

Part II

I.

I have just committed an irrevocable act of treachery: We are not supposed to reveal who we are.

As of now, this disclosure is only on paper. At the end of these writings, should I decide to eliminate what is recorded here, I can sequester every echo of my thoughts. For a devil, this is paradoxically more difficult to accomplish than it is for a man or a woman. We are certainly not encouraged to conceal anything from the Source. I have trained myself, however, to write without allowing any thought to radiate out from me, a condition in defiance of the E.O. who forbids such a practice. While he has no desire to use up a part of his resources by taking in all that is in our minds, he is

certainly not inclined to allow any one in his army, to be able to hold separate opinions.

Since I have acquired this curious human skill of keeping thoughts to myself, I feel able therefore to continue my history, my biography, my novel (call it what you will) about the life of Adolf Hitler. With but one addition, I can continue as I have begun. From time to time, I will have a word or more on the structure of the Two Kingdoms: that world of spirits who work for God, and are given the happy if somewhat inexact name of angels (we call them the Cudgels), and the army of devils loyal to the E.O. While the above remarks will hardly be unfamiliar to those readers who are familiar with "Paradise Lost," so are many of us also versed in that particular classic. (I cannot speak for the angels, but devils are devoted to good literature—we look upon such material as a professional need considering the extent of our work with humans. The corollary is that we detest most best-sellers for their sentimental inexactitudes.) Milton is high in our arcana of those poets and novelists we do not look upon as second-rate. Milton, after all, provided the world of men and women with a rough and ready chart of the situation within the domains of the Two Kingdoms. No matter how distorted and

inaccurate (and unfair!), his panorama is nonetheless a pioneer display of our warring armies. (Or, at least, how some of it did take place at the commencement.)

One can begin with Milton, then as a first model. It is, of course, outdated. Devils who serve the E.O. as officers in the seriously misnamed army-of-the-danned, are by now well-installed in all corners of human existence. Much like the immensely complicated Japanese game of Go, the positions we occupy with our—if you will—black stones are forever encircling and being encircled by the white stones of the angels. (It is even said that by the end of the game of Go played by two Masters of the Ninth Degree, it can take almost as long to count up the results of these black and white encirclements of each other as it did to play the match.)

To enforce, therefore, this first explanation of the complexities of our war, I must offer my own rudimentary outline on the basic balance of forces. Because of the separate conceptions of what reality might be, there are in effect three armies. God and his angels work upon humans to develop in Their direction; the E.O. and his devils try to possess many of the same humans; and the individual man or woman strives feverishly to be beholden

neither to God nor to Satan (so-called), but rather to be free, to be the creature of his or her own destiny, belonging to no external force. In the event, we devils try to guide our men and women (we call them clients), the Cudgels contest us, and the particular man or woman often does his or her best to fight Us off, both of Us.

This, it can be repeated, is but a first approach to the complexity and perversity of the subtle condition of existence itself, an Overview. My hope—given the curious but forthright temper that has overtaken me is that I will be able to do a bit more than recount the years before us in the life of Adolf Hitler. Let me be ready, also, to explain my strengths, my weaknesses (no devil is without a profile!) in aiding and subverting the career from boyhood on, not to mention the signal intervention of the Evil One.

Given this much, you have had a first introduction to your narrator.

2.

It is safe to say that I know a good deal. I can enter into many a mind, I can recover, if necessary, the concealed, even the long-buried memories of any client to whom I am assigned. While this does consume much Time (which for us is a resource comparable to the way money serves as the basic matrix for humans), I am, if necessary, able to inhabit people's dreams. My power of insight when brought to focus upon a single person is close to complete, whereas the average human has, at best, a memory that manages to function in one or another impaired state. My sense of recollection, moreover, is free of the usual distortions that serve the human ego since I exist within an absolute set of strategic commands. No need therefore to develop a forceful ego. That is reserved for those humans who are determined to work up their own major endeavors—from which derives the

tyranny of their memory which can usually afford to retain only that which is of the most direct use to them no matter how misremembered or damnably untrue.

In contrast to such men and women, I have a simple life. For the most part, I look to obtain success with my clients. In our Company, that produces reliable results. Sooner or later one is promoted. Over many periods, I have had clients whom I was able to develop sufficiently to be of use in one or another of the E.O.'s larger projects. The majority of humans, however, caught in the push-and-pull between their guardian angel and myself, end by producing little that is salient for us. Indeed, in a few unhappy situations, my attempted conversions were lost altogether. The guardian angel who was my opposite number gathered in such spoils.

As a result of these several successive defeats, my position suffered. For long periods thereafter I was assigned clients of petty origin or sadly modest achievements. I oversaw, for instance, waitresses of a carnal disposition who broke up dull marriages and thereby ruined the amorous head of a half-happy household. (Alois does come to mind.) I encouraged common soldiers to hurt the morale of their company by desertion. I served

workers who rose in their labor movement and turned corrupt. I knew a few mayors in small towns who got into trouble with little boys or pilfered funds. I served petty barons and counts who gambled away the last of old holdings, and I could list petty suicides, petty thieves, fallen priests, drunken louts, unfaithful wives, typical flotsam and uninspired jetsam. I had indeed a horde of clients, but only a few could present an interesting problem to my skills. I had all too many now nameless men and women who were born out of little and proceeded to amount to less. It could have been cause for despair. I admit that only the larger projects appealed to me even as any recognition from a social summit gives real life to a snob. While I could never know if the Maestro was using me for too little, or waiting for me to enlarge my experience, I did, on occasion, hear from him. He had not lost his eye concerning me, and remarked once that I might seek high rank again and could yet be assigned to a venture comparable to the epic encounters of the Company during the first three centuries of the Church in Rome. All that might be there for me once more, if I would keep the faith—that is, pay unremitting attention to my present wretches, thugs, and drunks. I learned then that the E.O. had selected me to oversee the work of other agents

concerning a young client whose potentialities might be immense. Insignificant at present was this person and his family, but there were ancestral fault-lines that happened to be full of the intoxicating stink of blood-scandal. The boy in question, now a young man, was stricken with timidity, had quit school too early, was an avaricious reader who remained hopelessly superior to what he read particularly when he could not understand it, was, in addition, lazy, prone to temper tantrums, and possessed of an ego comparable to the size of a swollen belly. All the same, he was desperately afraid of almost all meetings with other humans. Yes, this boy was an absolute and unmitigated mess.

I did not dare to ask, but of course I could not hide my reactions from the E.O. any more than any of my agents could conceal their active thoughts from me. At this point, the E.O. actually spoke to my thoughts with his thoughts, couching them in English, a language he enjoyed for its inclination to irony. He said: "Why this boy? Can it be that he possesses the largest ambition one could possibly encounter in a young man who is not already insane? I may propose that you take him on. But, be at ease! It is still no more than a project. It could certainly fail. He will need endless instruction.

His terrors must be bolstered with the most confident experiences you can arrange for him. And you must guard him from early and crushing defeats to his ego. In time, if he develops the greater part of his potential promise, he could become your only client. Must I say more? We are looking at a project worthy of a major effort."

I did dare to ask: What if I fail? Many of our projects do. Particularly the major ones. They are such outrageous gambles. Our Source is not unlike God in that regard.

I was depressed. The new project was at present a backwater, and would certainly need good luck—which is to say, times that would prove historically favorable to us. There was no sign of the felicitous conditions needed for a venture so much in need of gratuitous magnifications of possibility. (The First World War and the disasters that fell upon Germany had not yet occurred.) My role, as I saw it, would seat me as jockey on a horse running against unbelievably long odds. I could foresee further demotions for myself.

All that is not of consuming interest any longer. We know, after all, what happened to the horse. And I who rode the boy (with occasional help

from the Master) and rode him all the way up to glory (and down again—which is half the matter, the other half being why I now propose to tell the tale) can at least explain how the short novel I contemplated writing about the SS officer and the Jewish doctor lost my interest about the time I recognized that it was small. I knew too much to content myself with that. If I would break the first of the rules of our society, then it was certainly incumbent upon me to explore much further into what I know of Alois and Klara now that Adolf has been conceived on a night when I spoke of myself as present as a species of Black Gabriel for the Evil One.

