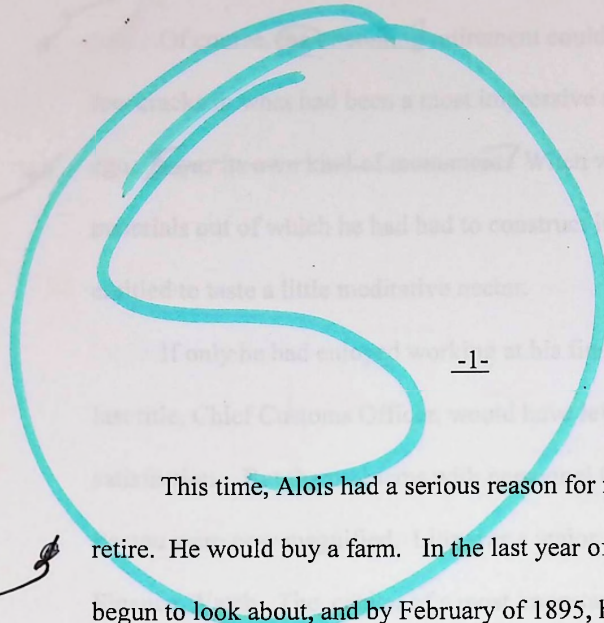


4.12.06


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This time, Alois had a serious reason for moving. He was ~~going~~^{after} to retire. He would buy a farm. In the last year of his Customs work, he had begun to look about, and by February of 1895, he bought what he deemed might be the right property in a town called Hafeld, thirty miles from Linz.

In April, Klara and the children moved from Passau to this newly¹ chosen abode. It was, indeed, a rural retreat. The closest school was in the nearest hamlet, Fischlham, a mile away, and there, after the summer, Adi would enter the first grade. Meanwhile, over the next few months Klara could live on the farm with their four offspring while Alois completed his service in Linz.

Of course, ~~the oncoming~~¹ retirement could not come without opening a few cracks in what had been a most impressive edifice. I speak of Alois' ego. ~~It was its own kind of monument.~~ When we consider the meager materials out of which he had had to construct it, he may even have been entitled to taste a little meditative nectar.

If only he had enjoyed working at his final post in Linz. Then, his last title, Chief Customs Officer, would have left a residue of real satisfaction. But the problems with personnel that he had encountered at Passau were now magnified. Linz was a major center of attention for the Finance-Watch. The capital of a most important province, Upper-Austria, Customs was stocked, therefore, with ~~even more~~^{most} ambitious junior officers and they kept together and seemed never at a loss to show their subtle contempt for the failings of senior officials. Most of these young men were ready to take for granted the future attainment of high office, ~~and Having come~~^{and} ~~from prosperous families,~~^{respected} their confidence left Alois feeling out of joint. For the first time in all the years that he had been wearing a uniform, he did not always strike the passing eye as an immaculate official. (That now demanded too many pains⁴.) Nor was he as punctual as once he had been.

Sometimes, at the point of issuing disciplinary reprimands, he would hesitate long enough to contemplate the possible repercussions. Worse. There were one or two occasions when he forgot what he was about to say next.

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

He had money enough. He could buy a decent farm outright. He would have his pension, and his savings—he and Klara had certainly exhibited thrift. Besides, he had in hand the sum and interest of a large part

of three wives' dowries. It could be said that the first two had brought real money to the union. If Anna Glassl had succeeded in recovering, through law, half of her large dowry due to their separation, still, the half remaining was not small. Franzceska, while hardly up to that measure, was nonetheless the child of a prosperous farmer. Even old Johann Poelzl, Klara's father, had come ^{forth} up ^{long-saved} with some kronen when they married.

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

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

and over. "The real woman—look for the real woman in the fields. Respect the fields."

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

he had
He had indeed bought a farm *about* five years ago *about* the time Adolf was *born*
~~born~~. In many a way that purchase had been more exciting to him than the *birth*
~~birth~~. *land, at least* was not going to die *like* the first three of Klara's *babies*
~~babies~~.

The reverse had occurred. The land did not perish, but his ownership did. The holding had been near Spital, about a hundred miles from where he was then working in Braunau, *but* *even then* ~~yet~~ he had had some ~~far off~~ notion of retiring there later. In the interim, it might be a good way to take care of his sister-in-law, Johanna Poelzl, in preference to having her dwell with them

as a maid. He did not want Johanna in the parlor every night, not with that dome on her back.

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

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

Alois was able, however, to sell that first farm at a modest profit and so was not ill-disposed *now!* to taking on the property in Hafeld ~~these several~~ years later. Here was a farm he *could* ~~would~~ work himself. It was called the Rauscher Gut (which can be translated as the *Breezy* ~~Windy~~ Estate) and it offered nine acres of pasture plus a wooden house under a thatched roof with good

views of the mountains of the Salzkammergut. In addition, there were fruit and oak and walnut trees. A hayloft was in the stable and stalls for two horses and a cow, plus one prize sow.

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

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

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

respected town officials to drink more than one stein with him on the merits and mysteries of bee-keeping. Indeed, he belabored each table on each night with so much concerning "the "mysterious psychology of these fabulous little creatures," that the junior officers would warn each other, "Tonight, let's try to keep the ~~Chimney~~ ^{Cloud of Smoke} from smoking us out with his bees."

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

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

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

His company nodded, their spirits glum. This was not lively beer talk. But Alois, on these last nights, had become the kind of lecturer who is always ready to exhibit an incorruptible lack of sensitivity ~~to~~ ^{for} his audience.

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

in pods on their legs and then, flying back to the hive, they manage to stay aloft under the weight of loads of pollen and nectar that weigh more than their own bodies. ~~Flying work horses the size of bees.~~ I tell you, they create a society that is not unlike ours, ~~But maybe more rational. It is~~ ^{but it's} certainly more hard-working."

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

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

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I was not prepared for Alois' interest in these matters. Here was not the man I knew. While I could see his practical purpose, since the product was eminently salable, apiculture also had its risks, including the peril of receiving a serious number of bee stings. On the other hand, While it might be reasonable to engage in such efforts rather than endangering his long-used heart by plowing a field, I was plagued, all the same, by an uneasy suspicion. Alois was too sincere in this enthusiasm. He was not sufficiently concerned with profit. was what That was what disturbed my understanding of him. The desire for money is the tap-root that usually drives men like Alois into new activity. So the relative absence of this desire did suggest that ~~another~~. Alois was ready to

undertake this venture because it satisfied something I had not yet perceived in him.

I ~~remembered~~ ^{saw a better reason} did recall that he had dabbled at keeping bees in one small town near Braunau, but soon ~~gave it up~~ in these last few months.

~~however~~, he had taken the pains to write a short article for a bee-keepers'

journal. ^{And} To my surprise, the piece ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~literate~~. It was published. Alois had

acquired a degree of book knowledge on the subject, ~~and now~~ ^{that provided him with a} had a modern point of view on new modes of cultivation. Bee hives made of straw, he

declared, would soon be ~~done away with~~ ^{outmoded}. (Skeps they were called, squat-

ribbed domed objects about the size and shape of big-bellied human torsos,

and these old skeps had their drawbacks. To harvest the honey, bee-keepers

had to keep the population of the hive stunned with smoke. That left the

hive in a near-comatose condition. It was a harsh and imprecise process.

Sometimes, the skep had to be ripped open in order to collect the product.

Despite the smoke, some honeybees were still active enough to sting the collector.

A new and much-discussed innovation was, however, being developed in England and in America. That was the point of his article.

Even in Austria, there were bee-keepers ready to do away with the old skep. For its time, it had been an improvement over the more barbaric practice—common through the Middle Ages—of chasing the bees out from their hole in a tree, but advanced bee-keepers were speaking these days of hives that could become the equivalent, or so his article proposed, of a metropolis for bees. This new housing, no greater in size than a small wooden cabinet, would be filled with wax trays installed vertically. The worker bees ^{could} then build their miniscule wax cells on both sides of each tray. And in a most orderly fashion! Since this cabinet could hold a number of trays, and each tray had room for thousands of cells in a grid of rows and files, some keepers calculated that each hive now bore ~~its~~ resemblance to the giant apartment buildings of the future.

That had been the point of his article—~~most~~ visionary indeed—but to explain this venture to Klara, Alois ^{chase to} ~~did~~ emphasize the pecuniary promise. Good money would come back from clean work, and Alois Jr. and Angela would help, he told her. ~~And~~ Adi as well. He convinced her that the new project was eminently practical.

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

repulse. It rather felt like in the Denmark. How could God allow it?

A standard lament.

We felt no need to go near Klara, therefore. She was more useful to us as herself, innocent and nurtured by the attitudes of the Cudgels. Klara, being gifted with depths of love, would soon be enchanted by the new one, Edmund, and that was certain to agitate Adolf's feelings.

Alois would be even better for a purpose. He was unrepentant in his strength and habits, his productive contributions, his built-in

~~was~~ Alois had never been one of our clients. ~~We had never felt the need.~~

He was by our measure an average man, which is to say, sufficiently corrupt to be available for our use should we be in true need of him. The assumption was that he would then be open. The Cudgels would hardly be guarding the fellow. To what end? What was there ~~for them~~ to protect? Whereas, when it came to Klara, we did not choose to go near. It would have proved punishing and again—to what end? We did not need her directly—as I have already remarked, evil children can issue nicely from the most loving mothers. Of course, average men and women find the thought

propulsion, service to others, or, by now, tactics—usually seen by them

repulsive. It rattles their faith in the Dummkopf. How could God allow it?

A standard lament.

We felt no need to go near Klara, therefore. She was more useful to us as herself, innocent and nurtured by the attentions of the Cudgels. Klara, being gifted with depths of love, would soon be enchanted by the new one, Edmund, and that was certain to agitate Adolf's feelings.

Alois would be even better for such a purpose. He was so dependable in his strengths and habits, his productive contributions, his built-in cruelties (not to mention his crudities) that one could, if necessary, intensify or reduce the heat of Adolf's hatred for his father in such a way as to mold the boy. Depend on it! ~~We depended on Alois.~~

But now, his outsize love for bees seemed out of character. Atheists like Alois, who attempt to go all the way to the grave without being challenged by the intimation that God may have created their universe, are ~~not unlike~~ ~~comparable to~~ pious virgins who fear the temptation of unholy heats. Such ladies can only accept their pinched yet ~~free-floating~~ carnality through a variety of counterfeits. So, too, do atheists have their substitute ~~by way of~~ paganism, service to others, or, by now, technology—usually seen by them

as the best possible solution to humankind's problems. Occasionally, they feel an exceptional allegiance to some phenomenon of nature. In Alois' case, it happened to be the recognition that a collaboration could be possible between the mighty and the miniscule, himself and the bees.

