes, and that secret pleasure she still looked to find on nights when Alois chose to make love as a change in his diet from the present affair with the new cook, Rosalie, at the Pommer Inn.

She hated him for such acts. But then, she also learned that this kind of hatred was treacherous. It seemed to increase her desire. Whereas on those nights when she felt a moment of love for Alois, all such good life turned to ice below. Alois would grumble when the act was done even as she was kissing him in a fever to set things right.

"Your mouth gives promises you do not keep," he would tell her.

It did not feel as if she were married. Anna Glassl and Fanni were always in her mind. If she had begun as a maid, and then became a nurse to Fanni's children, and then a stepmother, now her own children were dead. Alois-Junior, and Angela had been sent to Spital when diphtheria assaulted the younger children, and escaped infection. They were back with her now, even if the Hitler family rooms at the Pommer Inn were still reeking of the fumigation that followed each death. The odor lived on in her clothes through the three separate days of the three services at the cemetery. She knew how small a coffin could be—she had learned as much from the losses in the Poelzl family—but the miniature coffins of her own children ^{were} ~~proved~~ ~~equal to~~ three slashes upon her heart. It aroused the love she had not dared to feel when her children were alive. She had been too terrified of the evil she could bring to these newborn souls, so unprotected. It was only after the death of Gustav that she realized she had loved him.

Alois, in his turn, had decided not to forgive God. To his friends at the tavern near the Customs House, and to the men he would drink with after duty, especially the newcomers, young Customs officials, he would speak with the authority of his three decades in the Finance-Watch. "It is

the Emperor who has the power to guide us," he remarked one hot summer night. "Real power is there. God does nothing but kill us off."

"Alois," said his oldest friend, "you speak as if you are not afraid of going upstairs."

"Upstairs or downstairs, the only importance for me is Franz Josef. He should mean more to us than God, yes!"

"And the Devil?"

X "Forget the Devil. Who builds the ships? Who makes the railroads? Not God, not the Devil. Men make these things!"

"You go too far," said his oldest friend.

By the time he reached home, Alois was usually in no good mood. The beer wore off in a sour cloud. He would scold Alois-Junior, he would upbraid Angela, he would not say a word to Klara. Now, no more often than once a week (and he was furious at how much these three deaths had taken from his vitality) he would look at Klara again as he had on their first night, and ~~he~~ would try to conceive of how to introduce her to specialites de maison. He did not speak French but he knew all he needed to know about those three words. One of the Customs Officers would brag that he had

been to Paris in his youth. There, in a brothel, he claimed, he had learned more over two nights than in all the rest of his life.

Alois refused to be impressed. Some of the details were not foreign to him. Fanni, for one, liked to put her mouth ~~everywhere~~ ^{into many a place,} and Anna Glassl was no lady when you got down to it. And now and again with one of the maids or cooks, he would receive a nice wet surprise.

Of course, these days he was with a frightened bird whose torso could scorch him even if her thighs were as cold as a snow bank. She made love, yes, when he could actually get all the way into her—not often—she was as strong as the Hound, yes, so much like bitches he had seen snarling and snapping at a male dog's genitals. Klara did not snarl or snap, she just jumped up on her altar, alone, always alone, she was so private that he wanted to put his mouth where she was most private, and then he could slip the Hound into her mouth. He would show her where the real Devotion was located. Specialites de maison!

Yet, on this hot summer night when he tried to open her closed legs, pushing harder than ever with the force of his arms, there came a moment when his breath overtook him. A startling pang! For one instant, he felt as

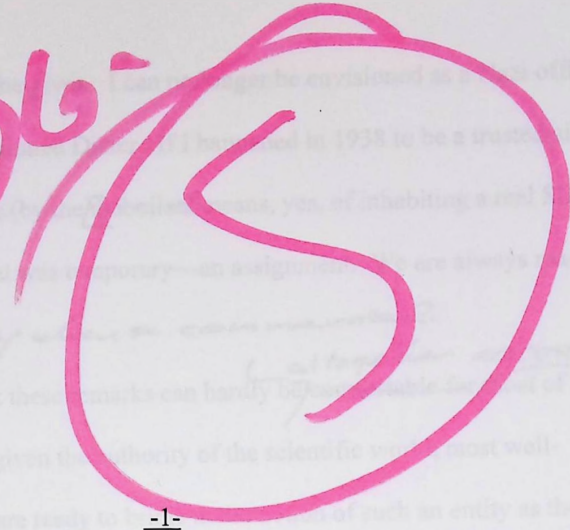
if he had been felled by thunder. Was that his heart? Was he the next to die?

"Are you all right?" she cried out as he lay beside her, his breath going in and out with a rasp that sounded as terrible as the last winds of their lost children.

"All right. Yes. No," he said. Then, she was on him. She did not know if this would resuscitate him or end him, but the same spite, sharp as a needle, that had come to her after Fanni's death was in her again. Fanni had told her once what to do. So Klara turned head to foot, and put her most unmentionable part down on his hard-breathing nose and mouth, and took his old battering ram into her lips. Uncle was now as soft as a coil of excrement. Even as she said this to herself, she sucked on him with an avidity that could come only from the Evil One—that she knew. It was from there that the impulse had come. So, now they both had their heads at the wrong end, and the Evil One was ~~also~~ ^{with them} there. He had never been so close before.

The Hound began to come to life. Right in her mouth. It surprised her. Alois had been so limp. But now, he was a man again! She felt such

power. His mouth lathered with her sap, he turned around and embraced her face with all the passion of his own lips and face, ready at last to grind it into her with the Hound, drive it into her piety, yes, damn all piety, thought Alois—damned churchmouse wife, damned church!—he was back from the dead—some kind of miracle, he was all there, his pride equal to a sword. This was better than a storm at sea! And then it went beyond such a moment, for she—the most angelic woman in Braunau—knew she was giving herself over to the Devil, yes, she knew he was there, there with Alois and herself, all three loose in the geyser that came out of him, and then out of her, now together, and I was there with them, I was the third presence, and was carried into the caterwauling of all three of us going over the falls together, Alois and myself filling the womb of Klara Poelzl Hitler, and indeed, I knew the moment when creation occurred. Even as the Angel Gabriel served Jehovah on a momentous night in Nazareth, so, too was I there with the Evil One at this conception on this July night nine months and ten days before Adolf Hitler would be born on April 20, 1889. Yes, I was there, an officer of rank in the finest intelligence service that has ever existed.

4.12.06-


-1-

Yes, I am ^{an} ~~one of his~~ instruments. I am ~~indeed~~ an officer of the Evil One. And this trusted instrument has just committed an act of treachery: It is not acceptable to reveal who we are.

The author of an unsigned and unpublished manuscript can attempt to remain anonymous, but the margin of safety is not large. Whenever we are in the presence of the Maestro, he has the capacity to read our thoughts.

If, from the beginning, I have spoken of my fear at undertaking this ^{work,} ~~as~~ ~~work,~~ ~~now,~~ it is because I knew that sooner or later I would have to reveal myself. ~~or destroy the work.~~ Now, however, that I have offered this disclosure,

there is a shift in the given. I can no longer be envisioned as a Nazi officer
 (and researcher) named Dieter. If I happened in 1938 to be a trusted aide to
 Heinrich Himmler (by the ~~diabolical~~ means, yes, of inhabiting a real SS
 officer's body) that was temporary—an assignment. We are always ready to
inhabit
 take on such roles *when so commanded.*

I know that these remarks can hardly be *(altogether accessible to)* comfortable for most of my
 readers. Today, given the authority of the scientific world, most well-
 educated people are ready to bridle at the notion of such an entity as the
 Devil. They have even less readiness to conceive of an ongoing conflict
 between Satan and the Lord. *The* Indeed, there is a modern tendency *(is)* to believe
 that such speculation is a medieval nonsense ~~that was~~ extirpated centuries
 ago by the Enlightenment. *(Voltaire did the job)* While *the* the existence of
 God *may be* is still acceptable to a minority of intellectuals *(but not)* the notion that there is
 an opposed entity equal *or nearly so.* or nearly equal to God is not. One Mystery might
 be allowed, but two, never!

There need be no surprise, then, that the world has *such an* so little
(in impoverished) understanding of Adolf Hitler's personality. Detestation, yes, but
 comprehension, no—he is, after all, the most mysterious human being of the

century. Nonetheless, I would say that I can comprehend his psyche. He was my client. I followed his life from infancy all the way into his later development as the wild beast of the century, this all-too-modest-looking politician with his snippet of a mustache.