In truth, I was not in that bed of unfettered carnality, certainly not on that occasion, nor did I have to be. Yet, when I stated that I was there, I was telling the truth.

The explanation, if one will follow it, is considerably less difficult than Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity. Spirits live in a relation to Time that is hardly comparable to the human perception of that mystery. Ingesting the experiences of other demons, we are able to travel back and forth through periods of Time that can only be recognized by humans in linear fashion. So, I did not have to be present on the night that Adolf was conceived in order to

have the exact experience of it. Another devil (of lower rank) had been consigned. By order of the E.O., he (or it, if you prefer) had entered the act, an insertion any of the E.O.'s cohort can accomplish (when it is not only desired but purposeful). Years later, that same devil had, by my demand, passed the experience on to me with a completeness of detail and carnal feeling that may be called absolute.

For all practical purposes, then, I had been there. I could use the experience to enlarge my own knowledge of Adolf. Since I also knew from the intensity of the occasion that the E.O. had joined with his agent for one instant (even as Jehovah had been with Gabriel during that other exceptional event) so I could believe in my own active presence. Whatever is the experience we draw into ourselves from other devils becomes our own experience. The same can be said of the memories, recent and long-forgotten, of our clients.

I, for example, was not attached formally to Adolf Hitler for many years, but the E.O. had placed him in my share of the Overview—the devils who worked with little Adolf were there to pass their experiences on to me. Over a period of time, his life and small deeds as a boy were sent on to me. Then,

as the hour approached when I would look to take possession of him, so did my concentration upon the sense-offerings of the minor devils in my command take on more prominence until I was as steeped in the life of the boy and young man as if I had been alone with him over all the years of his childhood and adolescence. For that reason I write about his life with an insight no biographer could begin to attempt without being barred from his profession.

It is in part this profound desire to share what I have learned that may now impel this incontestable my treachery toward the E.O. But then, I have come to understand that I am doing it all for myself. Profound experience that is communicated to no one will sour the soul. I, who have lived so long with the firm belief that I am no more and no less than a spirit, now have to face a seismic disruption. Somewhere within I sense the remnants of a soul, the truncated ends, let us say, of nerves long lost to an amputated limb which will insist on promising the body that it can grow again.

A recognition of this dimension comes too early a moment in our narrative. It will take all of a book I may never be able to finish to absorb the meaning of such an insight. I seek to quiet the disturbance this thought

causes by returning again to the present, to these years of living in an America I can hardly comprehend. If I am now a presence who consists of no more at this instant than a devil without a serious assignment, I sense that I must (may it be the saving imperative!) return to the premise with which I began—that an account of the life of my former client will establish, at least, a rough topography of that terrain in which I search for the remaining oddments of my soul.

3.

In setting down these basic explanations, I must say it is one of our ongoing missions to convince the ruling majority of the new technological world that there is no such entity as the Devil and most certainly there is nothing like two hierarchical spirit orders—the universe is subject to reason, nothing else. God, alone, as a solitary mystery, is acceptable in some powerful quarters. But not the Evil One. One mystery, not Two!

There need be no surprise, then, that the general understanding of Adolf Hitler's personality is dim. He is, after all, a third mystery, the most mysterious human of the century, a man, when all is said, who was all-too-human, if, it will be agreed, that the average man or woman does possess large funds of the inhumane. In any event, I was able by the end to

comprehend his psyche better than my own. Obviously, I take pride in this. He was a close to unmeasurable specimen of the human, and had time enough to grow into the scourge of the century, this client whom in the beginning I belittled for much too long as "little Adolf," yes, I knew him when we still referred to the young fellow who grew out of the boy as "little Adolf with the big ideas."

I can state that he was a most ordinary little Hitler in the beginning—that is, he was certainly an unhealthy baby and terrified Klara with every wheeze of his lungs and bubble of sputum.

It is probably true that she was ready to die if he did. Devils are sound at anticipatin motive, but our predictive attempts weaken on the borders of mortality. The Devil imposes, the man proposes, God disposes, is not inaccurate as a rule of thumb that we often must observe.

Part II

I

I have committed an irrevocable act of treachery. We are not supposed to reveal who we are.

As of now, the disclosure is only on paper. At the end of these writings, should I decide to eliminate what is recorded here, I can contain my thoughts within my mind. Paradoxically, this is more difficult for a devil to accomplish than it is for a man or a woman. While we are not permitted to conceal anything from the Source, I have trained myself to write without allowing any of the words to radiate out from me, a condition in defiance of the E.O. He forbids such a practice. While he has no desire to use up any

large part of his resources by taking in all that is in our minds, he is certainly not inclined to allow any of us to be able to hold separate opinions.

Now, however, that I have acquired this curious human skill of holding my thoughts to myself when I so choose, I feel able to continue my history, my biography, my novel (call it what you will). With but one addition, I can continue as I have begun. From time to time, I may offer a word or more explanation on the structure of the Two Kingdoms, our title for that world of spirits who work for God, and are given the happy if somewhat inexact name of angels (we call them the Cudgels), and in opposition, the army of devils loyal to the E.O. While the above remarks will hardly be unfamiliar to those readers who are familiar with "Paradise Lost," so are many of us also versed in that particular classic. (I cannot speak for the angels, who, for all I know, spend their time absorbing devotional prose and pious tracts, but devils are devoted to good literature—we look upon such material as a professional complement to our work with humans, indeed, we detest most best-sellers for their sentimental inexactitudes.) Milton, to be certain, is high in our arcana of those poets and novelists we do not look upon as second-rate. He did, after all, provide a rough and ready chart of the

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To enforce, therefore, this first explanation of the complexities of our war, I must offer my own outline on the balance of forces. Because of three separate conceptions of what reality might be, and where it ought to go, there are, in effect, three armies. God and his angels work upon humans to develop in Their direction; the E.O. and his devils look to infiltrate, or, better, possess many of the same humans; and the individual man or woman strives

feverishly to be beholden neither to God nor to the E.O., but rather attempts to be free, to be the creature of his or her own destiny, belonging to no external force. In the event, we devils try to guide our men and women (we call them clients), the Cudgels contest us, and any particular man or woman usually does his or her best to fight Us off, both of Us.

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At one period, not so long ago, as a result of several successive defeats, my position suffered. For a time, thereafter, I was assigned clients of petty origin or sadly modest achievements. I oversaw, for instance, waitresses of a carnal disposition who broke up dull marriages and thereby ruined the amorous head of a half-happy household. (Alois does come to

mind.) I encouraged common soldiers to hurt the morale of their company by desertion. I served workers and peasants who looked to stir up revolutions, but turned corrupt. I knew a few mayors in small towns who got into trouble with little boys or pilfered funds. I served petty barons and counts who gambled away the last of old holdings, and I could list petty suicides, petty thieves, fallen priests, drunken louts, unfaithful wives, typical flotsam and uninspired jetsam. I had indeed a horde of clients, but only a few could present an interesting problem to my skills. I had all too many now nameless men and women who were born out of little and proceeded to less. It could have been cause for despair. I admit that only large projects appealed to me even as any recognition from a social summit gives real life to a snob. While I could never know if the Maestro was using me for too little, or waiting for me to enlarge my experience, I did, on occasion, hear from him. He had not lost his eye concerning me, and remarked once that I might seek high rank again and could yet be assigned to a venture comparable to the epic encounters of the Company during the first three centuries of the Church in Rome. All that might be there for me once more, if I would keep the faith—that is, pay unremitting attention to my present wretches, thugs, and drunks.

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All this is not of consuming interest any longer. We know, after all, what happened to the horse. And I who rode the boy (with occasional help from the Master) and rode him all the way up to glory (and down again—which is half the matter, the other half being why I now propose to tell the tale) can at least explain how the short novel I contemplated writing about the SS officer and the Jewish doctor lost my interest about the time I recognized that it was small. I knew too much to content myself with that. If I would break the first of the rules of our society, then it was certainly incumbent upon me to explore much further into what I know of Alois and Klara now that Adolf has been conceived on a night when I spoke of myself as present, there as a species of Black Gabriel for the Evil One.