Sufficiently concerned, I penetrated quickly one night into his mind. I gathered what I needed. I knew more now. Alois saw bees as living a life with parallels to his own. That was cause for apprehension in me. For Alois, bees in search of new fields of flowers were intimate little creatures he could understand.

On any warm day, such foragers know the heat of the sun and the intimate yearning that the sun can arouse in flower petals. Alois was not about to throw open any bolted door to the mystical side of himself, but in the innermost recess of his thoughts, it stirred him to think of the honeybee entering into the perfumed caverns of the flower. Under the burgeoning heat of the sun, the flower would surrender its nectar to the bee's tongue, even as the hairs of the honeybee were covered with pollen. In another moment, the same bee would separate from one passionate lust to dive into another, whichever fine flower of the same species was beckoning in the

breeze, the creature ready again to gather more nectar while leaving pollen from the first flower on the second.

These images gave life to Alois. It was the balance between hard work and satisfied desire. He could feel close to that bee staggering back in flight, ^{its} pollen bags heavy, ^{and a} ~~its~~ stomach full of nectar. Had not Alois, in his turn, given much to women and yet brought back much for himself, so much accumulated wisdom on how to deal with his customs-house corner of the world. By the end, he invariably knew what was true and what was false in declarations offered by strangers, particularly women who might wish to deceive him, yet could not, because he was wiser than they were. He possessed the true honey—wisdom. That was the knowledge of what others were up to, all those secrets held by passing travelers and commercial people, secrets as sweet as honey, all those little goods travellers looked to steal and keep for themselves. But he was there to capture their secrets. He could work as hard and long as any honeybee on the hottest and most productive day of summer to protect the glory, centuries old, of the exceptional Empire of the Hapsburgs. Not all of them had been great, he would admit, not all were even very good people, but the best of them had

As we know, been, like Franz Josef, good, very good. (Alois could ~~hope to~~ find a resemblance to Franz Josef in his own features—the same sideburns, the same dignity. It was said of the Emperor Franz Josef that he could work for endless hours at his necessary and near-to-endless duties. When necessary, he, Alois, was also ready. And yet they knew enough, both of them—the Emperor and himself—to comprehend that it was not enough to amass the honey; one must keep a taste for oneself.

Some people in Linz he knew, fools for the most part, had been shocked when gossips spoke of the actress, Fraulein Katharina Schratt, whom Franz Josef had taken for a mistress. How could this be? He had a wife so beautiful—Empress Elizabeth. The news had spread like a spill of oil that has no boundaries. But it had not been shocking to Alois. He understood. Men had to keep some share of the honey for themselves.

Let me not be altogether captivated, however, by the voluptuous swells of Alois' meditation. In truth, he also had some fear of bees. Once, in previous years, he had been stung so ferociously and apocalyptically (if I may put it so) that he never forgot the attack of vertigo it caused. Such power to create pain! That it could exist in creatures so small! It could not

have come from the honeybee alone, he decided. Such pain must express the rage of the sun. With that, Alois was familiar. He had worked through many an August afternoon, stuffed into his uniform. Of course he knew the rage of the sun, and honeybees were agents of the sun even as he was an agent of the Hapsburgs, and ~~so~~ ^{there by} close to the greatness of ultimate power.

Could these epiphanies be the product of his approaching retirement?

I looked forward with my own trepidation to ^{the} changes I could not anticipate once he began to live with his family on the farm.

On the very night in April when for the first time they slept in the house at Haidhof, Clara began to cry again. Until then, she had kept her feelings hidden. Edmund was stilling, and it was winter. Moreover, Alois would not be able to join them personally until his retirement at the end of June. By April, however, Clara decided to brave the difficulties and, right after Easter, accompanied by ~~Adolf~~ ^{Adolf}, Edmund, and the pair of their possessions, she accomplished the move to Linz. It was made even more difficult since she was without Alois-Jurgen to help her with the luggage. She had to stay behind and board with a neighbor until the end of the school year. Nonetheless, whatever the difficulties, she embarked by train

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

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

This portion of the trip lasted from noon to dark, but the day had been warm, and Alois, to everyone's surprise, entertained the children with one song after another—his voice was rich, and Klara, who had a clear if delicate soprano, would join him when she knew the words. Alois was in a rare mood, and proud of his skill with the horses and wagon. It was some years since he had gotten up on a buckboard, and he had almost hired a driver, but given his oncoming responsibilities as a farmer, he took on the project himself.

The previous owner had—as was local custom—stocked each fireplace with logs and kindling, and so the rooms, before long, were warm. What with a carefully packed jar of ^{potato} pea soup, bread, and ^{liverwurst} sausage, they had enough to eat and went to bed happily. Alois would spend the next day with his family before driving their rented wagon back to Linz.

By the first night, however, Alois was also ready to establish ^{his} a special investiture of the premises. By the light of the gas lamp in their bedroom,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This was not about to pass him by. ~~Instantly~~, ^{instinctively} the Hound was straining at the leash. ~~Adolf's voice was heavy.~~ "How would you know what is the size of a healthy fellow?" he asked.

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

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

much power had been in his loins ^{on this night} ~~on this night~~. To have it all there ^{just} ~~just~~ when he had begun to wonder.

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

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

In the morning, she could sense his impatience to be done with the unpacking. It was obvious. He wanted to go out and walk his grounds. So, she took over the larger part of the immediate tasks while he gave the

Adi and Edmund)
 children a tour of the barn, all three huddled close to him before the animal
 immanence of the two horses, the cow, and the prize sow that had been part
 of the purchase price. Those animals were huge, and the sow was close to
 overpowering them with her odor.

Adolf and Adi, and Edmund to
 Now, Alois told them to go back to the house and help their mother.
~~That was just a joke. Klara would have~~
~~In the afternoon, he would, he promised, teach them how to milk the cow,~~
~~feed the pig, and curdy the horse, not to mention the hen house and the eggs,~~
 but for now it was their good mother who needed them.

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

In truth, he realized now, he had hardly studied the place before.
 Enough that the price was reasonable, and the house owned a fine view. He

had had to be in a hurry—he could not ^{expend days} ~~keep spending full days~~ in travel back and forth from Linz.

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

All this while, his true disappointment came back to him. He must recognize—once again—that he could not cultivate his bees, not this summer. The brunt of the project would have to wait. Honey-gathering began in April and hardly lasted into September. One had to be there at the beginning. So, he must wait. All right, he would have nine months now to

prepare, counting at least from the time when he would be back here again,

permanently, in June, late June, and an unexpected and most unpleasant

shiver of anticipation came to him at this thought. Did he know what he

was doing? ~~Such~~ ^{That was, and he} a bad thought ~~He~~ forced it back. He had been in control

of his feelings since he was ten years old, and he was not preparing to let go

now.

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By the first of July, Klara was visibly pregnant. In seven months, assuming the baby would be born without incident, there would be a total of eight kids who had come into existence because of him, eight, if you include the three who now were gone. Of course, if he so desired, he could add a few ~~Kinder~~ ^{he had known} not exactly accounted for—quite a number of cooks and chambermaids who had managed to conceive with what might be called mixed male parentage, ~~much mixed~~. Yes, whenever one of them said she was pregnant, he had agreed that it was possible and he could be the true father, but then, hadn't she also been with Hans and Gerhardt and Hermann and Wolf? With rare exceptions (like Fanni) those women were not in a

position to argue who was who, ~~when it came to the true father~~. It was enough to give them a decent gift.

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

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

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

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

down, accompanied by full screams of excitement from Angela and Adi.

Yet, he ~~was also ready enough~~ ^{was also available} to work the plow with the dray horse,

Graubart. Before too long, they had turned up three acres of hard soil pasture for the potatoes, the same sprouting seed potatoes Klara had bought and stored in the root cellar a week after her arrival. Alois-Junior worked harder for two weeks than his father would have believed.

Then, of a sudden, this flurry of labor fell off. Bad news arrived in a letter from the school in Passau. Alois had failed half of his courses. He would have to take those studies over again.

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

Yes, the boy must have been brooding for these two weeks over the bad school news but had not said a word, just kept working hard. In that time, they had tilled ten inches deep into the three acres chosen, a stubborn, resistant soil, after which they laid the seed potatoes in those shallow trenches and covered them lightly, each of the sprouters a foot apart, each row of furrow less than a yard away from the next, but that had been only the commencement. Now, came the labor that went into weeding and

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

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

pause. So, he did not strike him. Which, he came to decide, was a mistake. The boy's head should have been ringing from one hell of a wallop. Now, Junior might be able to think that his father could be a little afraid of him, maybe a little, yes. It was a fact that he ^{Junior} kept reducing the total of his hours—^{a true city-lad} like a lad from the city doing summer labor. ^{Well} An hour short of sundown, he would ask Alois to let him take Ulan for a ride ~~over the hill~~.

The trouble, Alois told himself, was that as a father, he was not hard enough. Under all the bite, he had a soft heart. The truth was that he adored Alois-Junior. The boy was so attractive. Restless, yes, and like his mother, victim to terrible moods. He was much too prideful, and in full flight from getting a decent education. Yet, he could be as charming as Fanni when he chose to be. He reminded Alois of how well she used to move. He even felt pride at how quickly his son had gotten on good terms with the stallion. Alois himself hesitated to ride him. It was truly a long way to the ground for a heavy man. But Alois-Junior could saddle up with all the eclat of a prize cadet—the sort who used to promenade along the best streets of Vienna wearing the boots that Alois had made for them in those years, all the way back when he had so admired such well-turned-out young men.

Memories returned of those officers strutting on the Ringstrasse with their handsome ladies, even as he, the apprentice, had dreamed of finding ^{some}

elegant and lovely young milliner for himself ^{yes, the old dream!} whom he might persuade to

^{they would} (start a shop offering the finest hand-made hats and most exceptional boots, a stupid dream, but now ~~his own~~ Junior reminded him of those cadets. Such a striking young man. He was not at all like little Adolf, full of hysterical temper, or tiny Edmund, full of snots.