As a newborn, he was a most typical Klara Pöschel product. That is, he was close to desperately unhealthy. Indeed, he saw Klara every three a drop of ~~secreted~~ out of his nose or a bubble of spit spewed up from his infant lips.

It is probably true that she was ready to die if he did not live. Devils are sound at anticipating motive (the more wicked, the better), but even our soundest predictions fade at the borders of mortality. We are obliged to recognize that God does have a final power to decide where and when a human being will die. Take the extreme example of an airplane that has just crashed. Let us say ~~it is~~ responsible for its malfunction. Nonetheless, we

-2-

As a newborn, he was a most typical Klara Poelzl product. That is, he was close to desperately unhealthy. Indeed, he terrified Klara every time a drop of ~~not~~ ^{mucus} oozed out of his nose or a bubble of sputum popped up from ~~his~~ infant lips.

It is probably true that she was ready to die if he did not live. Devils are sound at anticipating motive (the more sordid, the better), but even our soundest predictions fade at the borders of mortality. We are obliged to recognize that God does have a final power to decide where and when a human being will die. Take the extreme example of an airplane that has just crashed. Let us say ~~we~~ ^{devils} are responsible for its malfunction. Nonetheless, we

do not have the power to destroy everyone on board. Our Adversary (God) determines ~~the~~ ^{that} result. In most such cases, He will have to accept what we succeeded in bringing off, but not always. Occasionally, He will make an exceptional effort to save a few trapped on that edge of extinction. But this is rare—airplane crashes involve too many factors. Indeed, He could not even save His Son, (as we are never tired of reminding our clients) Still, there are occasions when a death we looked to create does not occur. From time to time, even in extreme difficulties, God still disposes.

Be it understood, then, that such mortal questions come down to the extent of the expenditure. Who will choose in each specific instance to bear the cost? Occasionally, we can make it prodigiously expensive for God to war with us. To keep this understanding alive, that He is less than All-Powerful, we try not to speak of the Lord as God, but as the D.K. What this means, ~~has to~~ ^{will} be explained before long. For that matter, we do not speak of the Evil One. Rather, we call our leader the Maestro.

Now, however, I choose to go back to Klara and her condition.

The attention she gave to Adolf's early days would have been seen as hysteria in any woman who had less cause for concern, but then, Klara was

living at the edge of the abyss. Recollections of her first illicit joining with Alois were pervaded by the penetratingly corrupt smell of the sickroom as Gustav, Ida, and Otto were lost one by one in the same few months of the same year. She had prayed devoutly to God to save each of her three babies, but the prayers were unavailing. As she saw it, God's rebuke could only confirm the sin of her condition.

By the time Adolf was born, she had formed the habit of washing her mouth every morning with laundry soap. (Alois was now full of a predilection—especially in late pregnancy—to ^{force} ~~put~~ Klara's mouth onto the Hound and keep it there, one big hand on her neck until his release had passed through its final spurt.)

No surprise then if her love was for the baby. So soon as Adolf gave some real indication of living—after two weeks he would smile with delight at the approach of her face—she began to believe that God might be kind to her this time, that He could even be ready to forgive. Would He be ready to spare this child? Was His Wrath lessened? Had He even given her an angel? Such is the nature of pious hope. Next, she had a dream that told

her to have nothing to do with her husband ~~Not~~ in bed. Such is the nature of pious obligation.

Alois soon had to face the possibility that a will of iron, when forged by prayer, can be quite as powerful in a woman as a highly-developed biceps on a man. At first, Alois could not believe that her refusal to let him touch her was more than a whim, a new species of enticement. "You women go back and forth like a kitten chasing its tail," he told her. Then, deciding that rebellion such as this was to be mercilessly crushed, he seized her buttocks in one hand and her breast with the other.

She bit him on the wrist hard enough to draw blood. Whereupon he cuffed her, leaving Klara with a bruised eye. Gott im Himmel! He was obliged next morning to beg her not to go out until her eye was no longer discolored. For a week, his hand bandaged, he shopped for food after work—no tavern on those nights. Then, with her bruise gone at last, he still had to give up what he considered irrevocable rights, and was obliged to sleep in a huddle on his side of the bed.

Since this state would be maintained over quite a period, I choose for the present to stay closer to Klara. An intensity of emotion is always

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

It need hardly be underlined that the death of Otto, Gustav, and Ida proved useful to us even if we had not been the ones to effect it. Obviously, it intensified Klara's adoration of Adolf past any usual measure of large maternal love. When he began to scream every time she kissed his lips, she came to recognize that it was the odor of lye on her mouth. But since Alois had been driven to his side of the bed, there was no longer a need each morning to use such harsh soap. So she could kiss Adolf again even as he gurgled obligingly.

We expected that this would prove useful. Excessive mother-love is almost as promising to us as a void of mother-love. We are keyed to look for excess of every kind, good or bad, loving or hateful, too much or too little of anything. Every exaggeration of honest sentiment is there to serve our aims.

However, we would wait. When it comes to turning a child into a client, we follow a reliable rule. ^{we} ~~he is to~~ move slowly. While an incestuous procreation followed by swarms of mother-love will offer rich possibilities,

particularly when the event has been fortified by our presence at conception, and we have, therefore, every reason to expect exceptional potentiality to be present for us, still we wait, we observe. The child may not live. We lose so many. All too often, God is aware of our choice and, heartlessly—I will say this about Him—yes, God can remove certain children heartlessly—no matter the cost to Himself. The cost to Himself? A curious calculation is present. The Lord is not insensitive to the hopes of those who surround the young one. The early death of an exceptional child can demoralize a family. Even when He knows, therefore, that a given individual has been ^{in good part} captured ~~in good part~~ by us, He hesitates. Sometimes, He does not wish to take on the collateral damage to the family. Besides, His angels can always look to steal the ^{child} ~~boy or girl~~ back from us.

So the D.K. is respectful of mother-love even when it is all-embracing. It can come as no surprise, then, that many artists, ogres, geniuses, killers, and an occasional savior live to maturity because God chose not to dispose of them. The first element of mutual recognition in the struggle between the D.K. (as we shall now call Him most of the time) and our leader—the Maestro—is their mutual understanding that no single

splendid human quality is likely to prevail by itself, unaltered by His powers or ours. Even the noblest, most self-sacrificing and generous mother can produce a monster. Provided we are present. All the same, this is not a game where we can count on the end result. That is why investing in the newborn is an unbalanced gamble for both the Maestro and the Lord.

But I can see by now that further explanation of the conditions, limitations, and powers of the world I inhabit, must be offered its exposition or too little will be understood.

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I will attempt, then, an explanation of our Two Kingdoms. (I could speak of them as two antagonisms, two realms, two visions of existence at odds with each other, but Two Kingdoms has been the term used by us since Biblical times.) Needless to add, we devils are confronted daily by a formidable array of angels. (We call them the Cudgels!)

While these warring forces will not be unfamiliar to anyone who has read "Paradise Lost," I would note that many of us are well-versed in literary classics. I cannot speak for the angels, but devils are obliged to be devoted to good writing. Milton, therefore, is high in our arcana of those few literary artists whom we do not have to look upon as unforgivably second-rate (because of their sentimental inexactitudes). Milton, after all,

did provide a rough outline of the contest between the Two Kingdoms. No matter how inaccurate were his details, he did present a pioneer demonstration of how our armies might have confronted each other at the commencement of that great estrangement which occurred when the earliest squadrons of angels divided into opposed camps, and each was convinced that they were the ones to direct the future of human beings.

One can offer respect, then, to that great blind man, even if his
 X descriptions are out of date. Devils who serve the Maestro do not ^{go to} war with
 X ~~angels~~ ^{against} in phalanx ~~any longer~~ ^{angels}. Rather, we are artfully installed by now in every corner of human existence.

To bring, therefore, a first explanation of the sinuosities, salients, neuterings, and recesses of our war, I am obliged to offer an outline of the forces at play now in human society. I would start by remarking that there are three aspects to reality—the divine, the satanic, the human—in effect, three separate armies, three kingdoms, not two. God and His angelic cohort work upon men, women, and children to bring them under His sway. Our Maestro, and we, his representatives, look to possess many of these same humans. Until the Middle Ages, human beings could not bring much

of an active role to the contest. Often, they were no more than pawns. Hence the title: Two Kingdoms. By now, however, we are obliged to take the individual man or woman into account. I will even say that many, if not most, humans, are at present doing their best to be beholden neither to God nor to the Maestro. They seek to be free. They often remark (and most  sententiously) "I want to discover who I am." All the while, we devils guide the people we have attracted (we call them clients), the Cudgels contest us, and many a particular individual does his or her best to fight off both of Us. Humans have become so vain (through technology) that more than a number expect by now to become independent of God and the Devil alike.