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For all practical purposes, then, I had been there. (To have an exact experience is to be present.) So, I also knew from the intensity of the occasion that the E.O. had joined with his agent for one instant (even as Jehovah had been with Gabriel during another exceptional event).

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command take on more prominence until I was as steeped in the life of the boy and young man as if I had been alone with him over all the years of his childhood and adolescence. For that reason I write about his life with an insight no biographer could dare to attempt without being barred from his profession.

It is in part this profound desire to share what I have learned that may now impel this my incontestable treachery toward the E.O. But then, I have begun to understand why I must be doing it. Profound experience that is communicated to no one will sour the soul. I, who have lived so long with the firm belief that I am no more and no less than a spirit, now have to face a seismic disruption. Somewhere within I sense the remnants of a soul, the truncated ends, let us say, of nerves long lost to an amputated limb which insists nonetheless on promising the body that it can grow again.

A recognition of this dimension comes at too early a moment in our narrative. It will take all of a book I may never be able to finish to absorb the meaning of such an insight. So, I seek to quiet the disturbance that this thought arouses by returning again to the present, to these years now of living in an America I can hardly comprehend. If I am a presence who consists of

no more at this instant than a devil without a serious assignment, I sense that I must (may it be the saving imperative!) return to the premise with which I began—that an account of the life of my former client will establish, at least, a rough topography of that terrain in which I search for the remaining oddments of my soul.

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In setting down these explanations, I will say that it is one of our ongoing missions to convince the majority of the new technological world that there is no such entity as the Devil and—this is crucial—nothing like two divine spirit orders. The universe is subject to reason, nothing else. God, alone, as a solitary mystery, may be acceptable in some powerful quarters, but not the Evil One. One mystery, not Two!

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comprehend his psyche better than my own. How can I not take pride in this? As a specimen of the human, he was close to unmeasurable, and developed without question into the scourge of the century, this client whom in the beginning I belittled for much too long as "little Adolf," yes, I knew him when we still referred to the young fellow who grew out of the boy as "little Adolf with the big ideas."

I can state that he was a most ordinary Hitler newborn in the beginning—that is, he was unhealthy, and terrified Klara with every bubble of his sputum.

It is probably true that she was ready to die if he did not live. Devils are sound at anticipating motive, but our predictive attempts weaken at the borders of mortality. The Devil imposes, man proposes, and the Lord disposes, is not accurate in most cases, but we are obliged to recognize that God does decide on timing of the death of every human. To take an extreme example—an airplane, let us say, which we have brought into malfunction (a most difficult process!)—will when it crashes not kill everyone unless Our Adversary so determines. Usually, in such cases, he will accept what we have succeeded in doing because it is too costly to countermand us—do not

assume that it takes nothing exceptional for God to save a human on the lip of extinction, indeed, He could not even save His Son, (as we are never tired of reminding our clients!) but there are occasions when a death we looked to create did not ensue. From time to time, God still disposes.

Be it understood, however, that the question comes down to expenditures. We are fighting a war with each other and all wars are ultimately determined by the cost to each side. Even as we are not all-powerful as devils, because He is our Adversary, so is He not all-powerful because of the cost of warring with us. To keep this understanding alive, the E.O. insists that we never speak of the Lord as God, but only as the D.K. (What D.K. means, I would prefer not to explain until later.)

It is Klara and her state that she is now again a mother, which calls more directly for my attention.

The attention she gave to the early days of her fourth child would have been hysteria in any woman who had less cause for concern, but Klara was living at the edge of an abyss. She had had nine months and ten days to contemplate earlier years with Alois, all the way in memory from the carnal steam of their first illicit bed to the rancid smell of the sickroom as Otto,

Gustav, and Ida had gone one by one in the same few months of the same year. She had prayed devoutly to God to save them, and He had chosen to rebuke her. As she saw it, that could only confirm the evil of her condition.

Since she could hardly begin to think that Alois was her father, she had no way to comprehend her reaction on the day he came to visit in Spital. She was sixteen and had never seen a man who disturbed her as much—she took a full step backward on their meeting at the door, and her body lurched into movement before her mind. She might as well have received a blow at the sight of him. Yet she also admired Alois, and immensely, and at once. Her mother had an expresison on her face Klara had not seen before. For one instant, Johanna had seemed beautiful, there in full pride and longing. On the next moment, Klara shared the same feeling, a closeness to her mother that was more than their everyday animal sense of sharing the same bed-rags of existence, no, it was as if she inhabited her mother's heart for the blink of an eye, and then took in the full force of the pang that followed. In truth, Klara had a devil's experience. The only joy that we can know occurs in the instant we invest our spirit in the man or woman who is to be our client. Johanna was not much of a devil (only for a day could one say that she had

been more or less invested) but it was enough for Klara to share her mother's desire.

We need not, however, travel along the back and forth of Klara's passion for Alois and Klara's piety. By the time Adolf was born, she would wash her mouth every morning with laundry soap, given her mate's nightly predilection for putting her head into his groin and keeping it right there, one big hand on her neck.

No surprise then if her love was for the baby. So soon as Adolf gave, in the midst of all his early illness, some good signs of living—after two weeks he could smile with delight at the approach of her face—she began to believe that God might be kind to her this time, that He could even be ready to forgive if she would be perfect. Would He would spare this child, His Wrath assuaged? Perhaps He had even given her an angel—such was the nature of secret hope! An angel, however, required that she have nothing more to do with her husband.

Alois soon had to face the possibility that a will of iron, when properly forged by prayer, is more powerful in a woman than in a man. He could not at first believe that her refusal to let him touch her was neither a whim nor a

new species of drawn-out enticement. "You women go back and forth like a dog chasing its tail," he told her in exasperation. Then, deciding it was a revolution to be crushed, he seized her buttocks with one hand and a breast with the other.

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

Since this state was to continue for close to three years, it will certainly be worth returning to Alois and the solutions he found to lift a few of the privations of matrimonial siege, but for now, we stay close to Klara. An intensity of emotion is always attractive to a hard-working devil, even as farmers dream of black soil for future crops.

It need hardly be underlined that the death of Otto, Gustav and Ida proved useful to us even if we did not effect it. Obviously, it intensified

Klara's love for Adolf past any usual measure of maternal love. When he began to cry out as she kissed his cheeks, she even came to understand that it was the odor of lye on her mouth and, Alois now driven to his side of the bed, she no longer washed her mouth in the morning, but kissed her baby who gurgled most obligingly.

To the degree that the E.O. had us paying attention to this birth, we were pleased. Excessive mother-love was as productive for the sort of garden we were looking to cultivate as a whole absence of mother-love or a cruel distortion of it. With all putative clients and their offspring, we were keyed to look for excess of every kind, good or bad, loving or hateful—distortion itself, the warping of honest sentiment, even the intensification of desired sentiment was the richest mix we could anticipate.

If the E.O. and the D.K. are generally obliged to ignore the majority of men and women for their inborn limitations or for the stalemate our adversarial interest in them generally creates, vastly more important to us are those figures, chosen in childhood for a large investment before the D.K. or the Cudgels become aware of such infiltration. That, as has been indicated, demands a gamble. Even as the E.O. chose Adolf early, and, I would

suspect, by the reliable steadfast rule that an incestuous procreation followed by swarms of mother-love is certainly a favorable beginning, here we also know that the event was powerfully fortified by the presence of the E.O. at the conception. There was then every reason to expect that the child would prove extraordinary. If it lived. We lose so many.

Nonetheless, when mother-love is not only all-embracing but preserving, why then, artists, gargoyles, ogres, geniuses, killers, and the occasional savior can come forth as the product. The first element of mutual recognition in the struggle between the D.K. and the E.O. is probably Their understanding that no single splendid human quality must ever prevail by itself, unaltered or unassisted by at least one of Them. Therefore, even the noblest, most self-sacrificing and generous mother can produce a monster if we get there first. We are always on the alert for candidates who are loved outrageously in early childhood.

By the time he was a year old, she called the boy Adi, never Adolf or Dolfi. (The last was too close to Teufel for comfort.) "Look," she would say to her stepchildren, Alois, Jr., and Angela, "look, isn't he an angel, a little god," and since the baby had a round face, big round eyes, and a small

mouth, and looked to them like any other baby, they nodded with easy obedience. She was a good stepmother and that was all right with Alois, Jr. and Angela since they had heard from their father that their own mother was crazy.