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

"Angela likes wiping Ulan down," said Alois-Junior. "I don't."

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

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

"Silent!" shouted Alois. "A -6- your mouth shut for the rest of the night. Not one word."

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

"Angela likes wiping Ulan down," said Alois-Junior. "I don't."

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

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

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

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

"Jawohl!" shouted Alois-Junior.

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

Alois-Junior stood up and left the table.

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

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

They finished the meal without another word. Angela came in, flushed from currying, started to speak, and then did not. She sat down, her face still moist from the quick wash she had taken with the dipper, and put her face to the food. Sitting next to her, Adi was so full of excitement and foreboding that he was stiff with fear he might soil himself. And Klara? She ate slowly, pausing often, her spoon in the air. She was filled with an unruly desire to upbraid her step-son again, and then—no small impulse—upbraid her own Alois as well. She said nothing, however. To interfere with two men who were in such a rage was no territory to enter. Edmund, *little lip-dribbling Edmund*, ~~male, pasty-faced, lip-dribbling Edmund~~ began to cry.

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

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

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

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

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

He did bring this matter up at the tavern in Flischlham. He needed to. He was looking for a few opinions on the respective merits of the veterinarians in the district, and used it as a calculated opening to stimulate the farmers into a bit of candor about other things as well. Maybe he would not be perceived forever as a retired fool. So, he listened to their guarded opinions about the local veterinarians and learned nothing he could count on. Next, he talked about his land.

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

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

They nodded. Farming and work. Yes. The oldest marriage. One must never do too much at once.

They were certainly slow-spoken. It took an hour of staring at the unadorned wooden walls of the tavern, fretting all the while over the one spike of a splinter in his behind (a gift of the dried-up wood of the tavern bench) before one of them would come forward with the muffled hint that

this land on which he had planted potatoes should have been given to beets. That was because last year's crop had been wheat. Now, they spoke of a variety of wheat whose genus was unfamiliar to him, but that was what the previous owner had been planting these last three years. Who knew? The soil could now be depleted. They did not say as much; they just drew on their pipes and drank their beer and looked sad. Worst of all, as he could tell, the sadness was hardly for him, no, it was offered to the outrage done to the earth now owned by another rich man, an interloper trying to be a peasant.

The smell of the tavern became unpleasant. He could not locate the odor that mingled with the beer, but it was impure—sour milk? Old manure? A compost pile outside the door that had gone wrong? What he resented most about this quiet dun-brown wooden den was that there was not even a hint of schnapps in the air, no, not even one good town drunkard.

The evening ^{did not} proved, however, ~~no~~ to be ~~altogether~~ a loss. He learned the name of an apiculturist who lived in Hafeld. And, for further consolation, the walk home was agreeable. The late summer moon was out, full and orange, a harvest moon. He began to feel some pleasure from his

beer. Tonight, those pints must have stored themselves in his stomach, ready only now to dispense some goodness. He had a long splendid urination by the side of the road.

Next morning he was back in his gathering gloom. He had to live with the disappointment of his three acres of potatoes. He would probably end with half a marketable crop. His drinking companions of last night

(who in memory now smelled ^{just (like)} as dank as the Fischlham tavern) were right. *The earth had been injured by three years or about*
He knew as much whenever he dug up one or another early potato. And

now he felt a few twinges in his gut. Was his heart acting up? Sometimes he felt as if this long-trusted organ—such a hearty companion—was forcing itself up into his brain. Yes, headaches.

Given the work yet to be done of digging up the potatoes and carting them to market in Fischlham, he ended by hiring a day laborer for the week, a stupid fellow, yet, on balance, the man probably served up as much useful service as Junior. How was the boy going to end? Would he yet be a criminal? Alois could certainly conceive of him in something like the French Foreign Legion. Dark thoughts, but they had their appeal. When he was young, he would have made a good soldier of that variety, ready for

anything. Or was that nonsense? There was something in the boy that was wilder than himself. Was that why, these days, they always had to speak to each other as if they were up on tiptoe!

The day laborer was stupid, but proved capable of putting a number of those potatoes aside for himself. Alois could not even be certain there had been a theft. Feeling not too well one afternoon, he had let the laborer take the produce to market, and the man returned with less Kronen than Alois had estimated. ~~Just a~~ little fingering at the edges. *Doubtless,*

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

It started with that big ^{*and*} pretty pig being grumpy. Then, day to day, it ^{*seemed*} ~~got~~ worse. Angela was so upset that Alois broke into his own reservoirs of pride and actually turned to his three nearest neighbors for advice. It was then he had to recognize that he had forgotten one of the laws of his childhood received from Johann Nepomuk before he was even ten years old. When it came to farming, there were no laws you could count on, no, not if you had the bad luck to meet an unexpected problem. Even your wisest

friends could disagree on the solution. Of course! Every farmer, he now learned, had his own idea of how to cure a sick pig. Of course!

The three neighbors suggested, in turn, an emetic, a binder, and a diarrhetic. All were wrong. The sow stopped breathing and was gone. All three had assumed the trouble could only be in the stomach or the bowels. Where else in a pig? Who had ever heard of consumption in such a heavy porker? Perhaps it was something else. Even the veterinarian he called in after the demise was unsure. Probably the lungs, but he ~~couldn't~~ ^{would not} say.

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

But, no, the vet was definite. "Do not take a chance, Herr Hitler, on any part of this animal."

Yes, that is what the vet told him, but only after he had been paid!

And there was Angela going on and on with her hiccups and her sobs, "Ach, ach, ach!" Not to mention his own labor of digging a ~~big goddam~~ hole for the carcass.

Yes, these were losses to calculate. What kind of profits could he point to from his mediocre potato crop? When he added the cost of the seed potatoes, the compost he had bought for the three acres, and then subtracted the wages of the hired hand, the loss of the sow, and the fee of the vet as well, how could he claim to have made any respectable sum? If not for the walnuts, which had, as promised, been easy money right off the ground, he would have had no profit at all.

He could reassure himself. It wasn't that he was in real financial trouble. ~~Never yet!~~ His pension alone was six times the income of any day laborer like the poor fellow he had hired, ~~who, dumb or not, was also able to cheat him. But, all right! In the old days, in the best years of his earning,~~

power at Passau and Linz, he had been situated in what you could call the well-salaried layers of the middle class.

not All the same, that hardly extracted the real thorn from his gut. One of his strengths when facing younger officers who came from good families—^{his confidence} had always been that he, being real peasant stock, could know at least when people were cheating him. And now he had discovered that the land he bought was nothing to brag about. Once upon a time, he might have been a peasant. Now, he ^{might} could just as well call himself another town idiot, fooled on a deal involving land. Could he feel any worse if Klara took up with a farm boy? That was impossible, but then, how had it been so possible for himself, Alois Hitler, to be gulled on this deal?

By October, he was settled in gloom. Even the Hound was one sick puppy. How was he to look at himself—a man in his late middle age who dangled a ^{wizenel} ~~red~~ pup between his legs?

Klara, seven and a half months pregnant, tried to explain it to him. Now that the potato crop was in, and so much hard work was finished, it was not unnatural to feel a little unhappy. Women, she could tell him, were that way after a child was born. So much had gone into the womb, so much

hope and effort, but now one was empty again. The baby might be there and beautiful, but for a time the woman had to feel empty. For a little while. It was natural.

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

Charges occurred, however, Alois' depression lessened. Junior was no longer around. Klara had taken it upon herself to suggest that he should be sent to hospital where he could work with her father, Johann Poelzl, who by now had certainly become old enough to need a family hand. It developed that Alois Junior was also in favor of the move. His father's depression, with all its muted threat of more desolation, lived on the edge of the son's rage, which had been removed in his absence.

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

where he could get on a ferry that passed through Spital. The boy was gone, and a cloud of dark premonition could ill.

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

His first school days proceeded through a bright and mellow September. The grass was still on the hills. It was a fine walk hard to head with his stout overalls and mud-soaked shoes. There was only one path—a

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

stems. They were true. He did have an odor—a touch of sulphur and an

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

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

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

Soon enough, Adi learned that it was unwise to shame Angela when she was afraid. She knew how to pay him back. She could always inform him that he smelled awful. Sometimes, it was his breath, as often, his body odor.

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

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

From Angela's point of view, it was simple. Whenever Adi was teasing her, she would tell him he smelled. She did not really mind. Bad smells did not bother her ~~much~~. She was accustomed to sour milk and horse manure. A passing wind reeking of pig wallow from a neighboring farm even brought real sorrow to her heart—poor dead Rosig!

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

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

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

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

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

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

So, by the age of six, he was absorbing the lessons of the eight and ten and twelve-year-olds, and it pleased him that Angela was the brightest in her class. He could see the approval in Fraulein Werner's eyes each time they entered the room, but then, they were also the neatest brother and sister. That was Klara's doing, and that helped to put them up high in Fraulein Werner's favor.

At his clothing did however
~~Of course, such neat dress obliged him to keep away from other boys~~
 during recess. Soon enough he had to deal with a bully one year older who kept daring him to wrestle.

"Are you crazy?" he would answer. "I am in my good clothes. My mother will kill me if I get them dirty." The daily wars of Passau had

enriched his voice with just enough assurance to deter the other. But then that boy was nothing. If Adi could manage to live with Alois-Junior, how much had he to fear from a fool like this, also named Klaus? It was big sister who bothered him with all this teasing.

Angela was concerned these days by having come into her first period. Here, Klaus had done her best to allay the girl's distress. She could see that it was all compressed in Angela's mind with Rosie who hemorrhaged blood all over her hands before she died.

To bring some color to such outraged feelings, Klaus spoke for the first time of intimate matters. She adored her step-daughter. The twelve-year-old was by now her substitute for a close friend, and so she spoke not only of this new condition, but went on at good length about odor in general, and its peculiar subtleties in nature. Odor was part of nature. Casting about for happy examples, she passed on ^{the new kind} a piece of information

Alena had provided her in passing. Once, Klara had asked how he could be sure his own legs (where he started his lives) would know how to find their way home. As she understood it, he planned to acquire a couple of live-birds, such a full volume of itself. There they would be, strong side by side in the shade of the big oak near the house. "How will these thousands of legs know in which way they belong?" she asked.

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Alois had provided her in passing. Once, Klara had asked how he could be sure his own bees (once he started his hives) would know how to find their way home. As she understood it, he planned to acquire a couple of hive-boxes, each a full colony in itself. There they would be, sitting side by side in the shade of the big oak near the house. "How will these thousands of bees know to which box they belong?" she asked.