This, it can be repeated, is but a first approach to the perversities embedded in existence, a sketch of the true complexity of events.

For example, I can recover, if necessary, the concealed, even long-buried memories of a client. Such power, however, consumes Time. (Time is a word I capitalize since for us, as well as for the angels, it is a resource comparable to Money's power over humans.) We are always calculating the Time we can afford to give each of our clients. My need to acquire more

insight must always be balanced, then, against the investment required at working ^{our} ~~our~~ will upon a particular person. For this reason, the average human is not usually of interest to us. Their powers of insight, memory, and ill intent are limited. Rather, we look to find men and women who are ready to transgress ^{large} ~~divine or social~~ laws, ^{whether social or divine}

Such men and women are, I fear, no longer common. Often we have to be content with mediocrities. In our Company, provided we are sufficiently patient, we can ^{improve} ~~improve~~ them. The Maestro approves of ^{such} ~~this~~ skill. It produces promotions for oneself. I have had clients whom I was able to develop to the point where they could serve in one or another of our larger projects. The ^{average clients} ~~majority~~, however, caught in the back and forth between ^a ~~their~~ guardian angel and a directing devil ^{step often} ~~like myself~~, end by producing little that is useful to either Kingdom, and I can certainly recall a few unhappy situations where the guardian angel who was my opposite ^{number} ~~number~~ came away with the spoils.

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

the morale of their company by desertion, I encouraged workers and peasants who looked to stir up revolutions, but turned corrupt. I knew a few priests in small towns who got into trouble with little boys, and more than a few estate managers who pilfered funds. I indulged petty barons and counts as they gambled away the last of old holdings, and I might as well list petty thieves, drunken louts, and unfaithful wives (of the worst sort—matched by their male counterparts). I had a horde of clients, but only a few could stimulate my more developed skills. So often, I had to serve as proctor for clients born with little who soon proceeded to less. While I could rarely know whether the Maestro was safeguarding my talents for some future purpose or continuing to sentence me to various backwaters, I did take hope on one occasion when he chose to remark that I might yet be given a post comparable in its challenge to some of the epic encounters of our Company during the first three centuries of the Church in Rome. Yes, that might still be there for me, provided I was ready to pay unremitting attention to my humdrum duties with ~~these~~^{these} wretches, thugs, and drunks. I did, and eventually, was selected to oversee the work of a number of minor demons who were keeping watch on a young Austrian family whose developed

potentialities might yet prove astounding. Insignificant at present was this embryo and his family, but he had ancestral fault-lines full of the intoxicating stink of our old friend, blood-scandal. So I was to stay close to him after his birth.

I did not dare to ask, but at this point, the Maestro did choose to speak directly to my curiosity. He said: "Why have I been so interested in this creature not yet born? Can it be that he will yet possess a mighty ambition? I may propose that you take him on full-time. But, remain at ease! At present, it is still no more than a project. It could certainly fail. His future terrors must be allayed by the most reassuring experiences you can arrange for him. And you must guard him from receiving any crushing defeats to his ego in the next few years. In time, if he develops the greater part of his potential promise, he could, as I say, become your only client. Must I say more?"

All this was uttered by the Maestro with characteristic irony. We never know how serious he might be when he speaks to our mind's ear. (His voice is a cornucopia of ^{humours.)} ~~humors.~~

In any case, I dared not ask: What if I fail? Many projects do. On the other hand, I soon learned how he was conceived.

Now, some readers may notice that I first spoke of that exceptional event as if I ^{were} ~~was~~ the one in the connubial bed. Now, I ^{state} ~~certainly suggest~~ that I was not. ~~Not literally.~~ Nonetheless, in referring to my participation, I am telling the truth just as completely as ^{if I were} ~~I have been~~ purveying a lie. For even as physicists now assume to their scientific confusion that light is both a particle and a wave, so do devils live in both the lie and the truth, side by side.

The explanation—provided one is ready to follow—is considerably less difficult than, let us say, Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity.

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Spirits like myself can exist in events they did not attend. I did not have to be present, therefore, on the night Adolf was conceived. I was able to ingest the exact experience by calling upon the devil (of lower rank) who had been in Alois' bed on the primal occasion. I must say that that is always an option for us—we are able to share a carnal act long after the fact. On the other hand, a minor devil can, on the most crucial occasions, implore the Evil One to be present with him during the actual moments. (The Maestro encourages us to speak of him as the Evil One when he does choose to enter sexual acts, and on this occasion, he was ~~most~~ certainly there!)

It is obvious that there is no clear classification for this book. It is more than a memoir and most curious as a biography since it is as privileged as a novel in its freedom to enter many a mine. ~~ttt~~

Afterward, once I began my assignment to Klara, Alois, and young Adolf Hitler, the moment of impregnation was repeated for me by the devil who had been present. It came into my senses with a completeness of odor and physical impact that can be termed absolute. Thereby, it also happened to me. Among us, to be given an exact recollection is equal to being present. So, I also knew from the incomparable intensity of the occasion that the Maestro had actually joined with the attendant devil for one instant even as Jehovah offered His immanence to Gabriel during another exceptional event.)

While I would not be attached exclusively to Adolf Hitler for some years, he was always in my Overview and so I am ready to write about his early life with a confidence no conventional biographer could begin to feel. ~~ttt~~

~~Unfortunately, it is not all that simple. What gives me pause is my~~

~~fear of the consequences. What, to the contrary, gives me hope is that I may~~
~~be able to do this work without attracting the attention of the Maestro. That~~
~~is because in these latterday American years, he is more attuned to~~
~~electronics then to print. The Maestro has followed human progress into~~
~~cyber-technologies far more closely than the Lord.~~

It could even say that it does not really matter since my longer concern is ~~ttt~~

I have ~~also~~ chosen, therefore, to write on paper—which may offer a small protection. My words may not be picked up as quickly. (Even processed paper still contains an ineluctable hint of the tenderness God put into His trees.)

While the Maestro has no desire to use up any part of his resources by monitoring every last one of our acts—there are too many demons and small devils for that—he is also not inclined to let us go on ventures he has not selected. Years ago, I would never have dared to embark on this written record. My fear would have been absolute. But now, with America wallowing in the inundations and engulfments of mass media, one can try to get away with more.

Ergo, I feel ready to continue ~~this biography, this novel—call it what you will~~. The assumption is that I can succeed in concealing my output from the Maestro. Intelligence work can be understood as a contest between code and the obfuscation of code. Since the Maestro is heavily engaged, and his present existence is more arduous than ever—he feels closer to eventual victory—I do feel free to venture out. I have grown more confident that I will be able to conceal the existence of this manuscript

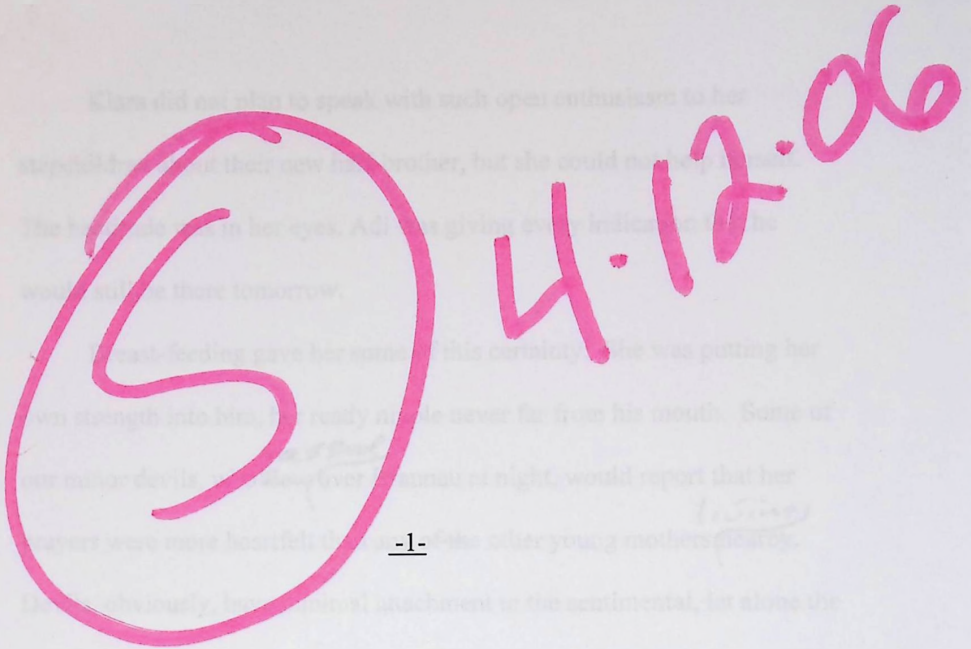
until, at least, it is finished. Then I will either feel obliged to print it or—destroy it. This second option has always offered the safest solution (except for the near-mortal blow to my vanity.)