Klara knew she should not talk with such exaggeration to her stepchildren about their half-brother, but she could not help herself. Adoration welled forth with every indication Adi gave that, yes, he would still be there tomorrow, he would live.

She was certain she would keep him alive. Breast-feeding gave her the incontestable virtuous sense that she was putting her own strength into him. Her nipple was never far from his mouth. My minor devils when out on night patrol in that region would report that her prayers were more heartfelt than any one of the near-thousand mothers of Braunau they passed in the night. Devils, obviously, have minimal attachment to the sentimental, let alone the heartfelt, but one or two were haunted by her, haunted, yes, a bit. Her prayer was that pure: "Oh, Lord, take my life if it will help to save his." Other women, being more practical, complained to the D.K. about what was missing in their lives. The most greedy and stupid were always looking to

grab and gorge—a better house, more money, even a lover. “yes, if you permit it, Lord.”—there was no comfort for which they did not lust. She looked to give comfort to the child, her breast, count on it, always in his mouth.

While the E.O. was in general not sympathetic to breast-feeding since its absence stimulated an essential if ugly energy in our future clients, his attitude was ready to reverse itself in cases of first-degree incest. For such situations, the closer the mother was to the child, why, the better for us.

The same was true of excretory dramas. A dirty butt on a baby, if found daily, was a potential client for us. No chance of that with Klara. If she had always kept a clean house, it was now as spotless as any rich merchant's home with its four or five servants, indeed, more. Her furnishings gleamed—it was as if she had lived with the paintings of Jan Vermeer for every day of every year. So, too, was Adi's pip-squeak of an anus kept as immaculate as a glistening pebble, and of that, too, did the E.O. approve—an incestuary must always be aware of the importance of his or her own excrement, a Diktat that was never quite explained to us although it did offer a hint of explanation merely by being stated. Our basic instruction was

that every rule, no matter how generally effective, was there to be reversed in special cases. Sometimes I would even think that the E.O. judged our potentiality to improve by our sensitivity to just this nuance—always be ready for the special case.

4.

Not long after Adolf was born, Alois decided to move out of the Pommer Inn. Since he had been assigned to Braunau in 1875, it was his twelfth change of address in fourteen years. But, Alois had liked the Pommer Inn: "It has a presentation of elegance if I can use such a word for Braunau." That was a prepared remark—he had a dozen he used to cover a hundred situations in small talk.

"Women are like geese—you can recognize them from their behind," was another. Or, when with professional company—"Learn to pick out a smuggler every time. They are too good to be true. They dress too well, they speak too well, and they work too hard at looking you in the eye."

When asked, however, why he had moved from the Pommer Inn after residing there for four years, he would shrug. He was not about to bring up the death of his three children, and besides, it was not the reason. "I like to move," he would say. He could have told more of the truth which was that he had used up the few waitresses, chambermaids and cooks at the Pommer Inn who were not too old or too ugly, and he could have added (and did to one or two friends), "when a woman goes dry on you, change your house. That can get their juices going." He could even have given the real reason—no matter where he lived, sooner or later, a restlessness came upon him that was intolerable. His flesh itched as if ants were reconnoitering his skin. He did not have to complain any longer of miniscule pests in the sheets, the draperies, the carpets, no need, he knew it was time to move.

On the day, however, that the Hitler family left the Pommer Inn, he had a most uncharacteristic thought. It was that the dark forces of the universe had chosen him for high position. As a corollary to this, he must not ruin the possibility by going too often to church. I will remark that his notion of high position was to be promoted to Chief Customs Official in the provincial capital of Linz (and indeed he was to achieve just that post before

he retired.) Never superstitious (except when he was) Alois later attributed the prestige of his last position in good part to the move he made at this time—from the Pommer Inn to a rented house on Linzerstrasse. He and Klara both agreed that they needed more room, and this they had. Now there were no female possibilities in the attic, but he could live with that. He had nosed out a woman with whom he could stop on his way home from the tavern. He had to pay for the privilege by giving her a gift from time to time, but then the rent on Linzerstrasse was low. It was really a dreary house.

All the while, he fought against falling in love with his wife. She infuriated him. If ants were like bees and had a Queen for whom they labored, then Klara was Queen of the ants, for his skin would crawl, his crotch would itch, and the beat of his heart tolled in his chest as if those ants reached even to there. Just so powerful was the presence of Klara lying in silence on her half of the divided bed. He would keep thinking of her as she had looked on the night of her wedding. She had had a dark rose silk dress made for the occasion, and wore a white collar, that much white she allowed herself as a bride, and on her white forehead which he considered well-shaped, (he would even grant her a noble forehead), she had teased some

charming curls. At her breast was pinned her one piece of jewelry, a small green cluster of glass grapes looking real enough to mislead you to reach for one. And then there were her eyes—no mistake! He had to fight against falling in love with a woman who kept the cleanest house in Braunau just for him and for three kids, a woman always as polite to him in public as to an emperor, a woman who never complained about what she had and didn't have and never nagged him about finances, a woman who still had only one good dress, the one she had worn at her wedding party, and yet if he laid a finger on her, she would have bitten it off. He wondered if the difference in their age was now what it was about. Better than marrying her, he should have put her in a nunnery. Yet his skin itched at the thought of how she would not let him near.

Drinking at the tavern, he would look to regain his pride. If he had disliked the Church in the first years of his marriage, he had by now developed a high scorn, for now he could say he knew a few things. He would occasionally scan a chapter or two in an anti-clerical volume he had found in an antique bookshop in Braunau, indeed, the store owner, Hans Lycidias Leipziger, would meet him on many an evening for beer, and while

the bookseller kept himself above the discussions by doing no more than nod his head from time to time, his wise presence, his shaven chin and upper lip, his full sideburns, his peepphole spectacles, his half-bald head of burgeoning white hair, offered a slight but legitimizing resemblance to Arthur Schopenhauer whose portrait was occasionally printed in the Braunau Zeitung, and so gave support to Leipziger's smallest assent, just enough to take the other Customs Officers around the more bruising turns of Alois' argument. While they were hardly to be counted as church-goers, "No good man wants to be neutered," most were ready to say, they were still officials, and could hardly feel at ease when a prestigious institution was mocked, let alone the Holy Roman Church.

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

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

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

The others laughed uneasily. But Alois was thinking of Klara and how her piety left a hot rock in his stomach. He would grind this rock to powder. "In the Middle Ages," he said, "do you know? The whores, they were more respectable than the nuns. They even had a Guild. I have been able to read about a convent there up north in Franconia so stinking bad the Pope had to investigate--because the Whores' Guild was complaining about the competition."

"Come, now," said two drinkers at once.

"True. It is true. Hans Leipziger here can show you the text."

Leipziger nodded slowly, reflectively. He was a little too drunk to be certain on which side his authority should fall. "Yes," said Alois, "the Pope sends a monsignor to look into it, and what does he report? Half of the nuns are pregnant. This is the sober fact history must live with. Next, the Pope takes a look at the monasteries. Orgies. Orgies of homosexuals." He said it with such force that he had time to take a large draft of his tankard.

"That, of course," said Alois, once new breath had been ingested, "need not surprise us. Half of the priesthood are mamma's boys. We know that."

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

"In that case, I tip my hat to him," said Alois, "if he is your brother, he is different. But that was then. The priests who weren't ashamed to be men were making another kind of scandal. You ever hear the saying of this Pope? Herr Leipziger, tell us his name."

Leipziger made a vague horizontal sweep of the air with his arm. "I remember," said Alois. "This Pope said, 'No priest needs to marry so long as the peasant has a wife.'"

The force of his voice insisted that they be ready to applaud with laughter. So, they laughed. "One more saying," he went on. "'The poor merchant has one wife, the priest has ten, and the Bishop cannot enter heaven—too many wives to count.'"

"Which Bishop?"

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

Alois had not forgotten the Bishop of Linz who, six years ago, had refused his application to marry Klara. In order to defray the expenses of

translating his letter into Latin, he had been forced to declare that he was a pauper. Six years ago, and it still rankled.