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

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

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

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

"Yes."

"How do these bees not get mixed up?"

Yes, he was reluctant to tell her. It was not something to talk about.

Not necessarily. Still, he chose to proceed. For Klara to be interested in apiculture might, on balance, be better for him than if she showed

indifference. "Each queen bee has her own odor," he informed Klara.

"Since she will fertilize every cell in every comb and so puts tens of thousands of eggs into separate wax cells for their beginning in life, so she is certain to pass her own odor into each of her thousands of larvae, yes, her eggs, her future children."

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

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

"You have never smelled it yourself?"

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

She began to laugh. In certain ways, she knew him well. He might read his books on the subject, but, at bottom, he did not like to admit that he

had not learned the subject by way of his hands, his feet, his strength, his five good peasant senses.

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

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

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

He explained then that the young queen, very much a virgin, not twenty days out of her own wax cell, (which was no larger in width and depth than the eraser tip on the end of a new pencil) would, so soon as she emerged from that cell, be fed by Queen bee nurses and Queen bee

attendants. Yet, just three weeks from that day, she would be ready to take her virgin flight out of the hive. Usually this took place on the first warm day in May. Up she would lift into the heavens, flying higher than all but a few male bees who would attempt to follow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What?"

"No! Donnerwetter, he can't pull out! The queen has hooks, or something of the kind, very sharp hooks, and that keeps him there. She

likes him there. He is stuck. When he does insist, when he has to pull away, you won't believe it, his good organ is ripped right out of him. He is obliged to leave it behind. His manhood! Gone. All gone."

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

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

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

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

Of course, he certainly did not go on to tell her of two other things. The first was that the queen was perfectly capable of having other lovers after that first fabulous flight. Over the next few weeks and into June, she

could have five or six more lovers. That would store more semen in her ovaries, enough to lay thousands, then tens of thousands of eggs, one each to every cell among those thousands of cells, and continue to do so until cold weather came. Then this cycle could be repeated each Spring for as much as the next three years to come. (All that wealth of impregnation derived from no more than five or six copulations!) This meant that for the rest of her life, the Queen would have no more to do with drones, but would be feeding honey and pollen to the pupae she had created while her court, her own worker females, followed her with devotion, capping the cells of larvae yet to emerge with a mysterious wax substance they were able to make from the pollen of the May flowers, a wax that no chemist could duplicate in the laboratory. No, he did not describe how devotedly the Queen would have to work for the rest of her life, and he certainly did not tell Klara that when mating season was done, these female worker-bees would evict the drones from the hive. When it came to dealing with the laziest bums who would not stir, ~~they~~ ^{the worker-bees} would sting ~~them~~ ^(the drones) to death. (Nor did the worker bees lose their sting. The belly of a drone was that much softer than human skin.) Then, after the slaughter, the worker bees would sweep

the carcasses out of the hive. Now did he speak of complications. There was always a tendency, once real warm weather began, for as much as half of the colony to be ready to swarm, that is, to fly away, desert the hive, go back to the way they used to live in the hole of a tree. You could lose your profit in a hurry. Nor did he tell her of new queens who were often extinguished by the court of bees who surrounded the Queen Bee. He left such details alone. It was better that Klara should remain sympathetic to what would be his oncoming enterprise.

Klara had not only been engrossed by what he told her that night, but now decided to use it to divert Angela from her woes. Klara, remembering her own early flow, could respect the girl's vulnerability. So, now she decided to tell Angela about the poor wrenching end of the brave drone who succeeded in reaching the Queen. This time, Klara had company in her laughter. They carried on as if they were girls of the same age or just about, and as Klara divulged more and more of what she had learned from Alois, the topic turned not only to odor, but to the exceptional power of the Queen Bee. There she was, this creature, hardly larger than her own nursing bees and certainly smaller than any drone. Nonetheless, she had the power to

impregnate the air of the hive and the thousands who dwelt within it. All of them would know their own hive since they all smelled the same. "It is," said Klara, full of a new set of giggles, "as if all Russian men and women have one kind of awful aroma, and those Polish oafs another. Maybe there is a good decent smell of tea for the English, and we Austrians, we have to be something special, we are warm like strudel." Again, she had Angela full of laughter. "And the French, yes, a shameless ugly scent. So harsh! Worse than rotten onions and old gravy. Italians—nothing but garlic." They were hugging each other by now. "Maybe the very worst, the Bohemians. I shouldn't describe them. Stinking old cabbage."

"Why not the Hungarians? Just as terrible!"

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

All this talk of good and bad smells gave a special tingle to Angela's nose. In school, she was now most aware of Fraulein Werner with all her talcum powder, and then there was her own little Adi. He had this absolutely smelly stink when he ran up and down too many hills. She was

always coaxing him to use more soap, or on those nights once a week when Klara boiled enough water for each of them to bathe in the big wash-tub, Angela would insist on lathering his back and his armpits before returning the bar of soap to him. Then, with a wholly mischievous grin—"You have the soap now, so put it where it can do some work, you careless boy."

Adi would scream with anger at such incivility, such disrespect, and loud enough for Klara to come running in. Yet he would not repeat a word to his mother. He was in a turmoil of indecision. Did he smell as bad as Angela kept saying, or was his sister crazy? Who could know? He could barely sniff a thing on himself.

Angela, however, would begin to brood once again on the death of Rosig. The prize sow had indeed been full of a strong odor, not unlike Adi at his worst, or was it Rosig at her worst?—enough! Angela began to cry for both, the boy and the pig together. Full of remorse for teasing him, she tried to make amends by telling him a few of the wonderful secrets Klara had told her, all of this new knowledge about bees, and on many a morning as the two walked to school, she would take up the topic again—her head

was so full of what she had been told that Adi's imagination was soon inflamed by the mysteries of the Queen Bee.

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

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

So when he heard that his father might be going to talk to a neighbor about purchasing what Alois called "the first materials"—an announcement he made on a Saturday evening at dinner, Adi had a vivid dream that night. He saw an army of bees flying in circles above the farm. Standing near their

house was an old man who was dressed differently from anyone Adi had ever seen. His shirt remained outside his pants and came to his knees, and he wore an old knit wool hat over his white hair, a hat as long as a stocking. It hung half down his back. He was not short, but he still looked like a dwarf because he was bent over. In this dream, Adi knew his name. The man was called Der Alte, and the boy woke up on Sunday morning to learn that his father was actually going to visit a bee-keeper named Der Alte.

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

I can say that I was directly instrumental in shaping the boy's dream. It had been the first active participation I had taken with the family since the night I entered Alois' mind just after his beer-soaked sermon in Linz about the beauties and wonders of apiculture.

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

It is curious, yet, after all, not as curious that few matters concerning men and women are so uncomfortable to discuss as bad odor. I will add that humans who labor for the Führer can hardly avoid that libel.

Enough! Sinks do not make for happy devils. At this time, approaching the end of the Nineteenth Century, our problems could often be traced to one phenomenon: Many human beings in whom we invested found it necessary to remain exceptionally fastidious in their personal habits. Otherwise, they would at varying times smell rank enough to arouse distrust.

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It is curious, yet, after all, not so curious that few matters concerning men and women are so uncomfortable to discuss as bad odor. I will add that humans who labor for the Maestro can hardly avoid that libel.

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cannot say with authority.

How this condition began, I do not know. It is possible that I have

served the Maestro for countless ages, but my recollection of earlier eras is
(assuming I was a participant) is
no more available to me than a human might have of previous incarnations.

the memory

It is probably not to the Maestro's interest to have us know any more than

~~the~~ problems
we need to know. Rather, we are asked to deal with no more than the
directly
problem before us. We do not have to call, after all, upon Judas or

Bluebeard or Attila the Hun to encourage a drunken client to go for one

more tot of booze. In consequence, we can (definitive insight into)
almost have no idea of the real

the beginning of the war between the Dummkopf and the Evil One. Whether

they were both gods or, as Milton proposed, the contest was between God

and an angel as important as Lucifer—that is—is beyond my province. Nor can we

dismiss the possibility that the Dummkopf, in early command of this earth

and this solar system, may have been in sufficient difficulty
was obliged nonetheless to address Himself to higher

powers out in the galaxies. Was He in need of aid? the
It is possible that our

O.O. (to use for a moment the Maestro's highest self-assigned title—the

Maestro sent those
Other Omniscience) was dispatched here by those greater powers. Why?

because they were
Why not? They may have been dissatisfied with the progress of the D.K.

Nevertheless,
 Evolution had already enmeshed itself in numerous cul-de-sacs. But these
 matters can only remain questions for me.

Yet, if I must offer ^{some} my conjecture ^{I would suppose} as to what might have taken place
~~in the 100,000 years~~
 during the interminable eons consumed by that same evolution, I would
~~expect~~
 posit that the D.K. is ~~undeniably~~ ^{and} the Creator of the world of weather, flora,
 fauna, and all human beings ~~with their separate souls and bodies~~. So, yes,

evolution was ~~certainly~~ ^{and} His laboratory, ~~and~~ the signs of His Folly as well as

of His Genius are to be found among ^{the myriad} those elaborations of His creations,

^{think of} ~~and the obstacles he encountered. Our need only~~
 over the near to measureless time ~~it took~~ ^{that elapsed} before He could induce a few of

His creatures to fly. Add to this the breadth and bulk of His earth-bound

species ^{and} ~~His~~ marine species, ^{on the} His godly hopes that went, for example, into

the brontosaurus (only to discover that that particular over-enlarged ~~beast~~

~~construction of animal life~~ happened to be simply too large to survive—that

is one failure.) ^{Leave it there} ~~I could name a myriad~~ The Creator had His relative

successes and His abysmal failures. While it must be admitted that He

never gave up, even if He was not always in firm control of the earth He had

fashioned, it is also incontestable that earthquakes and ice ages brought

many an interruption to His experiments and savaged many of His pursuits.

Why? Because He had incorrectly designed this globe of earth in the first place.