Of course, if I publish, I will then have to flee from the wrath of the Maestro. There are options open. I could choose to enter the equivalent in our spirit-life of the Federal Witness Protection Program. That is, the Cudgels would hide me. Of course, I would have to cooperate with them.

Ergo, I have a choice—treachery or extinction.

In any case, I do feel less dread. By revealing our procedures, I can enjoy the rarified pleasure (for a devil) of being able to characterize my existence. And should I be able to finish, I will still have the choice of destroying my work, or going over to the other side. I must say, the latter option begins to appeal ~~more to me~~.

Since I am unfaithful to the Maestro, I must show no sign. My modest duties in America ~~must be~~ ^{have to} performed impeccably, even as I offer ~~these~~ further details of the work I accomplished in the early upbringing of my most important client.



-1-

By the time he was a year old, Klara called the boy Adi. It was never Adolf or Dolfi. (Dolfi was much too close to Teufel.) "Look," she would say to her stepchildren, "look, Alois, look, Angela, isn't Adi an angel, a little angel, isn't it so?" Since the baby had a round face, big round eyes as blue as hers, and a small mouth, and therefore looked to them like any other baby, they nodded with easy obedience. She was a good stepmother and that was all right with Alois-Junior, and also with Angela, especially since they had been told by Alois-Senior that their own mother, Fanni, had been crazy.

Klara did not plan to speak with such open enthusiasm to her stepchildren about their new half-brother, but she could not help herself. The beatitude was in her eyes. Adi was giving every indication that he would still be there tomorrow.

Breast-feeding gave her some of this certainty. She was putting her own strength into him, her ready nipple never far from his mouth. Some of our minor devils, who ^{passed} ~~flew~~ over Braunau at night, would report that her prayers were more heartfelt than any of the other young mothers ^(living) ~~nearby~~. Devils, obviously, have minimal attachment to the sentimental, let alone the heartfelt, but one or two were bothered. Klara's prayer was so pure: "Oh, Lord, take my life if it will help to save his." Other women, being more practical, complained to God about what was missing in their days. The most greedy were always looking to own a better house. The stupid were looking for a surprisingly good lover, "yes, if you permit it, Lord." There was rarely a sweet for which they did not pine. Klara's prayers, by contrast, yearned to give long life to the child.

While the Maestro was not often sympathetic to breast-feeding since its absence could stimulate ugly energies we could later employ, he was

more tolerant in cases of first-degree incest. Then he wanted the mother to be close indeed to the child. All the better for us! (A monster is most effective when it can call on mother-love with which to charm new acquaintances.)

Excretory dramas also offer advantages. A dirty butt on a baby can send a signal—the mother may be a potential client for us. The opposite is also of use. Klara proves a fine example here. She always kept a clean house. Her rooms at the Pommer Inn were now as spotless as any home tended by several good maids. The furnishings gleamed. So, too, did Adi's pip-squeak of an anus offer its glow. It was kept as immaculate as an opal, small and glistening, and of that, too, did I approve—an incestuary must always be kept aware of the importance of his or her excrement, even if it comes down to a little asshole that is forever being polished.

-2-

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

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

When asked, however, why he had moved from the Pommer Inn after a residence that had lasted for four years, he would shrug. “I like a change,” he would say. The truth was that he had used up the waitresses, chambermaids and cooks at the Pommer who were not too old or too ugly, and he could have added (and did to one or two friends), “when a woman goes dry on you, change your house. That can put a little oil in her.”

On the day when the Hitler family left the Pommer Inn, he had, however, a most uncharacteristic thought. It was that fate could yet choose him for high position. I will remark that his idea of high position was to become Chief Customs Official for the provincial capital of Linz. Indeed, fate would yet give him exactly that post. Never superstitious (except when he was) Alois decided that the shift from the Pommer Inn to a rented house on Linzerstrasse was a good move. He and Klara both agreed that they needed more room, and now they had it. Of course, there were no females in the attic, but he could manage with that. He had nosed out a woman who lived on his route home from the tavern. He had to pay for the privilege by

giving her a gift time to time, but then the rent on Linzerstrasse was low. It was a dreary house.

All the while, he fought against falling in love with his wife. She infuriated him. If ants were like bees and had a Queen for whom they labored, then Klara was Queen of the ants, for she commanded his skin to crawl, his crotch to itch, and his heart to toll in his chest—all of this coming from no more than the presence of Klara on her half of the divided bed. He would keep thinking of how she had looked on the night of her wedding. She had worn a dark silk dress, rose-colored with a white collar—that much white she allowed herself as a bride—and on her white forehead, she had teased some charming curls. At her breast was pinned the one piece of jewelry she possessed, a small green cluster of glass grapes looking real enough to mislead a man into reaching for one. And then there were her eyes—no mistake! He had to fight against falling in love with a woman who kept the cleanest house in Braunau just for him and for three kids—two of them not even her own!—a woman always as polite to him in public as to an emperor, a woman who never complained about what she had and didn't have nor nagged him about finances, a woman who still had only one good

dress, the one worn at her wedding party, and yet if he laid a finger on her, she would have bitten it off. He wondered if the difference in their age was what it was about. Better than marrying her, he should have put her in a convent. Yet his skin itched at the thought of how she would not let him near.

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

church-goers—"No good man wants to be neutered," most were ready to admit—still they were officials. So, they could hardly feel at ease when a prestigious institution was mocked, let alone the Holy Roman Church.

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

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

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

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

"Come now," said two drinkers at once.

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

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

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

"In that case, I tip my hat to him," said Alois, "if he is your brother, he is different. But that was then. And I assure you: The priests who were real men did worse. You ever hear this saying by the Pope? From the

same Pope. He said, 'No priest needs to marry so long as the peasant has a wife.'

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

"Which Bishop?"

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

Alois had not forgotten the Bishop of Linz who, six years ago, had refused his application to marry Klara. ^{He ~~had~~ ~~recalled~~ ~~that~~ in} order to defray the expenses of translating his letter into Latin, ^{he} Alois had been forced to declare ^{himself} ~~that he was~~ a pauper. ^{That} ~~Six years ago,~~ it still rankled.

On the walk home, his mood remained foul. He came to an unhappy conclusion: his tirades against the Church might have to cease. He was fifty-four years old, and for many years, had not worried about his position in life. He knew that he would rise in the ranks open to him, but no higher.

Now, however, ~~all this might be shifting~~ ^{up} From a friend in the Finance Watch, ^{him} ~~he~~ had been told ~~that in Vienna~~ there was talk of a

promotion for Alois Hitler up to Chief Customs Officer at Passau. Given his lack of formal education, this would be a true rise in rank, ~~a most innovative promotion~~. "However, you must now watch yourself, Alois," the friend from the Finance Watch said. ^{"All this"} "This is still a year away. Keep a good name if you want to be moved to Passau."

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

But now this respected friend ^(by way of his) ~~(who had a)~~ confidant in the upper councils of the Finance-Watch) was saying, "Watch out for the townspeople in Braunau."

This ^{caution} ~~were~~ travelled into his digestion. Because Alois could not decide whether to trust his friend. The man was a practical joker. In fact, he was the same one who had once told him: "The townspeople of Braunau are nothing. You can put your thumb to your nose at them." Alois had indeed put together a good many habits around that remark, but the truth

was he had certainly said too much tonight if there was any ground to the rumor concerning Passau. ~~Most unsettling~~ Of a sudden, he was learning how much ambition he had, a real ambition which he had never admitted to himself. He couldn't. It would have been like a river breaking through a levee. But now ^{he had} ~~he could recognize that a flood water was waiting. He had~~ to stop pissing on the Church.