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

Now, however, his belly was heavy with uneasiness. From a respected friend in the Finance Watch, he had heard that there was talk at Vienna headquarters of promoting him to Chief Customs Officer in Passau. Given his lack of upper education, that would be a true rise in rank. "So, watch yourself, Alois," the friend had said.

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

But now this respected friend who had his ear in the councils of the Finance Watch was saying, "Watch out for bad stories about you in Braunau."

That was a pang you could say went right to the hilt. Because Alois could not trust this friend. Not completely. He was a practical joker. In fact, he was the same one who had told him years ago: "The townspeople are nothing. Put your thumb to your nose when it comes to them." Alois had put together a good many habits around this remark, but the truth now was that he felt up he had said too much tonight. Now, with this rumor of being moved up to Passau and promoted—was it a rumor? Was it real? Now, he was learning how much ambition he had, ambition that he had never admitted to himself. It was like a river breaking through a levee. It was a flood. If he wanted to stay afloat, he had to stop pissing on the Church.

Yes, in this sense, his wife, a cold tit to him and a jug of warm milk to the baby—what a guzzler! never off of the tit—but a very useful wife all the same. High marks on Kinder, Kuchen, Kirche—good for the children, good with the cooking, very good concerning the Church. God might just as well have made Jesus Christ all alone for her.

Now, he, personally, was not going to be caught in church except for State occasions, holidays. He did not wish to put up with a new itching attack. He did not see the confessional box for himself, absolutely; his skin even prickled at the thought. A serious official of the Crown baring his soul (and some of the private stuff below the belt!), no, not to one more priest hoping to find food for a new masturbation. Never!

Women, however, had to go to church. It was time to accept that as a fact. The people in Braunau must not be able to say that he wouldn't let his wife go to Church.

5.

Within our Company, we look upon ambition as our most powerful fuel. If, as we wian accept, all human emotion was first conceived by the D.K. even as He gave each and all of the necessary instincts to the animals, human feelings, nonetheless, are also available to us for adaptation and transformation. Of none is this more true than ambition and avarice. (For example, you may be certain that it was the E.O. who developed the concept

of money.) There are men and women who will do anything for money. Yet we do not consider avarice as coequal with greed but look upon it rather as the vehicle of greed. Ambition, if taken in the same light, can be described as the vehicle of Vision. Which is why God, in the beginning, was interested not only in restraints upon behavior but also in its opposite, ambition, for the D.K. not only had His Vision of what humankind should become but He also desired that each man and woman should be ready to fulfill his or her arduous part in that Vision—a clear-cut project, I would wager, at least as the D.K. saw it in the beginning.

Be certain that the E.O. knew enough to appropriate his large portion of the mechanism. I speak with authority on the matter for this good reason. Both sides of the equation make sense. In order that the Vision be effective, God gave great power to human ambition. In doing so, He left us with a rich

field of clients. It may be sacrilege to some but I would even argue that the D.K. miscalculated, and seriously so. Ambition is not only the most powerful of the emotions but the most unstable, the most susceptible to distortion or defeat—which close to always creates for us a putative client. (It may even be argued that a substitute for ambition once defeated is avarice, the one emotion that the D.K. intended as an aid to loyalty, to steadfastness, to a narrow but intense point of view, whereas the E.O. (as the first of the Alchemists) transmuted into for greed, since avarice, used properly by us, is a malformation of loyalty—outrageous blind loyalty to oneself.

Still, it is obviously a secondary factor in human affairs. It is ambition that the E.O. seeks to transmute in all our likeliest candidates. The D.K., always a prodigious optimist, had not foreseen that the only men and women who could promulgate the Vision through the intensity of their ambition

would have to be nothing less than saints. The D.K. had miscalculated altogether. The E.O. had a far better comprehension of how men and women were likely to develop than God and/or the angels.

As was the case with Alois, ambition is often the most secret of the emotions. It can tear all of one's long-guarded vanities about the purity of one's self into psychic shreds so soon as it bursts forth in its real embodiment—the blind force of the heart.

Let it come as no surprise that Alois was not alone in suffering his disruption. Ambition is a true germ. It is infectious. Klara was feeling her own kind of ambition. Now that she had a child who was giving a few vital signs of staying alive, and this due, she believed, in very large part, to the life in the milk of her breasts—the most generous joy she had ever felt—now wanted all and everything for her child, her Adi, and to such a degree that

was even ready to contemplate forgiveness for Alois, a little in any case,

enough to allow him to cross the middle of the bed.

4.

Not long after Adolf was born, Alois decided to leave the Pommer Inn, which move added up to his twelfth change of address in Braunau over fourteen years. But, Alois had good words for the Pommer: "It has elegance. I don't know that I would use such a word for anything else in this little city." That was a remark he made often—he had a dozen such to enliven a hundred situations of small talk. Here are two he used not infrequently: "Women are like geese—you can recognize them from behind." Or, when speaking to fellow professionals: "Know to pick out a smuggler. It is easy. They are too good to be true. They dress too well, they speak too well, and they work too hard at looking you in the eye."

When asked, however, why he had moved from the Pommer Inn after residing there for four years, he would shrug. He was not about to bring up the death of his three children. Besides, it was not the reason. "I like to move," he would say. He could have told more of the truth which was that he had used up the few waitresses, chambermaids and cooks at the Pommer Inn who were not too old or too ugly, and he could have added (and did to one or two friends), "when a woman goes dry on you, change your house. That can oil their juices." He could even have given the real reason—no matter where he lived, a restlessness came upon him sooner or later that was intolerable. His flesh itched as if ants were exploring his skin, and he knew it was time to make a change.

On the day, however, that the Hitler family left the Pommer Inn, he had a most uncharacteristic thought. It was that the forces of the universe might yet choose him for high position. (Since these forces could be dark—such was his philosophy—he did not wish to offend the possibility by going too often to church.) I will remark that his notion of high position was to be promoted to Chief Customs Official in the provincial capital of Linz; indeed he was to achieve just that post before he retired. Never superstitious (except

when he was) Alois later attributed the prestige of his last position in good part to the move he made at this time—from the Pommer Inn to a rented house on Linzerstrasse. He and Klara both agreed that they needed more room, and now they had it. Of course, there were no females to visit in the attic, but he could manage with that. He had nosed out a woman who lived on his route home from the tavern. He had to pay for the privilege by giving her a gift time to time, but then the rent on Linzerstrasse was low. It was a dreary house.

All the while, he fought against falling in love with his wife. She infuriated him. If ants were like bees and had a Queen for whom they labored, then Klara was Queen of the ants, for his skin would crawl, his crotch would itch, and the beat of his heart tolled in his chest as if those tormentors reached even to there. Just so powerful was the presence of Klara lying in silence on her half of the divided bed. He would keep thinking of her as she had looked on the night of her wedding. She had had a dark rose silk dress made for the occasion, and wore a white collar, that much white she allowed herself as a bride, and on her white forehead which he considered well-shaped, (he would even grant her a noble forehead), she had

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Drinking at the tavern, he would look to regain his pride. If he had disliked the Church in the first years of his marriage, he had by now developed a superior scorn. Now, he could say he knew a few things. He would occasionally page through a section of an anti-clerical volume he had found in an antique bookshop in Braunau, indeed, the store owner, Hans Lycidias Leipziger, would meet him on many an evening for beer, and while

the bookseller kept himself above the Customs Officers' discussions by doing no more than nod his head from time to time, his wise presence, his shaven chin and upper lip, his full sideburns, his peephole spectacles, his half-bald head of burgeoning white hair, offered a slight but legitimizing resemblance to Arthur Schopenhauer whose portrait was occasionally printed in the Braunau Zeitung, and so gave support to Leipziger's smallest assent, just enough to bring the other Customs Officers around the more bruising turns of Alois' argument. While they were hardly to be counted as church-goers, "No good man wants to be neutered," most were ready to say, they were still officials, and could hardly feel at ease when a prestigious institution was mocked, let alone the Holy Roman Church.