(relatively small)
Of one matter I am relatively certain. By the time His most ambitious concept, men and women, had entered the D.K.'s ^{existence} expectations, there came a shift in the importance of odor. Concerning that, I believe I have at last some ^{indications} to offer. It is

must have
I would also suppose that in the long-gone era of primitive man, odor had been one of the Creator's assets. How could He not have used its

signals to aid the development of ^{many} ~~all~~ His species? In large part, animals and humans were often drawn ^{to} or repelled ^{by} by one another directly through the messages that ^{reached} ~~came to~~ the nose. So simple and elegant a solution!

these odors
Presumably ~~their~~ ^{creatures'} smells were ready to reveal the depth of each animal's courage, perseverance, fear, treachery, shame, loyalty, and their — not (least) — determination to propagate. ~~no end to the list~~ Odor was most It was all useful to the D.K.

Odor the D.K.
It enabled Him to take creative steps ~~forward~~ in evolution without having to oversee each and every mating.

pleasant
I think by the time our E.O. was ready to contest His progress, the hand ~~he~~ could no longer believe in entertain any idea of Himself as All-Good and All-Powerful. The presence of a colleague (probably) ~~(possibly)~~ unwanted in the first

place) had to reduce His sense of His own stature. So the D.K. began to search for a method whereby His Cudgels could determine which men, women, and children had gone over to the adversary. Indeed, I ^{propose} ~~would go so~~ far as to say that the D.K. ~~could have~~ marked each of our clients with a touch of condign odor, a process chosen for its simplicity and relative lack of cost. From the Middle Ages on, therefore, our Maestro had ^{contested} ~~combated~~ this obstacle to his intentions by encouraging many of his alchemists to develop perfumes whose subtleties became a means whereby rotten odors could be topped with sweeter, earthier, more untraceable, and finally more appealing fragrances, even exotic in their hint of a bit of reek beneath the bouquet. (It is, for example, impossible to ^{keep track of the pervasive promiscuity of court} ~~reconstruct the history of court~~ life in France during the reign of Louis XIV without pondering these royal redolences, these carnal aromas so full of camouflage. They proved a boon to all of our clients who were rich enough to afford good perfumes.)

By the end of the Enlightenment, matters had altered once more.

Soaps, developed by us, were able to ^{nullify} ~~add their powers of obliteration to~~ mephetic aromas. ^{By the Twentieth Century the} ~~Again, the Dummkopf was confounded.~~ At this time of

^{the time of} ~~Adi's boyhood, and indeed, throughout the decades to come, a pervasive~~

increasing
~~all along~~ *contributed vitally to our*
 erasure of human odor became part of our immense progress across this
~~sector of the war between the Kingdoms~~

and the development of plumbing all came into being, ~~and were~~ due in large
 part to the *support we gave to such*
~~energies of our~~ entrepreneurs.

Toward the end By the middle of the Twentieth Century, the D.K.'s dependence on
God's
~~unpleasant~~ bad personal odor as a means of warning His Cudgels that the Evil One's

clients were near, ~~was close to being rendered obsolete~~ *had been*. Deodorants

dominated the day. By now, in the Twenty-First Century, ~~hardly any~~ *it is*
~~rare to find a~~ *husband or wife* ~~who~~ *possesses a* sense of the odor of their closest partner.

not only (This is certainly true in the more developed nations?) The loss of such
 cognitive power has ~~lessened the dominance of the D.K. and given great~~ *but has*
 impetus to us.

Back, however, toward the end of the Nineteenth Century, ~~this was~~ *the*
~~obliteration of human odor was not nearly so complete~~
~~not so, not yet~~ and the meeting between Alois, Adi, and Der Alte was
 characterized by a curious but immediate intimacy between the boy and the
 old man. In part, indeed, it was aromatic.

I must not ignore, however, the walk to Der Alte's farm ~~for~~ *on* the
 way, Alois had a real conversation with his son for the first time.

-1-

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

Of course, retirement could not come without opening a few cracks in what had been a most impressive edifice. I speak of Alois' ego. When we consider the meager materials out of which he had had to construct it, he may even have been entitled to taste a little meditative nectar.

If only he had enjoyed working at his final post in Linz. Then, his last title, Chief Customs Officer, would have left a residue of real satisfaction. But the problems with personnel that he had encountered at Passau were now magnified. Linz was a major center of attention for the Finance-Watch. The capital of a most important province, Upper-Austria, Customs was stocked, therefore, with ambitious junior officers and they kept together and seemed never at a loss to show their subtle contempt for the failings of senior officials. Most of these young men were ready to take for granted the future attainment of high office, and their confidence left Alois feeling out of joint. For the first time in all the years that he had been wearing a uniform, he did not always strike the passing eye as an immaculate official. (That now demanded too many pains.) Nor was he as punctual as once he had been. Sometimes, at the point of issuing disciplinary reprimands, he would hesitate long enough to contemplate the

possible repercussions. Worse. There were one or two occasions when he forgot what he was about to say next.

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

He had money enough. He could buy a decent farm outright. He would have his pension, and his savings—he and Klara had certainly exhibited thrift. Besides, he had in hand the sum and interest of a large part of three wives' dowries. It could be said that the first two had brought real money to the union. If Anna Glassl had succeeded in recovering, through

law, half of her large dowry due to their separation, still, the half remaining was not small. Franzceska, while hardly up to that measure, was nonetheless the child of a prosperous farmer. Even old Johann Poelzl, Klara's father, had come forth with some long saved Kronen when they married.

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

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

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

Five years ago, about the time Adolf was born, he had bought a farm. In many a way that purchase had been more exciting to him than the birth. Unlike the first three of Klara's babies, land was not going to die.

The reverse had occurred. The land did not perish, but his ownership did. The holding had been near Spital, about a hundred miles from where he was then working in Braunau, but he had had, even then, some notion of retiring there later. In the interim, it might be a good way to take care of his sister-in-law, Johanna Poelzl, in preference to having her dwell with them as a maid. He did not want Johanna in the parlor every night, not with that dome on her back.

All the same, he did feel some admiration for his sister-in-law. Johanna was not in the least afraid of God. She would put no trust in Him.

"God," she would declare, "did not have to kill off so many of us in the Poelzl family." Alois could tip his hat to that. "She's not like my wife," he was fond of telling the tavern. "Klara is ready to kiss every cross she meets."

All the same, Johanna did not run the farm very well. Sooner or later, every hired man who worked there was antagonized by her sharp tongue. Finally, she decided to live again with her father and her mother—also named Johanna. If we recall, this Johanna was the one who had been Alois' mistress on an unforgettable occasion. ("Sie ist hier!")

Alois was able, however, to sell that first farm at a modest profit and so was not ill-disposed now to taking on the property in Hafeld. Here was a farm he could work himself. It was called the Rauscher Gut (which can be translated as the Breezy Estate) and it offered nine acres of pasture plus a wooden house under a thatched roof with good views of the mountains of the Salzkammergut. In addition, there were fruit and oak and walnut trees. A hayloft was in the stable and stalls for two horses and a cow, plus one prize sow.

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

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

Indeed, in the last days before his retirement ceremony (which was acceptably eulogistic to Alois and most impressive, even thrilling, to Klara) he did have a series of drinking nights as a closer way of saying farewell to his staff and to the decades of his work. Since he had no desire ever to be seen as a man who would moon over the past, he dwelt on his future, he bullied his junior associates, plus a couple of old cronies, and a few respected town officials to drink more than one stein with him on the merits and mysteries of bee-keeping. Indeed, he belabored each table on each night with so much concerning "the "mysterious psychology of these fabulous little creatures," that the junior officers would warn each other,

"Tonight, let's try to keep the Cloud of Smoke from smoking us out with his bees."

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

In these last weeks, then, before retirement, in the same Linz tavern he had frequented each night after his customs house shift, Alois spoke more and more of the higher concepts of apiculture. Honey bees formed an amazing world, he would inform his drinking cohort. "With rare exceptions, these tiny creatures offer up their lives to one purpose: It is to build a future for the generations who will follow. The honey they convert from nectar and pollen is not only for their own consumption, but, gentlemen, it is also made to feed their larvae." He nodded. "These larvae are installed in the tiniest hexagonal cells, a wonder to behold, because they are constructed symmetrically out of the very beeswax these insect workers make from pollen, which process, gentlemen, is so mysterious that it is not yet wholly understood even by the most modern chemists."

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

their own bodies. I tell you, they create a society that is not unlike ours, but it is certainly more hard-working."

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

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

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I was not prepared for Alois' interest in these matters. Here was not the man I knew. While I could see his practical purpose, since the product was eminently salable, apiculture also had its risks, including the peril of receiving a serious number of bee stings. On the other hand, it might be reasonable to engage in such efforts rather than endangering his long-used heart by plowing a field, I was plagued, all the same, by an uneasy suspicion. Alois was too sincere in this enthusiasm. He was not sufficiently concerned with profit. That was what disturbed my understanding of him. The desire for money is the tap-root that usually drives men like Alois into new activity. So the relative absence of this desire did suggest that Alois was ready to undertake this venture because it satisfied something I had not yet perceived in him.

I did recall that he had dabbled at keeping bees in one small town near Braunau, but soon saw a better reason. In these last few months, he had taken the pains to write a short article for a bee-keepers' journal and the piece was published. Alois had acquired a degree of book knowledge on the subject that provided him with a point of view on new modes of cultivation. Bee hives made of straw, he declared, would soon be outmoded. Skeps they were called, squat-ribbed domed objects about the size and shape of big-bellied human torsos, and these old skeps had their drawbacks. To harvest the honey, bee-keepers had to keep the population of the hive stunned with smoke. That left the hive in a near-comatose condition. It was a harsh and imprecise process. Sometimes, the skep had to be ripped open in order to collect the product. Despite the smoke, some honeybees were still active enough to sting the collector.

A new and much-discussed innovation was, however, being developed in England and in America. That was the point of his article. Even in Austria, there were bee-keepers ready to do away with the old skep. For its time, it had been an improvement over the more barbaric practice—common through the Middle Ages—of chasing the bees out from their hole

in a tree, but advanced bee-keepers were speaking these days of hives that could become the equivalent, or so his article proposed, of a metropolis for bees. This new housing, no greater in size than a small wooden cabinet, would be filled with wax trays installed vertically. The worker bees could then build their miniscule wax cells on both sides of each tray. And in a most orderly fashion! Since this cabinet could hold a number of trays, and each tray had room for thousands of cells in a grid of rows and files, some keepers calculated that each hive now bore resemblance to the giant apartment buildings of the future.

That had been the point of his article—visionary indeed—but to explain this venture to Klara, Alois chose to emphasize the pecuniary promise. Good money would come back from clean work, and Alois Jr. and Angela would help, he told her. Adi as well. He convinced her that the new project was eminently practical.