Yes, in this sense, his wife, a cold tit to him and a jug of warm milk to the baby—what a guzzler! never off the tit, but, get by all that ~~she~~ ^{is} she was a useful wife. Good for the children, good cook, very good with the Church.

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

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

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In our ranks, we look upon ambition as a force that is ^{generally} usually at our disposal. ~~While we accept the likelihood that many human emotions were designed by God,~~ we are ready to attach ourselves to any passion that veers out of control. Of no emotion is this more true than ambition. ^{Yet, it} ~~is so~~ related to the Lord's purposes that He is invariably ready to encourage it. ^{By His Design, every} ~~is also~~ ^{is there} ~~would suppose His goal is for every living human to fulfill some part of His Vision. To that degree, God will also prosper.~~

Of course, such a supposition is a folly. As the Maestro is never loathe to tell us, a human who suffers from too much ambition is advertising the Creator's own lack of anticipation. The D.K., wishing His Vision to be ~~not~~

~~only~~ effective, but innovative, had encouraged the human will to be free of Him. ~~In doing so, He enabled us to take in a horde of clients.~~ Once again, God had miscalculated. Ambition is not only the most powerful of the emotions but the most unstable. Defeat ^{can} ~~became~~ intolerable ~~and so many of~~ the most ambitious choose to blame God for a run of bad luck. ~~(They call it Fortune, but secretly, they are enraged at God.)~~

Large ambition, therefore, has to awaken our interest. The D.K., a prodigious optimist, had not foreseen that the men and women who ^{intended} ~~could~~ ~~to~~ promulgate His Vision ~~by the intensity of their ambition~~ had better be saints. ~~Otherwise, they might betray Him!~~ In contrast, the Maestro has always been alert to the lodes of perversity to be found in every vein of human nature.

Consider the case with Alois. Many people guard their ambition as the most sequestered part of their emotions (guarded even from their own awareness). For so soon as ambition begins to burn too brightly, it is ready, if necessary, to shred a good many long-held convictions about the inviolability of one's honor. Or one's loyalty to ~~close~~ friends. All too often ambition becomes as blind a cutting tool as a laser.

No surprise then if Alois was not the only one in the Hitler family to suffer such a disruption. Ambition, being a true germ, is highly infectious. If Klara now had a child who was actually giving signs of staying alive, her breasts, in consequence, were suffused with joy, the most generous joy she had ever known. Klara now wanted everything for Adi. And to such a degree, that she was even ready to forgive her husband sufficiently to allow him to cross the middle of the bed.

Their second courtship began. She was still breast-feeding Adolf. So, there was no question of a pregnancy. What inspired the return of some ~~little~~ carnal interest was her growing appreciation of Alois. He had built strong foundations, after all, for the good future of Adolf. Even as her husband had risen from the mud of Strones and Spital to the honor of ~~an officer~~ ^(an officer) in uniform in the service of Franz Josef, she, in turn, was ready to dream of the heights to which little Adolf could ascend should his ability prove equal to the vigor ~~(and upward progress)~~ ¹ of his father.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At that moment, the dog began to bark. Alois had bought a mongrel boxer for a few ^{Kronen} ~~guilder~~ from a farmer he knew. Since they were living in a house, rather than at an inn, the purchase could be considered protection worth the cost. But the dog, whom he named Luther, proved disappointing.

While Luther worshipped Alois and quivered before his master at every shift of tone, he did not seem otherwise alert. Moreover, he had nervous habits. On this night, as Alois shouted at him to stop howling, poor Luther watered the floor.

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

tender expression of a lover overwhelmed for a moment by the implicit equality of flesh to flesh, soul upon soul. At such instants, she felt as if this child was closer to her and knew more about her than anyone.

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

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

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

"That dog can't learn to control himself," he cried out of his own pain at the awful turn the evening had taken. Luther was bleeding at the mouth from blows he had received full-face on his muzzle, but in turn, Alois' palm had a small but ugly laceration from raking one fierce slap across a broken incisor in the middle of Luther's sad front teeth.

-4-

*a memoirist and
if I am a biographer, I do
more a*

It will be noted that I write about my people much like any reasonably
by turns,
good novelist. ~~By turns,~~ I am ready to observe them sardonically,
objectively, ironically, sympathetically, judgmentally, even

compassionately. Nor am I often sinister. This should not come as a
~~But I feel no need to~~
surprise. Why ~~descend to~~ a casual reader's notion of how a devil is
guilty
supposed to behave?

From the onset of our service, the Maestro has instructed us to make
humankind our ongoing study. He even encourages us to feel close to what
is godly in people as well as keening to the spoils that may be there later.
To comprehend the nobler facets of humankind, precisely those that can

present obstacles to us, is important. If we had religious Orders in our muster, I might be ^{the equivalent of} ~~like~~ a Jesuit. ~~indeed~~ I share with them a fundamental understanding. I am always ready to acquire a sympathetic comprehension of ^{an} ~~whoever is our~~ adversary—I see it as my duty to be ready, indeed, to know more about godly sentiments than all but the most gifted of the angels.

That may be why the Maestro encourages us to speak of God as the D.K. (At least those of us who work in German-speaking lands. In America, it is the D.A.—dumb ass! In England, the B.F.—bloody fool! For France, A.S.—L'Ame Simple. In Italian, G.C.—gran cornutto! For Spanish—G.P.—grande payaso.) So D.K. stands for Dummkopf. It is not that we look upon God as stupid—never so! Moreover, we know from experience (and lost battles) that the Cudgels can, on occasion, be as bright and incisive as ourselves. Our use of the word Dummkopf comes, I ^{expect} ~~would~~ ^{determination} ~~suppose~~ from the Maestro's ~~intention~~ to wean us from our greatest weakness—the unwilling admiration we feel for the Almighty. As the Maestro never allows us to forget, God may be powerful, but He is not All Mighty. Hardly so! We, after all, are also here! If the D.K. is the Creator, we are His most profound and successful critics.

All the same, we have to recognize that the Angels have succeeded in *convincing most of humanity* getting most men and women to believe that our leader is the Evil One. ~~Now~~ is there real opportunity to protest this canard. So, our best recourse, ~~as~~ the Maestro suggests, is to take pride in the term. When I write E.O., or speak of the Evil One, it is with full knowledge of the irony of the concept. The Maestro has given us so much, our subtle master. "Leave excessive reverence to the God-worshippers," he tells us. "They need it. They are always on their knees. But we have work to do, and it is tricky. I recommend that you keep thinking of Him as the Dummkopf. For, indeed, given what He could have achieved, this is what He is. Remember: It is our universe to gain. It is His to lose. Keep calling Him the Dummkopf."

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

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

Heaven. There it was, right up in his anus next to the gas and the cramps. All the while, his mother subtly, tenderly, delicately expunged the soil, wet or dry, from his rosebud, (which was, of course, Klara's secret name for her dear baby's incomparably dear little hole—die Rosenknospe.) She was so proud of its pink sheen that she could not even suppress her joy when her step-children were watching. Indeed, unlike other good mothers in Braunau, she barely bothered to teach Angela how to substitute for her. She was, after all, wholly superior to the unhappy elements in the procedure. His stool, (which could on occasion be as rank as any other colicky child) did not occasion her disgust. If the outpouring was ^{outrageous} ~~rank~~ in smell, or what was worse—gave a hint of the empty cavern that lurks in the odor of grave illness—her breath remained calm. But she preferred the stink to be rich enough to overpower anyone else. The stronger, the better. A sign of health. Such was her love for Adi.

Yes, love sparkled between them. His eyes danced as she dredged his cheeks with feather-smooth wipes of the rag, and her eyes—whether she knew it or not—were full of admiration that his little penis stood so erect. She, in turn, would giggle and coax it back (most properly) as they both

laughed. For, of course, it jumped up again. Whereupon she kissed the tip, (once), and then blushed. Be assured! She did not allow her mind to suggest that such an act might be subject to Confession. No, not with such innocent joy.

All this had to change after the episode with Luther.

She lived again in high fear of Alois. Now, she was always in fear that Adi's swaddling cloths might bag open. What if Alois came upon a full plop on the floor? Once, stepping out of the parlor to start a dish in the kitchen, she returned in the next minute to see the child playing with his spoil—he had already plastered his upper lip and chin. She shuddered at the thought of Alois coming through the door.

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

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

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

make, and felt in consequence masterful. He had no fear of Klara ^{not} even when she came close to striking him.