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

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

"In that case, I tip my hat to him," said Alois, "if he is your brother, he is different. But that was then. And I assure you: The priests who were real men did worse. You ever hear this saying Pope? From the same Pope. He said, 'No priest needs to marry so long as the peasant has a wife.'"

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

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

But now this respected friend who had his ear in the councils of the Finance Watch was saying, "Watch out for the people in Braunau."

That was a pang travelled right to the hilt. Because Alois could not decide whether to trust this friend. He was a practical joker. In fact, he was the same one who had told him years ago: "The townspeople are nothing. When it comes to them, put your thumb to your nose." Alois had indeed put together a good many habits around this remark, but the truth now was that tonight he had said too much, absolutely, what with this rumor of being moved to Passau. Now, he was learning how much ambition he had, an ambition that he had never admitted to himself. It could have been like a river breaking through a levee. A flood. If he wanted to stay afloat, he had to stop pissing on the Church.

Yes, in this sense, his wife, a cold tit to him and a jug of warm milk to the baby—what a guzzler! never off of the tit—but, get by all that!—she was a useful wife. Good for the children, good cook, very good with the Church. God might just as well have made Jesus Christ all alone for her.

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itching attack, no, he did not see the confessional box for himself. His skin even prickled at the thought. A serious official of the Crown baring his soul (and some of the private stuff below the belt!), no, not to one more priest hoping to find food for tonight's masturbation. Never!

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On the day, however, that the Hitler family left the Pommer Inn, he had a most uncharacteristic thought. It was that the forces of the universe had chosen him for high position. (Since these forces might be dark, he did not wish to ruin the possibility by going too often to church.) I will remark that his notion of high position was to be promoted to Chief Customs Official in the provincial capital of Linz; indeed he was to achieve just that post

before he retired. Never superstitious (except when he was) Alois later attributed the prestige of his last position in good part to the move he made at this time—from the Pommer Inn to a rented house on Linzerstrasse. He and Klara both agreed that they needed more room, and this they had. Now, there were no female possibilities in the attic, but he could live with that. He had nosed out a woman with whom he could stop on his way home from the tavern. He had to pay for the privilege by giving her a gift from time to time, but then the rent on Linzerstrasse was low. It was really a dreary house.

All the while, he fought against falling in love with his wife. She infuriated him. If ants were like bees and had a Queen for whom they labored, then Klara was Queen of the ants, for his skin would crawl, his crotch would itch, and the beat of his heart tolled in his chest as if those ants reached even to there. Just so powerful was the presence of Klara lying in silence on her half of the divided bed. He would keep thinking of her as she had looked on the night of her wedding. She had had a dark rose silk dress made for the occasion, and wore a white collar, that much white she allowed herself as a bride, and on her white forehead which he considered well-shaped, (he would even grant her a noble forehead), she had teased some

charming curls. At her breast was pinned the one piece of jewelry she owned, a small green cluster of glass grapes looking real enough to mislead you to reach for one. And then there were her eyes—no mistake! He had to fight against falling in love with a woman who kept the cleanest house in Braunau just for him and for three kids, a woman always as polite to him in public as to an emperor, a woman who never complained about what she had and didn't have and never nagged him about finances, a woman who still had only one good dress, the one she had worn at her wedding party, and yet if he laid a finger on her, she would have bitten it off. He wondered if the difference in their age was now what it was about. Better than marrying her, he should have put her in a nunnery. Yet his skin itched at the thought of how she would not let him near.

Drinking at the tavern, he would look to regain his pride. If he had disliked the Church in the first years of his marriage, he had by now developed a high and superior scorn. Now, he could say he knew a few things. He would occasionally scan a chapter in an anti-clerical volume he had found in an antique bookshop in Braunau, indeed, the store owner, Hans Lycidias Leipziger, would meet him on many an evening for beer, and while

the bookseller kept himself above the Customs Officers' discussions by doing no more than nod his head from time to time, his wise presence, his shaven chin and upper lip, his full sideburns, his peephole spectacles, his half-bald head of burgeoning white hair, offered a slight but legitimizing resemblance to Arthur Schopenhauer whose portrait was occasionally printed in the Braunau Zeitung, and so gave support to Leipziger's smallest assent, just enough to take the other Customs Officers around the more bruising turns of Alois' argument. While they were hardly to be counted as church-goers, "No good man wants to be neutered," most were ready to say, they were still officials, and could hardly feel at ease when a prestigious institution was mocked, let alone the Holy Roman Church.

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

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

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

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

"Come, now," said two drinkers at once.

"True. It is true. Hans Leipziger here can show you the text."

Leipziger nodded slowly, reflectively. He was a little too drunk to be certain on which side his authority should fall. "Yes," said Alois, "the Pope sends a monsignor to look into it, and what does he report? Half of the nuns are pregnant. This is the sober fact history must live with. Next, the Pope takes a look at the monasteries. Orgies. Orgies of homosexuals." He said it with such force that he had time to take a large draft of his tankard.

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

"In that case, I tip my hat to him," said Alois, "if he is your brother, he is different. But that was then. The priests who weren't ashamed to be men were making another kind of scandal. You ever hear the saying of this Pope? Herr Leipziger, tell us his name."

Leipziger made a vague horizontal sweep of the air with his arm. "I remember," said Alois. "This Pope said, 'No priest needs to marry so long as the peasant has a wife.'"

The force of his voice insisted that they be ready to applaud with laughter. So, they laughed. "Another saying," he said. "'The poor merchant has one wife, the priest has ten, and the Bishop cannot enter heaven—too many wives to count.'"

"Which Bishop?"

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

Alois had not forgotten the Bishop of Linz who, six years ago, had refused his application to marry Klara. In order to defray the expenses of

translating his letter into Latin, Alois had been forced to declare that he was a pauper. Six years ago, and it still rankled.

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

Now, however, his belly was heavy. Much uneasiness. From a respected friend in the Finance Watch, he had heard there was talk of promoting him to Chief Customs Officer in Passau. Given his lack of upper education, that would be a true rise in rank. "Now, you must watch yourself, Alois," the friend had said.

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

But now this respected friend who had his ear in the councils of the Finance Watch was saying, "Watch out for the people in Braunau."

That was a pang went right to the hilt. Because Alois could not decide whether to trust this friend. He was a practical joker. In fact, he was the same one who had told him years ago: "The townspeople are nothing. Put your thumb to your nose when it comes to them." Alois had put together a good many habits around this remark, but the truth now was that he had said too much tonight, absolutely, what with this rumor of being moved to Passau and promoted—was it nothing but a rumor? Now, he was learning how much ambition he had, ambition that he had never admitted to himself. It was like a river breaking through a levee. It was a flood. If he wanted to stay afloat, he had to stop pissing on the Church.

Yes, in this sense, his wife, a cold tit to him and a jug of warm milk to the baby—what a guzzler! never off of the tit—but, go by all that—she was a very useful wife. High marks on Kinder, Kuehen, Kirche—good for the children, good cooking, very good with the Church. God might just as well have made Jesus Christ all alone for her.

Now, he, personally, was not going to be caught in church except for State occasions, holidays. He did not wish to put up with a new itching attack. He did not see the confessional box for himself, his skin even prickled at the thought. A serious official of the Crown baring his soul (and some of the private stuff below the belt!), no, not to one more priest hoping to find food for tonight's masturbation. Never!

Women, however, should be seen in church. It was time to accept that as a fact. The people in Braunau must not be able to say that he didn't allow his wife go to Church.

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They had to be shocked, but the force of his voice insisted that they be ready to applaud with laughter, so they laughed. "Yes, another saying," he went on. "'The poor merchant has one wife, the priest has ten, and the Bishop cannot enter heaven—he has too many wives to count.'"

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Alois had not forgotten the Bishop of Linz who had refused his application to marry Klara, and thereby forced him to appeal to Rome which, in turn, had made him lie that he was a pauper in order to defray expenses on the work of translating his letter into Latin.

On the walk home, his mood was foul.

5.