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

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Alois had never been one of our clients. He was by our measure an average man, which is to say, sufficiently corrupt to be available for our use should we be in true need of him. The assumption was that he would then be open. The Cudgels would hardly be guarding the fellow. To what end? What was there to protect? Whereas, when it came to Klara, we did not choose to go near. It would have proved punishing and again—to what end? We did not need her directly—as I have already remarked, evil children can issue nicely from the most loving mothers. Of course, average men and women find the thought repulsive. It rattles their faith in the Dummkopf. How could God allow it? A standard lament.

We felt no need to go near Klara, therefore. She was more useful to us as herself, innocent and nurtured by the attentions of the Cudgels. Klara, being gifted with depths of love, would soon be enchanted by the new one, Edmund, and that was certain to agitate Adolf's feelings.

Alois would be even better for such a purpose. He was so dependable in his strengths and habits, his productive contributions, his built-in cruelties (not to mention his crudities) that one could, if necessary, intensify or reduce the heat of Adolf's hatred for his father in such a way as to mold the boy. Depend on it—we depended on Alois.

But now, his outsize love for bees seemed out of character. Atheists like Alois, who attempt to go all the way to the grave without being challenged by the intimation that God may have created their universe, are not unlike pious virgins who fear the temptation of unholy heats. Such ladies can only accept their pinched carnality through a variety of counterfeits. So, too, do atheists have their substitutes by way of paganism, service to others, or, by now, technology—usually seen by them as the best possible solution to humankind's problems. Occasionally, they feel an exceptional allegiance to some phenomenon of nature. In Alois' case, it

happened to be the recognition that a collaboration could be possible between the mighty and the miniscule, himself and the bees.

Sufficiently concerned, I penetrated quickly one night into his mind. I gathered what I needed. I knew more now. Alois saw bees as living a life with parallels to his own. That was cause for apprehension in me. For Alois, bees in search of new fields of flowers were intimate little creatures he could understand.

On any warm day, such foragers know the heat of the sun and the intimate yearning that the sun can arouse in flower petals. Alois was not about to throw open any bolted door to the mystical side of himself, but in the innermost recess of his thoughts, it stirred him to think of the honeybee entering into the perfumed caverns of the flower. Under the burgeoning heat of the sun, the flower would surrender its nectar to the bee's tongue, even as the hairs of the honeybee were covered with pollen. In another moment, the same bee would separate from one passionate lust to dive into another, whichever fine flower of the same species was beckoning in the breeze, the creature ready again to gather more nectar while leaving pollen from the first flower on the second.

These images gave life to Alois. It was the balance between hard work and satisfied desire. He could feel close to that bee staggering back in flight, its pollen bags heavy, and a stomach full of nectar. Had not Alois, in his turn, given much to women and yet brought back much for himself, so much accumulated wisdom on how to deal with his customs-house corner of the world. By the end, he invariably knew what was true and what was false in declarations offered by strangers, particularly women who might wish to deceive him, yet could not, because he was wiser than they were. He possessed the true honey—wisdom. That was the knowledge of what others were up to, all those secrets held by passing travelers and commercial people, secrets as sweet as honey, all those little goods travelers looked to steal and keep for themselves. But he was there to capture their secrets. He could work as hard and long as any honeybee on the hottest and most productive day of summer to protect the glory, centuries old, of the exceptional Empire of the Hapsburgs. Not all of them had been great, he would admit, not all were even very good people, but the best of them had been, like Franz Josef, good, very good. As we know, Alois could find a resemblance to Franz Josef in his own features—the same sideburns, the

same dignity. It was said of the Emperor Franz Josef that he could work for endless hours at his necessary and near-to-endless duties. When necessary, he, Alois, was also ready. And yet they knew enough, both of them—the Emperor and himself—to comprehend that it was not enough to amass the honey; one must keep a taste for oneself.

Some people in Linz he knew, fools for the most part, had been shocked when gossips spoke of the actress, Fraulein Katharina Schratt, whom Franz Josef had taken for a mistress. How could this be? He had a wife so beautiful—Empress Elizabeth. The news had spread like a spill of oil that has no boundaries. But it had not been shocking to Alois. He understood. Men had to keep some share of the honey for themselves.

Let me not be altogether captivated, however, by the voluptuous swells of Alois' meditation. In truth, he also had some fear of bees. Once, in previous years, he had been stung so ferociously and apocalyptically (if I may put it so) that he never forgot the attack of vertigo it caused. Such power to create pain! That it could exist in creatures so small! It could not have come from the honeybee alone, he decided. Such pain must express the rage of the sun. With that, Alois was familiar. He had worked through

many an August afternoon, stuffed into his uniform. Of course he knew the rage of the sun, and honeybees were agents of the sun even as he was an agent of the Hapsburgs, and thereby close to the greatness of ultimate power.

Could these epiphanies be the product of his approaching retirement? I looked forward with my own trepidation to the changes I could not anticipate once he began to live with his family on the farm.

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

This portion of the trip lasted from noon to dark, but the day had been warm, and Alois, to everyone's surprise, entertained the children with one song after another—his voice was rich, and Klara, who had a clear if delicate soprano, would join him when she knew the words. Alois was in a rare mood, and proud of his skill with the horses and wagon. It was some years since he had gotten up on a buckboard, and he had almost hired a driver, but given his oncoming responsibilities as a farmer, he took on the project himself.

The previous owner had—as was local custom—stocked each fireplace with logs and kindling, and so the rooms, before long, were warm. What with a carefully packed jar of potato soup, bread, and liverwurst, they had enough to eat and went to bed happily. Alois would spend the next day with his family before driving their rented wagon back to Linz.

By the first night, however, Alois was also ready to establish his special investiture of the premises. By the light of the gas lamp in their bedroom, he could see that Klara looked in fine color, not pale at all, and when he said as much, she laughed in true merriment.

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

"Ach," he said, "you are still calling me Uncle. It is almost ten years that we are married and still, what am I to you? Uncle Alois? Do you mean Old Uncle Alois?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

To his astonishment, her answer was the nearest she had ever come to speaking in a manner that most certainly belonged to other kinds of women.

"Maybe I call you Uncle," she said, "because you are such a big, healthy fellow of an Uncle."

This was not about to pass him by. The Hound was straining instantly at the leash. "How would you know what is the size of a healthy fellow?" he asked.

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

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

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

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

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

In the morning, she could sense his impatience to be done with the unpacking. It was obvious. He wanted to go out and walk his grounds. So, she took over the larger part of the immediate tasks while he gave the

children a tour of the barn, Adi and Edmund huddled close to him before the animal immanence of the two horses, the cow, and the prize sow that had been part of the purchase price. Those animals were huge, and the sow was close to overpowering them with her odor.

Now, Alois told Adi and Edmund to go back to the house and help their mother. That was a joke. Klara would have to milk the cow, feed the pig, and curry the horse, not to mention the hen house, but he needed to walk his lands alone. He had to make more than a few decisions. So, once again, he studied the condition of the fruit and walnut trees. When he had last seen them, there was more than a little snow on the ground, but the trees looked healthy, and the large branches, now bare, did appear to have integrity, strong, reasonably straight, not too many tortured shapes to suggest the aftermath of crazy storms when the trees were young.

In truth, he realized now, he had hardly studied the place before. Enough that the price was reasonable, and the house owned a fine view. He had had to be in a hurry—he could not expend days in travel back and forth from Linz.

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

All this while, his true disappointment came back to him. He must recognize—once again—that he could not cultivate his bees, not this summer. The brunt of the project would have to wait. Honey-gathering began in April and hardly lasted into September. One had to be there at the beginning. So, he must wait. All right, he would have nine months now to prepare, counting at least from the time when he would be back here again, permanently, in June, late June, and an unexpected and most unpleasant

shiver of anticipation came to him at this thought. Did he know what he was doing? That was a bad thought and he forced it back. He had been in control of his feelings since he was ten years old, and he was not preparing to let go now.

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By the first of July, Klara was visibly pregnant. In seven months, assuming the baby would be born without incident, there would be a total of eight kids who had come into existence because of him, eight, if you include the three who now were gone. Of course, if he so desired, he could add a few not exactly accounted for—he had known a number of cooks and chambermaids who had managed to conceive with what might be called mixed male parentage. Yes, whenever one of them said she was pregnant, he had agreed that he could be the true father, but then, hadn't she also been with Hans and Gerhardt and Hermann and Wolf? With rare exceptions

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

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

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

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

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

and down, accompanied by full screams of excitement from Angela and Adi. Yet, he was also available to work the plow with the dray horse, Graubart. Before too long, they had turned up three acres of hard soil pasture for the potatoes, the same sprouting seed potatoes Klara had bought and stored in the root cellar a week after her arrival. Alois-Junior worked harder for two weeks than his father would have believed.

Then, of a sudden, this flurry of labor fell off. Bad news arrived in a letter from the school in Passau. Alois had failed half of his courses. He would have to take those studies over again.

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

Yes, the boy must have been brooding for these two weeks over the bad school news but had not said a word, just kept working hard. In that time, they had tilled ten inches deep into the three acres chosen, a stubborn, resistant soil, after which they laid the seed potatoes in those shallow trenches and covered them lightly, each of the sprouters a foot apart, each row of furrow less than a yard away from the next, but that had been only the commencement. Now, came the labor that went into weeding and

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

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

pause. So, he did not strike him. Which, he came to decide, was a mistake. The boy's head should have been ringing from one hell of a wallop. Now, Junior might be able to think that his father could be a little afraid of him, maybe a little, yes. It was a fact that Junior kept reducing the total of his hours—a true city lad doing summer labor. Well short of sundown, he would ask Alois to let him take Ulan for a ride.

The trouble, Alois told himself, was that as a father, he was not hard enough. Under all the bite, he had a soft heart. The truth was that he adored Alois-Junior. The boy was so attractive. Restless, yes, and like his mother, victim to terrible moods. He was much too prideful, and in full flight from getting a decent education. Yet, he could be as charming as Fanni when he chose to be. He reminded Alois of how well she used to move. He even felt pride at how quickly his son had gotten on good terms with the stallion. Alois himself hesitated to ride him. It was truly a long way to the ground for a heavy man. But Alois-Junior could saddle up with all the eclat of a prize cadet—the sort who used to promenade along the best streets of Vienna wearing the boots that Alois had made for them in those years, all the way back when he had so admired such well-turned-out young men.