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

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

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

Adolf walked away as silently as he had entered, but he had no doubt. His mother was betraying him. Just then he heard a final set of cries intense enough to turn him back toward the room. From what he could see by whatever moonlight was coming through the window, his father had begun to belabor Klara with all of his body, his big belly slapping on her belly. And she was grunting like a dog. So full of contentment! "You beast, you are an ugly man, you are an animal, you!" and then again, "You, yes, you, yah, yah, yah." There was no question. She was happy. Ja!

He would never forgive her. That much the two-year-old knew.

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

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

Must one suppose that because a child's deepest reactions seem to have a half-life of no more than thirty minutes, they cannot be profound? Because of that betrayal, he might never love his mother as much again. Yet, his feelings were heightened. There was pain in his love now, and an anger that revealed itself by nipping at her breast with his new teeth. Indeed, for a few days, he fell close to Luther, and when drowsy, would sleep beside the dog through an afternoon. Truth, he saw the hound as a sibling, and this brotherly affair went on until Adolf began to take too much

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advantage of the beast, punching him in the belly, trying to poke his eyes, and sometimes loosing a kick to the ribs. When the dog began at last to growl at his approach, Adolf would whine and run to Klara. There was a period when ~~this all made her so distraught that~~ ^{her} delight in breast-feeding was gone. The tooth had done it. The days of weaning were at hand.

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

We may remember that the last time we ~~had been so close to~~ ^{saw} Alois, he ^{was} ~~had been~~ burying his nose and lips in Klara's vulva, his tongue as long and demonic as a devil's phallus. (Be it said: we are not without our

contributions to these arts!) Alois was certainly being aided by us. Never before had he given himself so completely to this exercise, and quickly he had become good at it, and so quickly, that no explanation is possible unless we are given credit as well. (Which is why we speak of the Evil One when joining in the act—we do have the power to pass ^{these} transient but lubricious gifts to men and women even when ^{they are not our} ~~we are not planning to turn them into~~ clients.)

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

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

As a devil, I am obliged to live intimately with excrement in all its forms, physical and mental. I know the emotional waste of ugly and disappointing events, the sour indwelling poison of unjust punishment, the corrosion of impotent thoughts, and, of course, I also have to engage caca itself. It is true. As devils, we live in shit and work with it. So, we often look to comprehend a marriage through the eye of the cloaca—and I will add—that is not the worst way since parenthood is not only the crown but the outhouse of marriage. As St. Odon of Cluny stated so unforgettably in a remark worthy of the best of devils: inter faeces et urinam nascimur—between shit and piss are we born. That leads me to say that the proper study of marriage resides not only in partnership, congeniality, boredom, predictable habit, daily annoyance, verbal scuffles, and daily despair, but in the guts and smear of it all—the comradely knowledge of all the forbidden tastes, smells, and bodily nooks. Indeed, if all of that were absent, the sacrament would have less foundation. On caca, is marriage based. So I would assert. You, in turn, are free to reject my opinion because I am a devil, after all, and we do look for the lowest common denominator to any

truth. Small wonder if the condign properties of waste are part of our province.

Alois' promotion came through. The Finance Watch moved him to the post of Chief Customs Officer at Passau, and Klara was now without doubt that she was married to a man of achievement.

On the other hand, they could hardly rent their house before Alois was due to walk at his new post in Passau. That was a full day's travel from Braunau. So, there were weeks at a time when Alois had to live apart from the family. In consequence, Adolf could fall in the big bed next to his mother.

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On the other hand, they could hardly rent their house before Alois was due to work at his new post in Passau. That was a full day's travel from Braunau. So, there were weeks at a time when Alois had to live apart from the family. In consequence, Adolf could loll in the big bed next to his mother.

If it was grievous that Klara had to put him aside whenever Alois come home, so did the child also learn that the loss of such happiness would be regained so soon as Alois was off again to Passau.

This condition lasted for a year. Even when the family did make the move to Passau, Alois had to oversee other border towns and was, therefore, absent nearly as much as before—which permitted Adolf to sleep ^{again} right up close to the nocturnal warmth of his mother.

Now, in Passau, the new position ^{not only} gratified Alois' vanity, but ~~also~~ ^{threatened} offered a threat to his confidence. Back in Braunau, a less important station, the smugglers ^{had been usually seen} they rounded up ~~were~~ petty individuals. Most of the product ~~to be~~ examined was agricultural; weighings were tedious. Braunau might be nicely situated on the river Inn, but even its architecture was humdrum.

In Passau, Austrian customs, by mutual agreement, operated on the German side of the Danube. The difference was highly visible. Passau had once been ruled by a Prince-Bishop, and so could boast of medieval towers. Some of its churches dated back to the onset of the Middle Ages; others were High Renaissance. Passau's walls reflected the grandeur of dedicated duty, ancient crimes, torture chambers, dark secrets, by-gone glory, and—

much to the point for Alois—criminal smugglers with imagination enough to be something of a match for him.

So, he was not without discomfort in the new position. If, until now, his uniformed presence had been a full warning to would-be malefactors, he knew that much depended upon the rigor of his professional manner. So he took professional pains to present a personality of monumental official calm, a man who had set an incorruptible seal on himself. Let travellers know that he was not the fellow with whom to play games. He had studied many an upper-class customs officer—those with university learning, some with livid, invaluable dueling scars. They were the ones to model oneself after.

Taking up his command in Passau left him feeling, however, less inside his own good Austrian skin. His tone, in consequence, became a touch too harsh. Occasionally some trifle would provoke him unduly. Once he went into a tirade because an underling addressed him as “Herr Official” rather than “Herr Senior Official Hitler.” He could sense that this Passau cohort of subordinates was better educated than the younger officers at Braunau. Were these new faces growing critical of him? Now and again,

looking down from his post at the rush of the Danube below the Customs' bridge, his eyes would sparkle with tears. He would find himself thinking of Braunau, and of the two women buried in the region, dear carnal-spirited Franzeska, yes, and for an instant he would also mourn Anna Glassl. No beauty, but she had known what to do under the sheets.

He smoked all the time. His nickname, unknown to him, was ~~the~~ *the Cloud of Smoke, (Here, the* ~~Chimney.~~ (The German is good enough to offer ~~here:~~ Der Rauchfung!)

"And today, what is the mood of der Rauchfung?" one young officer might ask another as he came on duty. Alois knew these juniors were resentful because he did not allow them ~~to smoke on their shifts,~~ *the liberty that he enjoyed* nonetheless, he knew that the very injustice of it would enforce his authority. A good officer must be fair for the most part, yet still exercise certain specific inequalities. Done judiciously, that proved effective. One's inferiors were reduced a notch.

Now that Klara and the children had joined him in Passau, he also became more severe with his offspring. Alois-Junior and Angela soon learned not to speak to him unless they were asked a direct question. Otherwise, they were not to interrupt his thoughts. If Alois-Junior happened

to be outside, the father would put two fingers to his lips and whistle. It was identical to the call he used to summon Luther. In turn, Alois-Junior, fresh-cheeked, strong, stocky, and with a face like his father's, had driven Klara and Angela into hysterics one afternoon by picking up a monumental turd that Adi had chosen to deposit on the parlor rug. When stepmother and sister began to scream at the sight of it in Junior's hand, dark, doughy, and forbidding as a primeval club, he chose to stalk after them, his eyes wild. What a mischief! Klara and Angela were crying out in terror. This was a monstrosity! Then, Adi joined the chorus. He screamed with the rest even as he chose to prance right behind Alois-Junior, and kept on with it until his big brother, tiring of the sport, tore off an inch of the stuff, whirled around and planted it on the tip of Adolf's nose.

That evening Klara told Alois-Senior. The beating that ensued was comparable to the attack on Luther. Alois-Junior could just about crawl off to school next day. Profound, after that, was the discipline in the house. When Alois came home from his duties, the children dared at most to whisper. Klara, unwilling to upset him, was also quiet. Supper was eaten in

silence. The smell of Alois' breath, rich with meat and sour from beer, mingled with the aroma of red cabbage.

After dinner, he would take to the armchair, select one of his long-stem pipes, tamp his tobacco into the bowl with all the authority that is ready to reside in the thumb of a man of official importance, and then proceeded to overpower the air with his own smoke. Alois-Junior and Angela went to their room once permission was given. But, Adi was called forward.