Within the Company, we look upon ambition as a force that is at our disposal. At least, usually so. While we are obliged to accept the not-happy likelihood that human emotions only originated in men and women through God's choice, even as He gave necessary instincts to the animals, nonetheless, we look upon all human feelings as available to us for adaptation to our purposes. Of no intense states is this more true than ambition, and its corollary, avarice. (You may be certain that it was the E.O. who developed the concept of money.) Yet we do not consider avarice to be quite the same as greed. Rather, we look upon it as the vehicle of greed, just as ambition, taken in the same light, can be described as the vehicle of Vision. That is why God, in the beginning, while interested in putting serious restraints upon

behavior, did encourage ambition. (I cannot speak with certainty on this point, but I would suggest that the D.K. not only had His Vision of what humankind should become, but He also desired that each man and woman be ready to fulfill an arduous part of that Vision.)

I must assume that God's demands proved too arduous. Be certain that the E.O. knew enough to appropriate his portion of the new human structure. I speak with authority on this matter for good reason: Both sides of the equation make sense. In order that the Vision be effective, God had to grant great power to human ambition, human will to succeed. In doing so, He left the E.O. room to capture a rich field of clients. It may be sacrilege to some, but I would even argue that God miscalculated, and seriously so. Ambition is not only the most powerful of the emotions but the most unstable. Assuredly, it is susceptible to distortion and can hardly bear defeat. Almost always defeat creates a putative client for us—that is, someone who hates God for not giving him a fair share of good luck. (It may even be argued that one substitute for thwarted ambition is, precisely, avarice, and yet that is an emotion the D.K. intended as an aid to loyalty. Yes! Because avarice is steadfast, avarice possesses a narrow point of view. The E.O., as the first of

the Alchemists, (and far and away the best!) transmuted that emotion directly into greed, since avarice, employed properly by us, is a malformation of loyalty—it is outrageous blind loyalty to oneself.

Still, the E.O. looks upon avarice as a secondary factor in human affairs. Personal ambition is what we seek to capture in our likeliest candidates. The D.K., always a prodigious optimist, had not foreseen that the only men and women who could promulgate the Vision through the intensity of their ambition would have to be saints. Few humans developed into saints. So, the D.K. miscalculated altogether. The E.O. had a better comprehension of how men and women were likely to grow and change.

As was the case with Alois, ambition often can be the most secret of the emotions. Once loosed, it is ready to tear into psychic shreds long-guarded vanities about one's own purity, honor, and pride. It is then that ambition bursts forth in its real embodiment—the blind force of the heart.

Let it come as no surprise that Alois was not the only one in the family to suffer this disruption. Ambition is a true germ. It is infectious. If Klara now had a child who was actually giving a few vital signs of staying alive, this was due, she believed, to her milk. Her breasts were suffused with the

most generous joy she had ever known. Klara now wanted everything for Adi, and to such a degree that she was even ready to contemplate forgiveness for her husband, a little in any case—enough maybe to allow him to move over the middle of the bed.

So, their second courtship began. It was not at all like the night when Gustav was conceived. Here, she was still breast-feeding Adolf and so there was no question of a pregnancy. That would have to wait. What inspired her interest, is that she could recognize how Alois had built the strongest of foundations for the future of Adolf. Even as Alois had risen from the mud of Strones and Spital to the high honor of a uniform in the service of the Emperor Franz Josef, one could now begin to measure the heights to which Adolf might ascend if his ability to go beyond his origins was equal to the vigor of the father.

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

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

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

"Let us keep it that way."

"No, Alois, sometimes I am afraid he is not very important to you."

She had gone one step beyond the last step she had thought to take.

Now, he was stirred. Bad enough for him that he had only half a bed, now she was looking to nag him. "Important to me?" he said. "That I can answer. He is not yet important to me. I want to see if he will live."

She did not weep often, but this time she burst into tears. Even as she heard the harsh tone of his voice, she knew that the worst had happened. She felt weak before him again. She was not free of loving him.

At that moment, the dog began to bark. Alois had bought a hound at a low price from a farmer he knew. Now that they were living in a house, rather than an inn, he considered this an added protection worth the cost. But the dog, whom he named Luther (he was fonder of Protestants than Catholics) proved disappointing. While Luther worshipped Alois and quivered before his master at every shift of tone, he did not seem otherwise

alert. Moreover, he had nervous habits. Even as Alois now shouted at him to be silent, poor Luther urinated on the floor.

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

to speak without a word. At such instants, she had felt as if this child was closer to her and knew more about her than anyone in her life.

Now, Adolf had much of the same look as he gazed first upon the wet dog and then at the over-flushed face of the father. There was no tenderness in this look, but much comprehension.

She no longer wept. She felt an odd panic as if she must now encourage the little boy to weep so that she could give him her breast and thereby remove him from knowing too much. Indeed, she succeeded. Adi burst into a rage when she seized him up and took him out of the room and force-fed him her breast so soon as she dared to brave his first new teeth. Indeed he nipped her enough for Klara to cry out, whereupon he gave a deep and hearty chuckle. They were back together again.

From the room she had just quit, she could hear Alois bellowing at Alois, Jr. and Angela to clean up the puddles.

"That dog can't even shit right," he cried out of his own pain at the awful turn the evening had taken. Luther was bleeding at the mouth from blows he had received full-face on his muzzle, but in turn, Alois' palm had a

small but ugly laceration from raking one fierce slap across a broken incisor
in the sad beast's front teeth.

6.

It will be noted that I write about my people in much the same modes any reasonably good novelist might attempt, that is, sardonically, objectively, ironically, sympathetically, judgmentally, even compassionately. This should not come as a surprise. Because I am a species of devil of indeterminate high rank (in the Company our relative hegemony is not often revealed to us) that does not mean that I must write like a devil. From the onset of our service, the E.O. has instructed us to make humankind our study. We are told that we do the E.O. honor every time we are able to appreciate a man or woman in all their complexity, which is a way of saying we should feel as close to what is godly in them as to what is diabolical. To comprehend those sides of humankind which are inimical to us is almost as important as it is to develop

the power to influence their potentialities. If there were religious Orders in the Company, I would be prepared to say that for the most part I would be a Jesuit for I share a fundamental understanding with them as, for certain, does the E.O.—one must acquire a sympathetic understanding of all that is in essence and ultimately our final adversary—be ready, indeed, to know more about true godly sentiments than God Himself.

That is why the E.O. encourages us to speak of God as the D.K. (At least those of us who work in German-speaking lands.) D.K. are the initials we use for Dummkopf. It is not that we look upon God as directly stupid (not so!). And we know from experience that the angels, our drear Cudgels can, on occasion, be as bright and incisive as we are, but the root of the name comes from the E.O.'s desire to wean us from what has been our greatest weakness in the past, precisely the covert admiration we used to feel before God.

It was only fair, it was only accurate, the E.O. imparted to us, that we become able to redress the balance. The Angels had succeeded in naming our Source, our Prince of Darkness, as the Evil One, and so successfully that we are obliged to live with this insult in nomenclature. Indeed, the Souce

finally decided that the best option left to him was to take pride in the initials E.O. Which we do. When I write E.O. or speak of the Evil One it is with full knowledge of the richness of the concept he has given us not only about ourselves but himself, our subtle master who even disdains capitalizing any references to him. "Leave all that to the God worshippers," he tells us. "We have too much work to do, and it is tricky work. Let us protect ourselves by coming to think of Him more and more as the Dummkopf. For that is what He is. We are brighter by far, and of late we are becoming more creative. Remember: It is our universe to gain. It is His to lose. Do not cease calling Him the Dummkopf. Let him live with D.K. as well as I do with E.O. In full candor, I tell you: I no longer desire to be called the Source or the Prince. E.O. is a perfect match for D.K."

9.

Klara and Alois were now, for a brief time, happy. The Finance Watch named Alois to the post of Chief Customs Officer at Passau and if it was only a provisional promotion since he would have to prove himself at the position before the title would be secure, still, it was unheard of—such a high promotion. Klara had the pleasure of knowing she was married to a man of no small powers of achievement.

Adolf benefited as well. They could hardly rent the Braunau house on Linzerstrasse at such quick notice, yet Alois had to be in Passau. So, there were periods, often for weeks at a time, when Alois was living a full day of travel apart from them, and Adolf could loll at night in the big bed with his mother.

The child's joy was profound. If it grieved him that Klara had to put him aside when Alois came home, so did he also learn that such happiness could be quickly recovered since in a day or two, Alois would be off again to Passau.