Memories returned of those officers strutting on the Ringstrasse with their handsome ladies, even as he, the apprentice, had dreamed of finding an elegant and lovely young milliner for himself, yes, the old dream! They would start a shop offering the finest hand-made hats and most exceptional boots, a stupid dream, but now Junior reminded him of those cadets. Such a striking young man. He was not at all like little Adolf, full of hysterical temper, or tiny Edmund, full of snots.

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

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

"Angela likes wiping Ulan down," said Alois-Junior. "I don't."

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

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

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

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

"Jawohl!" shouted Alois-Junior.

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

Alois-Junior stood up and left the table.

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

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

They finished the meal without another word. Angela came in flushed from currying, started to speak, and then did not. She sat down, her face still moist from the quick wash she had taken with the dipper, and put her face to the food. Sitting next to her, Adi was so full of excitement and foreboding that he was stiff with fear he might soil himself. And Klara? She ate slowly, pausing often, her spoon in the air. She was filled with an unruly desire to upbraid her step-son again, and then—no small impulse—upbraid her own Alois as well. She said nothing, however. To interfere with two men who were in such a rage was no territory to enter. Edmund, little lip-dribbling Edmund, began to cry.

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

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

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

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

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

He did bring this matter up at the tavern in Flischlham. He needed to. He was looking for a few opinions on the respective merits of the veterinarians in the district, and used it as a calculated opening to stimulate the farmers into a bit of candor about other things as well. Maybe he would not be perceived forever as a retired fool. So, he listened to their guarded opinions about the local veterinarians and learned nothing he could count on. Next, he talked about his land.

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

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

They nodded. Farming and work. Yes. The oldest marriage. One must never do too much at once.

They were certainly slow-spoken. It took an hour of staring at the unadorned wooden walls of the tavern, fretting all the while over the one spike of a splinter in his behind (a gift of the dried-up wood of the tavern bench) before one of them would come forward with the muffled hint that

this land on which he had planted potatoes should have been given to beets. That was because last year's crop had been wheat. Now, they spoke of a variety of wheat whose genus was unfamiliar to him, but that was what the previous owner had been planting these last three years. Who knew? The soil could now be depleted. They did not say as much; they just drew on their pipes and drank their beer and looked sad. Worst of all, as he could tell, the sadness was hardly for him, no, it was offered to the outrage done to the earth now owned by another rich man, an interloper trying to be a peasant.

The smell of the tavern became unpleasant. He could not locate the odor that mingled with the beer, but it was impure—sour milk? Old manure? A compost pile outside the door that had gone wrong? What he resented most about this quiet dun-brown wooden den was that there was not even a hint of schnapps in the air, no, not even one good town drunkard.

The evening did not prove, however, to be a loss. He learned the name of an apiculturist who lived in Hafeld. And, for further consolation, the walk home was agreeable. The late summer moon was out, full and orange, a harvest moon. He began to feel some pleasure from his beer.

Tonight, those pints must have stored themselves in his stomach, ready only now to dispense some goodness. He had a long splendid urination by the side of the road.

Next morning he was back in his gathering gloom. He had to live with the disappointment of his three acres of potatoes. He would probably end with half a marketable crop. His drinking companions of last night (who in memory now smelled just like the Fischlham tavern) were right. The earth had been injured by three years of wheat. He knew as much whenever he dug up one or another early potato. And now he felt a few twinges in his gut. Was his heart acting up? Sometimes he felt as if this long-trusted organ—such a hearty companion—was forcing itself up into his brain. Yes, headaches.

Given the work yet to be done of digging up the potatoes and carting them to market in Fischlham, he ended by hiring a day laborer for the week, a stupid fellow, yet, on balance, the man probably served up as much useful service as Junior. How was the boy going to end? Would he yet be a criminal? Alois could certainly conceive of him in something like the French Foreign Legion. Dark thoughts, but they had their appeal. When he

was young, he would have made a good soldier of that variety, ready for anything. Or was that nonsense? There was something in the boy that was wilder than himself. Was that why, these days, they always had to speak to each other as if they were up on tiptoe!

The day laborer was stupid, but proved capable of putting a number of those potatoes aside for himself. Alois could not even be certain there had been a theft. Feeling not too well one afternoon, he had let the laborer take the produce to market, and the man returned with less Kronen than Alois had estimated. A little fingering at the edges. Doubtless

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

It started with that big and pretty pig being grumpy. Then, day to day, it seemed worse. Angela was so upset that Alois broke into his own reservoirs of pride and actually turned to his three nearest neighbors for advice. It was then he had to recognize that he had forgotten one of the laws of his childhood received from Johann Nepomuk before he was even ten years old. When it came to farming, there were no laws you could count

on, no, not if you had the bad luck to meet an unexpected problem. Even your wisest friends could disagree on the solution. Of course. Every farmer, he now learned, had his own idea of how to cure a sick pig. Of course.

The three neighbors suggested, in turn, an emetic, a binder, and a diarrhetic. All were wrong. The sow stopped breathing and was gone. All three had assumed the trouble could only be in the stomach or the bowels. Where else in a pig? Who had ever heard of consumption in such a heavy porker? Perhaps it was something else. Even the veterinarian he called in after the demise was unsure. Probably the lungs, but he would not say.

Nothing could have aggravated Alois more. To pay good money after the animal had died! Why? Because he had to know the cause. What an idiocy! He wasn't going to raise any more pigs, not now, but still he had to know. And then he found out that the veterinarian—if you could call him that—remained no more sure of the cause than his neighbors. It would take, he told Alois, the further expense of lab tests in Linz. To hell with that! Such an expenditure would be obscene. On top of it, he had to bury the animal whole. He was tempted, but he did not dare to carve away any good

part of the meat for the family. Left to himself, Alois would have looked for some choice cuts—how much did the hams have to do, after all, with the lungs? But, no, the vet was definite. "Do not take a chance, Herr Hitler, on any part of this animal."

Yes, that is what the vet told him, but only after he had been paid! And there was Angela going on and on with her hiccups and her sobs, "Ach, ach, ach!" Not to mention his own labor of digging a hole for the carcass.

Yes, these were losses to calculate. What kind of profits could he point to from his mediocre potato crop? When he added the cost of the seed potatoes, the compost he had bought for the three acres, and then subtracted the wages of the hired hand, the loss of the sow, and the fee of the vet as well, how could he claim to have made any respectable sum? If not for the walnuts, which had, as promised, been easy money right off the ground, he would have had no profit at all.

He could reassure himself. It wasn't that he was in real financial trouble. His pension alone was six times the income of any day laborer like the poor fellow he had hired. All the same, that hardly extracted the real thorn from his gut. One of his strengths had always been his confidence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Soon enough, Adi learned that it was unwise to shame Angela when she was afraid. She knew how to pay him back. She could always inform him that he smelled awful. Sometimes, it was his breath, as often, his body odor.

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

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

From Angela's point of view, it was simple. Whenever Adi was teasing her, she would tell him he smelled. She did not really mind. Bad smells did not bother her. She was accustomed to sour milk and horse manure. A passing wind reeking of pig wallow from a neighboring farm even brought real sorrow to her heart—poor dead Rosig!

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

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

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

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

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

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

So, by the age of six, he was absorbing the lessons of the eight and ten and twelve-year-olds, and it pleased him that Angela was the brightest in her class. He could see the approval in Fraulein Werner's eyes each time they entered the room, but then, they were also the neatest brother and sister. That was Klara's doing, and that helped to put them up high in Fraulein Werner's favor.

His neat clothing did obliged him, however, to keep away from other boys during recess. Soon enough he had to deal with a bully one year older who kept daring him to wrestle.

"Are you crazy?" he would answer. "I am in my good clothes. My mother will kill me if I get them dirty." The daily wars of Passau had

enriched his voice with just enough assurance to deter the other. But then that boy was nothing. If Adi could manage to live with Alois-Junior, how much had he to fear from a fool like this, also named Klaus? It was big sister who bothered him with all this teasing.

Alma had provided her in passing. Once, Klara had asked how he could be sure his own home (once he started his journey) would know how to find their way home. As she understood it, he planned to acquire a couple of silver-birds, such a full delivery in itself. There they would be, sitting side by side in the shade of the big oak near the house. "How will these thousands of birds know to which tree they belong?" she asked.

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Angela was concerned these days by having come into her first period. Here, Klara had done her best to allay the girl's distress. She could see that it was all connected in Angela's mind with Rosig who hemorrhaged blood all over her hams before she died.

To bring some calm to such outraged feelings, Klara spoke for the first time of intimate matters. She adored her step-daughter. The twelve-year-old was by now her substitute for a close friend, and so she spoke not only of this new condition, but went on at good length about odor in general, and its peculiar subtleties in nature. Odor was part of nature. Casting about for happy examples, she presented a piece of information

Alois had provided her in passing. Once, Klara had asked how he could be sure his own bees (once he started his hives) would know how to find their way home. As she understood it, he planned to acquire a couple of hive-boxes, each a full colony in itself. There they would be, sitting side by side in the shade of the big oak near the house. "How will these thousands of bees know to which box they belong?" she asked.

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

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

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

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

"Yes."

"How do these bees not get mixed up?"

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

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

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

"You have never smelled it yourself?"

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

She began to laugh. In certain ways, she knew him well. He might read his books on the subject, but, at bottom, he did not like to admit that he

had not learned the subject by way of his hands, his feet, his strength, his five good peasant senses.

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

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

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

He explained then that the young queen, very much a virgin, not twenty days out of her own wax cell, (which was no larger in width and depth than the eraser tip on the end of a new pencil) would, so soon as she emerged from that cell, be fed by Queen bee nurses and Queen bee

attendants. Yet, just three weeks from that day, she would be ready to take her virgin flight out of the hive. Usually this took place on the first warm day in May. Up she would lift into the heavens, flying higher than all but a few male bees who would attempt to follow.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What?"

"No! Donnerwetter, he can't pull out! The queen has hooks, or something of the kind, very sharp hooks, and that keeps him there. She

likes him there. He is stuck. When he does insist, when he has to pull away, you won't believe it, his good organ is ripped right out of him. He is obliged to leave it behind. His manhood! Gone. All gone."