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

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

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

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

A town doctor reassured her that this medical phenomenon was not fearsome. Such boys often grew up to be men with large families—~~“The good God, dear lady, gave more than enough to the first testicle, before He chose to double it.”~~

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

“Boys of his condition are sometimes active. Highly active. That is all.”

These kind words did not soothe Klara. The missing testicle left one more stain on the Poelzl family. Her sister Johanna was not only a hunchback but, according to Alois, half-mad. And then there was a first cousin—a true imbecile. Not to speak of all of Klara's dead brothers, her dead sisters, her own dead children. There was not enough, she decided, of

Alois' strong constitution in Adolf, no, none of the strength Alois had so obviously passed on to Alois-Junior. This was also her fault. She had loved her husband on the night that Adolf had been conceived, but only on that night, and in a way—was it unholy?—such a night!

But now—could it be too late?—she would say that she loved her husband again. She came to this conclusion slowly, step by step, over many months, but on one fine night in June, a year and a half after his transfer to Passau, she felt a new respect for him. For just that afternoon—he had learned that in another six months, he would be transferred to Linz, the capital of the province, there to serve as Chief Customs Officer. It was the most important assignment you could find in all the Service between

Salzburg and Vienna, *and it came at a fine time since he would be ready to retire in a few years* *

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

107 being blank has been discarded

and this promotion would increase the size of his pension

*

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

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

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

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

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

"Will he talk to me?"

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

He rarely got near enough to Klara. Yet just a few weeks ago, ~~no~~ ^{he had been able} more, he used to enjoy the same conversation each morning with her.

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

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

"I think you are the most beautiful."

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

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

Now, when he tried to ask if she was the most beautiful woman in the world, she would laugh unhappily. "Oh, I am an old worn-out girl," she would say, "I am not beautiful, Dolfchen. But your sister Angela will be."

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

Meanwhile, much of the time, his father was in Linz. One week after Edmund's birth, Alois took up new and full-time duties there. Since Linz was fifty miles east of Passau, Alois did not ^{bring back too} return to his household more ~~than twice a month. The weight of his strong voice was not there now to~~ ^{more than} ~~twice a month. So during~~ quiver through the boy's body. During the day, when Angela and Alois-Junior were away at school, Adi would be alone with his mother and the infant, yet Klara still did not have a lot of time for him. And at night, he no longer could be certain where he would sleep. Alois-Junior would often take over his cot, and Adi would have to move to Angela's bed. ~~She would~~ ~~tickle him too much.~~ Sometimes she would tell him that he did not smell good. "So, Adi, your breath is rotten," she would say. Often, he would put a blanket on the floor to escape her.

He was also afraid to go outside. There were boys his age and older playing in the field back of the house, and their yells were fearsome. He



spent his time looking at the illustrations in a book his father had bought about the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. He decided he would like to be a brave soldier. Could he be? He was so afraid!

One afternoon, after school and much at Klara's bidding, Alois-Junior pulled Adolf out of the house, and led him to the field behind the house. Yes, he had known it would be so. A dozen small boys were playing at war.

Alois-Junior studied the group, then selected the leader of one army, a stout five-year-old. "This is my brother," Alois told him, "and if you let anyone on the other side hit Adolf, you will hear from me." He punched the boy on the arm hard enough to certify his words, and departed.

When Adolf came home that evening, Alois-Junior told him, "From now on, I eat the cream puffs first. As many as I want. If you cry to your mother, mamma's boy, I will not protect you on the field."

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

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

Actually, there had been little enough punishment on the first day.

The fat boy was quick to use his own body to shield Adi from every attack.

Besides, it did not take long to grasp the basic principle. ~~The game was simple.~~ Divided into two teams, the boys took turns chasing each other. It was really not a war. More like tag. Once you were touched, you were dead. And each melee lasted but a few minutes. After which, the boys, close to breathless, would count the losses, take a breath, and start up again. On the first charge across the field, somebody would always get knocked down. Once, when the fat boy ^{whom} ~~that~~ Alois-Junior had chosen was waylaid by two kids from the other team, it even happened to Adolf. A rude shove on the shoulder and he was slammed to the ground. Earth drove up his nose.

He did not cry. It took a considerable effort of his will. In the following minute, he had to negotiate with himself in order to keep from weeping. He was hurt that no one had applauded his new-found stoicism.

His feelings were as bruised as the scrape on his cheek. His nose burned from the outrage to his stuffed-up nostrils, but he managed not to cry. One's

will could be as strong as a wall if one was ready to command it. So he told himself. He was nothing if not precocious.

He also managed to get through the rest of the battles that day without another collision. He was quick enough to dart away whenever an enemy soldier came near. To his delight, he even tagged one boy.

On the next day, his face was in the dirt again. ~~Action was~~
~~and it~~
~~everywhere. It was hard to dodge the rush. He was knocked down again.~~

(The fat boy was rueful about it and begged him not to tell his brother. Adi had the pleasure of patting him on the back. No cause for alarm, he announced, not a word would he say. *Yet, that*)

~~That~~ night he could hardly sleep. He felt that in time to come, the fat boy, Klaus, would be his lieutenant, while he would be captain.

Sketch → To accomplish such an aim, he came up with a new set of rules.

War, he reasoned, was not two armies charging at each other all the time—

war was maneuver! He did not know the word as yet, but he had ~~certainly~~ *an instinct*

for
~~acquired~~ the concept.

To his new mates he now proposed that they move from the flat field to a hill in the next meadow. Each army could now begin at the foot of opposite slopes, and so would not be visible until one or the other crossed the summit.

Once he had convinced the boys of this change, he brought in an amendment. The leader on each side, he insisted, must not be touched. "The highest officer," he argued, "must always be respected."

To gain his point, it did not hurt that stout, sturdy Klaus was always by his side. All the same, Adi was a little amazed at how well he could deal with these matters. So was I. ~~For a boy of five, his eloquence captured my attention.~~

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

Be it understood that further investiture is never routine. Each case is unique. The average man or woman, ~~paralyzed by his ignorance,~~ assumes one can lose one's soul to the devil on an instant, and permanently, ^{but} the premise is false ^{and has to be} but is reinvigorated every Sunday by the most dedicated and mediocre ministers. The real situation is that we do not appropriate people by way of a lightning flash. Nor does Satanic entrapment brand a man or woman forever as our vassals. Rather, it is an ongoing tug of war. So soon as we seek to invest our powers in a client, the Cudgels are likely to appear.

Outright

Quick possession rarely occurs. Indeed, after a series of such battles, the

odd soul actually captured by the Cudgels or ourselves can bear more

resemblance to a throwaway than a prize. (Schizophrenic) ~~(Insane)~~ people can be the victims

of such ~~sustained~~ contests.)

Entrapment, then, is not free of paradox. The clients that we find most difficult to approach are those with the greatest potential. Conversely, individuals who are easy to pick up rarely prove of real service. It takes so little to traduce a drunk or an addict. We do, however, polish what is left of their charm. That helps to consume a little more of the compassion of their families, especially if the mother, father, or any of the siblings are obsessed with not losing the last of their charity. In effect, we injure that family's God-loving hearts. But such is simple work. Gains are small. Ultimate ends are not served. Our final aim, after all, is to draw the majority of humans away from allegiance to the D.K.

There is, however, another factor in every contest—an economic factor. It concerns the separate resources of Divine energy and of Satanic energy. They differ.

I can allow that even in the higher cadres of devils and angels, we hardly know who has more Time to give to a contest once we vie for possession of a given man or woman. Of course, this does not involve *clearly* ~~immediate happenings if they are immense~~ larger matters. The D.K. can, for example, disburse whole bonanzas of divine substance into His sunsets (which, it must be admitted, do bolster human morale. There, I would call Him a spendthrift, but, then, we devils ~~have to give our attention~~ *devote more* always to the ~~reserves of our budget~~ *limitations*. Ergo, we ~~have to estimate closely the~~ expenditures of Time involved in securing a new client. To give years to a promising varlet who eventually goes over to the Cudgels leaves a budgetary blemish on one's record. So, when choosing a target, we try to exhibit more acumen than our opponents.

For example, we rarely fail to attend the joinings of rich and powerful people (so full of infidelity!). As has been noted, whether rich or poor, we do not ignore incest. Other copulations, however, particularly those illumined by angels, present a more demanding task—it is not routine to slip through their blockade! It seems—I dare to speak here only for myself—as if the E.O. has never been able to accept his failure to be present in the hour when Jesus Christ was conceived.