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

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

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

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

Of course, he certainly did not go on to tell her of two other things. The first was that the queen was perfectly capable of having other lovers after that first fabulous flight. Over the next few weeks and into June, she

could have five or six more lovers. That would store more semen in her ovaries, enough to lay thousands, then tens of thousands of eggs, one each to every cell among those thousands of cells, and continue to do so until cold weather came. Then this cycle could be repeated each Spring for as much as the next three years to come. All that wealth of impregnation derived from no more than five or six copulations! This meant that for the rest of her life, the Queen would have no more to do with drones, but would be feeding honey and pollen to the pupae she had created while her court, her own worker females, followed her with devotion, capping the cells of larvae yet to emerge with a mysterious wax substance they were able to make from the pollen of the May flowers, a wax that no chemist could duplicate in the laboratory. No, he did not describe how devotedly the Queen would have to work for the rest of her life, and he certainly did not tell Klara that when mating season was done, these female worker-bees would evict the drones from the hive. When it came to dealing with the laziest bums who would not stir, the worker-bees would sting the drones to death. (Nor did the worker bees lose their sting. The belly of a drone was that much softer than human skin.) Then, after the slaughter, the worker

bees would sweep the carcasses out of the hive. Now did he speak of complications. There was always a tendency, once real warm weather began, for as much as half of the colony to be ready to swarm, that is, to fly away, desert the hive, go back to the way they used to live in the hole of a tree. You could lose your profit in a hurry. Nor did he tell her of new queens who were often extinguished by the court of bees who surrounded the Queen Bee. He left such details alone. It was better that Klara should remain sympathetic to what would be his oncoming enterprise.

Klara had not only been engrossed by what he told her that night, but now decided to use it to divert Angela from her woes. Klara, remembering her own early flow, could respect the girl's vulnerability. So, now she decided to tell Angela about the poor wrenching end of the brave drone who succeeded in reaching the Queen. This time, Klara had company in her laughter. They carried on as if they were girls of the same age or just about, and as Klara divulged more and more of what she had learned from Alois, the topic turned not only to odor, but to the exceptional power of the Queen Bee. There she was, this creature, hardly larger than her own nursing bees and certainly smaller than any drone. Nonetheless, she had the power to

impregnate the air of the hive and the thousands who dwelt within it. All of them would know their own hive since they all smelled the same. "It is," said Klara, full of a new set of giggles, "as if all Russian men and women have one kind of awful aroma, and those Polish oafs another. Maybe there is a good decent smell of tea for the English, and we Austrians, we have to be something special, we are warm like strudel." Again, she had Angela full of laughter. "And the French, yes, a shameless ugly scent. So harsh! Worse than rotten onions and old gravy. Italians—nothing but garlic." They were hugging each other by now. "Maybe the very worst, the Bohemians. I shouldn't describe them. Stinking old cabbage."

"Why not the Hungarians? Just as terrible!"

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

All this talk of good and bad smells gave a special tingle to Angela's nose. In school, she was now most aware of Fraulein Werner with all her talcum powder, and then there was her own little Adi. He had this absolutely smelly stink when he ran up and down too many hills. She was

always coaxing him to use more soap, or on those nights once a week when Klara boiled enough water for each of them to bathe in the big wash-tub, Angela would insist on lathering his back and his armpits before returning the bar of soap to him. Then, with a wholly mischievous grin—"You have the soap now, so put it where it can do some work, you careless boy."

Adi would scream with anger at such incivility, such disrespect, and loud enough for Klara to come running in. Yet he would not repeat a word to his mother. He was in a turmoil of indecision. Did he smell as bad as Angela kept saying, or was his sister crazy? Who could know? He could barely sniff a thing on himself.

Angela, however, would begin to brood once again on the death of Rosig. The prize sow had indeed been full of a strong odor, not unlike Adi at his worst, or was it Rosig at her worst?—enough! Angela began to cry for both, the boy and the pig together. Full of remorse for teasing him, she tried to make amends by telling him a few of the wonderful secrets Klara had told her, all of this new knowledge about bees, and on many a morning as the two walked to school, she would take up the topic again—her head

was so full of what she had been told that Adi's imagination was soon inflamed by the mysteries of the Queen Bee.

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

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

So when he heard that his father might be going to talk to a neighbor about purchasing what Alois called "the first materials"—an announcement he made on a Saturday evening at dinner, Adi had a vivid dream that night. He saw an army of bees flying in circles above the farm. Standing near their

house was an old man who was dressed differently from anyone Adi had ever seen. His shirt remained outside his pants and came to his knees, and he wore an old knit wool hat over his white hair, a hat as long as a stocking. It hung half down his back. He was not short, but he still looked like a dwarf because he was bent over. In this dream, Adi knew his name. The man was called Der Alte, and the boy woke up on Sunday morning to learn that his father was actually going to visit a bee-keeper named Der Alte.

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

I can say that I was directly instrumental in shaping the boy's dream. It had been the first active participation I had taken with the family since the night I entered Alois' mind just after his beer-soaked sermon in Linz about the beauties and wonders of apiculture.

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

It is curious, yet, after all, not so curious that few matters concerning men and women are so uncomfortable to discuss as bad odor. I will add that humans who labor for the Maestro can hardly avoid that libel.

Brought-Sinks do not make for happy devils. At this time, approaching the end of the Nineteenth Century, our problems would often be traced to one phenomenon: Many human beings in whom we invested, found it necessary to remain exceptionally fastidious in their personal habits. Otherwise, they would at varying times smell rank enough to arouse disgust.

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It is curious, yet, after all, not so curious that few matters concerning men and women are so uncomfortable to discuss as bad odor. I will add that humans who labor for the Maestro can hardly avoid that libel.

Enough! Stinks do not make for happy devils. At this time, approaching the end of the Nineteenth Century, our problems could often be traced to one phenomenon. Many human beings in whom we invested, found it necessary to remain exceptionally fastidious in their personal habits. Otherwise, they would at varying times smell rank enough to arouse distrust.

How this condition began, I cannot say. My recollection of earlier eras, assuming I was a participant, is no more available to me than the memory a human might have of previous incarnations. It is probably not to the Maestro's interest to have us know any more than we need to know. Rather, we are asked to deal with problems directly before us. We do not have to call, after all, upon Judas or Bluebeard or Attila the Hun to encourage a drunken client to go for one more tot of booze. In consequence, we can have almost no definitive insight into the beginning of the war between the Dummkopf and the Evil One. Whether they were both gods or, as Milton proposed, the contest was between God and an angel as important as Lucifer—that is beyond my province. Nor can we dismiss the possibility that the Dummkopf, in early command (and disarray) of this earth and this solar system, may have been in sufficient difficulty to address Himself to higher powers out in the galaxies. It is possible that the Maestro was sent here by those greater powers because they were dissatisfied with the progress of the D.K. Evolution had already enmeshed itself in numerous cul-de-sacs. Nonetheless, these matters can only remain questions for me.

Yet, if I must offer some conjecture as to what might have taken place during the interminable eons consumed I would suppose that the D.K. is Creator of the world of weather, flora, fauna, and all human beings and evolution was His laboratory—the signs of His Folly as well as of His Genius are to be found among the myriad of His creations, and the obstacles he encountered. One need only to think of the near to measureless Time that elapsed before He could induce a few of His creatures to fly. Add to this the breadth and bulk of His earth-bound and marine species, or the godly hopes that went, for example, into the brontosaurus (only to discover that that particular over-enlarged beast happened to be simply too large to survive—that is one failure.) Leave it at that. The Creator had His relative successes and His abysmal failures. While it must be admitted that He never gave up, even if He was not always in firm control of the earth He had fashioned, it is also incontestable that earthquakes and ice ages brought many an interruption to His experiments and savaged many of His pursuits. Why? Because He had incorrectly designed this globe of earth in the first place.

Of one relatively small matter I am certain: By the time His most ambitious concept, men and women, had entered existence, there came a shift in the importance of odor. Concerning that, I believe I have at least some rudiments to offer. It is that in the long-gone era of primitive man, odor must have been one of the Creator's assets. How could He not have used its signals to aid the development of many species? In large part, animals and humans were often drawn to one another or repelled by the messages that reached the nose. So simple and elegant a solution. Presumably their smells were ready to reveal the depth of each creature's courage, perseverance, fear, treachery, shame, loyalty, and—not least—their determination to propagate. Odor enabled the D.K. to take creative steps in evolution without having to oversee each and every mating.

I think by the time our Maestro was ready to contest His progress, the Lord could no longer believe in Himself as All-Good and All-Powerful. The presence of a colleague (probably unwanted in the first place) had to reduce His sense of His own stature. So the D.K. began to search for a method whereby His Cudgels could determine which men, women, and children had gone over to the adversary. Indeed, I would propose that the

D.K. marked each of our clients with a touch of condign odor, a process chosen for its simplicity and relative lack of cost. From the Middle Ages on, therefore, our Maestro had contested this obstacle to his intentions by encouraging many of his alchemists to develop perfumes whose subtleties became a means whereby rotten odors could be topped with sweeter, earthier, more untraceable, and finally more appealing fragrances, even exotic in their hint of a bit of reek beneath the bouquet. (It is, for example, impossible to keep track of the pervasive promiscuity of court life in France during the reign of Louis XIV without pondering these royal redolences, these carnal aromas so full of camouflage. They proved a boon to all of our clients who were rich enough to afford good perfumes.)

By the end of the Enlightenment, matters had altered once more. Soaps, developed by us, were able to nullify mephitic aromas. By the twentieth century the increasing erasure of human odor contributed vitally to our progress. Soaps, bath-tubs, cleansing oils and the development of plumbing all came into being, due in large part to the support we gave to such entrepreneurs.

Toward the end of the Twentieth Century, God's dependence on unpleasant personal odor as a means of warning His Cudgels that the Evil One's clients were near, had been rendered obsolete. Deodorants dominated the day. By now, in the Twenty-First Century, it is rare to find a husband or wife who possesses much sense of the odor of their closest partner. (This is certainly true in the more developed nations.) The loss of such cognitive power has not only lessened the dominance of the D.K. but has given impetus to us.

Back, however, toward the end of the Nineteenth Century, obliteration of human odor was not nearly so complete, and the meeting between Alois, Adi, and Der Alte was characterized by a curious but immediate intimacy between the boy and the old man. In part, indeed, it was aromatic.

I must not ignore, however, the walk to Der Alte's farm. On the way, Alois had a real conversation with his son for the first time.