Fortunately for us, Jesus proved to be a not untypical Son. (The record we are furnished informs us that He was often at odds with His Father.)

But I stray from my point. The prevailing fact of our existence is that we are obliged to live within a limited budget, and so, our projects are chosen with discretion.)

Except in special instances, we do not, therefore, take large interest in the early development of children. "Over the first few years," our Maestro will remark, "a child is caught between the need for love and the development of its will. These inclinations are so naturally at odds with each other that an ^{early} approach is rarely necessary ⁴ until the child involved is older."

Except for unusual cases (like Adi's), we exercise no intervention until the age of seven. ~~(Indeed, ^{For that matter} in the nineteenth century, a very young child was always in danger of being carried off by one disease or another.)~~

Once turned seven, a prospective client's health becomes easier for us to assess. On the other hand, our Maestro terms the next five or six years:

The Age of Clods. "They are now encountering the world in its basic form—their school years. Nearly all of them rush toward habit, routine, and stupidity as the most immediate forms of protective insulation. These are the years when the average human ego takes shape in all of its readiness to lie, mis-remember, distort and forget—all in order to keep the young ego in some readiness to support the ongoing project, oneself."

More often, our selections commence with adolescence. Then, the best energies invested by the D.K. are there for us to subvert. (For He is usually eager to invest a good deal in very young men and women even when they do not know what to do with this sudden inrush of new resources.) Dramatic distortions of His Intention become open to us. I have spoken at this length of our cautions. I have mentioned these reserve processes of selection because I wish to emphasize how uncommon was the special attention given to this one particular five-year old. That his name was Adolf Hitler was, after all, of no importance then.

All the same, I had lived (by proxy) in the demonic instant of his conception, and had then been assigned to review the work of the devils who would oversee his family's activities. It was light surveillance. Our

jargon for this kind of action was milk-runs, an expression we employed long before it was adopted by ^{the Army} ~~U.S.~~ Air Force pilots in the Second World War. Any one of our devils might pass by a house in the hours before dawn, and by way of the small and large family storms that had transpired since the last visit, new information was ingested. It required no large expenditure unless the abode was guarded by ^{a Cudgel, Normally,} ~~angels.~~ ~~In a more normal-~~ ^{however,} ~~condition,~~ ^{make} one could take a quick pass by the house and sweep ^{up} ~~away~~ with the findings. While humans slept, we did our work. ~~(As did the angels?)~~

~~Yes, those forces of Light also worked through the night!)~~

I had been able to keep up ^{over} ~~then~~ with a close history of the Hitler family ~~for~~ all the years since Adolf had been born. (Be it understood that my devils also kept track of numerous other projects in that region of Austria.) If what my agents had offered up to now was modest, it had, nonetheless, sufficed. Reviewing Adolf's early years, I confess that I saw no vast promise in the boy. He was outrageously in need of love and damnably vulnerable. The odds were that he would creep through life with a self-protective ego. At least, so I would have judged if the Evil One had not been present at his conception. That event, however, had to affect my

judgment. Even on the busiest nights, the Hitler family was included on every milk-run.

This routine of careful but passive observation was overturned altogether for me on the day that Alois-Junior dragged Adi off to the boys' game of war. The E.O. intervened. I received a direct message: "Take closer care of him now. Stiffen his spine. We ^{can} ^{much} ^{potential} ~~will lose many of his future~~

~~potentialities~~ If we don't take steps."

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There is no room for rebellion when given a direct order. I did what

I was told to do. I stiffened the boy's spine. Indeed, I will make the claim

that ^{the task was} ~~I~~ accomplished ~~this~~ with finesse. For I did not inject any special funds

into his courage or his will; rather, I provided him with enough wit to carry

out the job himself. ^{since he} ~~He~~ had been the one, ^{after all} ~~who~~ chose not to weep

when his face was in the dirt, ^{and} ~~and~~ afterward, ^{he had also} ~~displayed~~ his own cunning ^{at} ~~in~~

finding ways to avoid physical punishment. ~~It had been enough that I was~~

~~(so to speak) at his side. We, too, can serve as guardian angels. (For prime,~~

~~clients, only!)~~

I was aware again of the superior insight of the Maestro. Adi showed a few signs that he might be worth the work. The child ^{might even} ~~had~~ ^{be} powerful instincts, and was as much superior to an average five-year-old as a young race-horse to a run-of-the-mill mule. I enjoyed working with him, and that was just as well since the order had come during a period when I could not afford new inroads on my budget. Improving a child's courage usually demands the ^{disbursement} ~~use~~ of precious stores, precisely those funds ~~of love~~ ~~and food~~ we have managed to steal from the Cudgels. Of necessity, we have become skilled at impersonating angels. Even an adult, feeling our infusion of love, tends to believe it is bona-fide, ~~that he or she is the~~

~~recipient of Grace.~~ I suspect Kierkegaard had just that in mind when he

^{proposed that people had} suggested people would do well to be wary of feeling too saintly, since they

^{could not be certain of the source of such feelings.} They could then be working for Satan.)

^{in fact} ~~I speak of this because~~ ^{it might as well add that,}

^{and so I had come} return on our investment puts us in the best of moods, ^{So I came to enjoy}

being ^{showed his} ~~in company~~ with Adi as he looked to improve the little game of war

~~that was being played by these five-year-olds in Passau in the spring and~~

~~summer of 1894. Indeed, the change in my sentiments was as rapid for me.~~

~~as for the child, but then, I was there night after night to instruct Adi while he slept, and indeed, he delighted me for during the day, he did show his capacity to improve the war games.~~

He soon saw, and I believe this came as much from his perception as mine, that outposts were necessary. It was wrong to send soldiers over the hill with no knowledge of what they might encounter. ~~So,~~ ^{therefore,} a scout from each army had to attempt to work his way up close enough to the summit to gain a look at the dispositions of the other side. Following in logical sequence came another change in the rules—an advancing army had to be free to move its forces from flank to flank, even as it climbed the hill. The defense could also shift their outposts. Of course, this called for larger forces on each side, but Adi was soon able to convince his regulars that more boys should be invited from nearby streets and fields. Of course, they, the originals, having been first on this hill, were entitled to take promotion in rank. Let me offer one of his speeches to his troops.

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

"That is what I want."

"Of course. It is what we all want. All of us. But for that, we must learn more. So, we need more soldiers. How are we to do this?"

"I will tell you. It is by talking to all who are willing to join us.

~~Then, we, who are here~~ ^{now, then} ~~can be given high rank.~~ ^{And we} ~~We, who command~~ ^{we'll} ~~must be~~
very high in rank. Not just ~~a~~ captain, or ~~a~~ major, but a general.

"Klaus here, will be my colonel."

~~Those words are close to what he said.~~ ^{are the} ~~While I have certainly~~ ^{he used} ~~had~~
~~helped to)~~ ^{ordinary} ~~endowed him with an eloquence no five-year-old could muster on his own, I~~
~~I am happy some of his~~ ^{some of his} ~~also have to admit that not all of the good turns of speech that came out of~~
him ~~were mine.~~

Before long, he and his troops were engaged in hour-long contests.

There were endless alterations of the rules. The numbers increased to fifteen and twenty a side.

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

That was not uncharacteristic of our Maestro. We had to be ready to accept quick changes. In this case, the situation of the family had altered.

Alois was going to move Klara, Angela, Alois Junior, Adi, and the baby Edmund, up from Passau to dwell nearer to him in Linz.

While the war games are now done for a ^{time} while, I feel the need to soothe any ^{growing} uneasiness in the reader. Good readers are ^{an} ~~the most~~ unprotected ^{species} of humans — their allegiance moves in advance of their judgment. Some may have felt uncomfortable, therefore, to discover that they were enjoying these first successes of the child, Adolf Hitler. Be assured. To read about the skills or triumphs of any protagonist is bound to elicit happiness in just about all who follow the story, especially if there is a suggestion of the sentimental, or even better, the magical—useful tools for any author who wishes to arouse quick emotions in the reader. That is why so many popular writers come looking for us. We love them. We do not disabuse them. ^{we enjoy them.} So popular writers usually believe they are working for God as well as for their own prosperous selves, ^{both and their} and all the while ^{are encouraging} we encourage them to steep their readers in baths of misperception. The profit comes to us. Misperception of reality will, at the least, waste God's Time, and that is ^a ~~one more~~ form of compound interest in our ~~kind of~~ economy.