This agreeable state would last for a year, and then, was often able to continue after the family joined Alois in Passau, for the new territory required him to oversee other towns, and he was away as much as he was back, thereby permitting Adolf to remain within the nocturnal embrace of his mother.

For Alois, the change was not only agreeable, but disturbing. Braunau, after all, had only a few thousand people. Its trade with Germany was limited, its smugglers were petty thieves, and the roads from Munich to Vienna which travelled that route were secondary. Even the tourists who passed through were rarely well-to-do and greedy, nothing to catch a good customs-man's eye. Most of the product was agricultural; weighings were tedious. Braunau was situated nicely on the river Inn, but its architecture presented humdrum buildings all much of the same height, and built in such

scattered fashion as to create no sense of substance to the view. One glance at the town was enough to promise that its dark secrets would be few.

Passau was another matter. It was part of Bavaria, not Austria, but by agreement, Austrian customs were allowed to operate on the German side of the Danube. The buildings that greeted them on the river bank gave intimations of mysterious origins. Passau was large, and had once been ruled by a Prince-Bishop. It had medieval towers, it had castles, it had churches whose foundations had been dug at the onset of the Middle Ages. To Alois it spoke of grandeur, high duty, ancient crimes, torture chambers, by-gone glory, and criminal smugglers with imagination enough to be a match for him.

He was frightened for the first time by the responsibilities of his position. If he had always thought his appearance to be exceptional, a fact he had certified in every mirror available, he also knew that it was due to a manner he had developed over the years. On duty, he offered a personality of forceful calm which offered no peace to the traveler before him. The manner suggested that to manifest this calm, he had put a seal on the lava within himself. That was the way to be—the people you dealt with could feel

the pressure you kept on that one tight lid. Over the years he had put together the kind of official one ought to be by studying the upper-class officers above him—those with university learning, and livid, invaluable duelling scars. They were the ones to model after.

Taking up his command in Passau, he was, however, less than happy. He was reduced to watching himself. While he made few errors, his tone was, he knew, harsh. He even became too demanding to suit himself. Rudeness toward inferiors was reasonable provided the cutting edge of the criticism was accurate—one's subordinates learned correct procedure best under the sting of a whip well-applied, but occasionally some trifle would cause him to go too far. Once he went into a tirade because an underling addressed him as "Herr Official" rather than "Herr Senior Official Hitler." He could sense that his Passau contingent, so much more sophisticated than the junior officers at Braunau, were critical of him. Now and again, when he looked at the force and flow of the Danube from the Customs' bridge, tears would come to his eyes—he would find himself thinking of Braunau, and of the two wives buried in the region, dear carnal-spirited Franzeska, yes, and

for an instant he would also mourn Anna Glasl. No beauty, but she had known what to do under the sheets.

He smoked all the time. His nickname, not known to him, was the Chimney. "In what kind of mood is Herr Chimney today?" an officer might ask another as he came on duty. He knew that the juniors were resentful that he did not let them smoke on their shifts, but he liked the injustice of it. His years had told him that a good officer should be fair for the most part, but must also remain alert to using any small inequality that will irritate inferiors yet bring them down, thereby obliging his junior officers to respect one's presence more.

After Klara moved up to Passau, he also turned hard on the children. He taught Alois, Jr. and Angela not to speak to him unless they were asked a question. If Alois, Jr. was outside, he would put two fingers to his lips and whistle. It was identical to the call he used to summon Luther. In turn, Alois, Jr., fresh-checked, strong, stocky, and with a face like his father's, had driven Klara and Angela into hysterics one afternoon by picking up one of Adi's monumental turds that he had chosen to deposit on the rug in the parlor. When his stepmother and sister screamed, young Alois ran after

them. He was also screaming, but his cries were joyous, all the while that they were crying out in terror and whole indignation at the bottomless mischief, wickedness, and downright future evil of the act. After a while Adi joined in their chorus. He screamed with the rest even as he also galloped right after Alois, Jr., until his big brother, tiring of the sport, tore off an inch of the turd, whirled around and planted it on the tip of Adolf's nose.

That evening Klara told Alois, Senior. The beating that ensued for Junior was monumental, worse than the attack on Luther. The boy could barely crawl off to school the next day. After that, discipline in the house was profound. When Alois came home from his duties, the children made no sound. Klara, unwilling to upset him, and in full remorse for having told him of the fecal deed, was also quiet. The supper was eaten in a silence comparable to the uneasy reverence of staring from a height into an abyss. The smell of Alois' breath, rich with meat and sour from beer, mingled with the after-aroma of the red cabbage.

He would take, then, to the armchair, select one of his long-stem pipes, tamp his tobacco into the bowl with all the heavy authority of the thumb of a man of official importance and proceed to overpower the fireplace with his

own smoke. The two older children went to their room once permission was given. Then, Adi was called forward.

Alois would fondle the three-year-old's head, and proceed with a divided grin—fifty percent affection, fifty percent meanness of spirit—to blow smoke into Adolf's face. He would chuckle when the boy would cough.

As soon as Alois let go of his head, Adolf would smile and run off to the water closet. There he would throw up. The rot of his father's lungs mingled with the smoke. Sometimes, his head bent over the pail, he would remember Alois making love to Klara, and the sounds he had heard became a part of the lurches of his esophagus and his sobs of regurgitation. He was hoping that Klara would come to his aid.

She did not. It was the only year of her life when her feelings toward Adolf were as much at odds as her fear of Alois and her desire for him. She did not dare to help Adolf at such times. She sensed that the greatest provocation to her husband would be to comment on the volume of his smoke as if all the worst expectations of failure at Passau were quieted by the clouds he could extract from his pipe.

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

She took him to the doctor only to be reassured that this medical phenomenon was hardly uncommon and such boys often grew up to be men with large families—"The good God, dear lady, gave more than enough to each testicle."

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

"Some boys with that condition, such a minor condition, are sometimes active, highly active. That's all."

Kind words could not soothe Klara. The missing testicle was one more stain on the Poelzl family. Her sister Johanna was a hunchback and, according to Alois, half-mad; a first cousin was an imbecil. Not to speak of all the dead brothers and the dead sisters. No, there was not enough of Alois' constitution in Adolf, she decided, none of the father's strength that he had passed on to Alois, Junior. This was also her fault. She had loved Alois on

the night that Adolf had been conceived, but only on that night, and in a way—was it unholy?—such a night!

Now, she could say that she loved her husband more, and indeed on a night in June, after a year and a half at Passau, she loved him even more for he told her what he had learned just that afternoon—his promotion would now be permanent! Indeed, in a half year, he would be transferred to serve as Chief Customs Officer in Linz, the capital of the province, the most important place you could find in the Service between Salzburg and Vienna.

On that night, they conceived another child. Perhaps there was never an hour when she loved Alois more or wanted another son so much. Adi, little Adi with his one testicle, now terrified her—a horror had come into her soul. She which waited in dread for what was yet to come. Nor did she dare to to believe any longer that Adi would live, would certainly live, no, they needed another child, and the new one must belong to Alois as much as to herself.

10

Edmund was born on March 24, 1894, a few weeks before Adolf was five. Klara had told him that he would soon have a brother or sister so he was ready to play with the baby so soon as it appeared. He expected, however, a child about half his age in size, a living creature ready to speak, and certainly able to listen. He was aghast, therefore, on the approach to Klara's bed when he saw no more than a swaddling on her breast with a face as wizened as an old orange.

Having been sent the night before to a neighbor's house where he experienced the discomfort of trying to sleep on a small bed between Angela and Alois, Jr. (who kept pinching each other over his intervening body) he knew that unhappy changes were coming. If this perception only lived in his

chest with apprehension, it turned into his first large sorrow when, next day, he rushed forward to his mother's bed and the midwife put out a hand as large as his face and said, "Stay back. Don't hurt the baby."

What made it worse was that his mother could do no more than offer a pale smile, and put a hand on his head so light in its touch that he could feel no love. Tears came to his eyes.

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

"Will he talk to me?"

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

For weeks, he could not get close to Klara. There had been a time when he would have the same conversation with his mother each morning.

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

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

"I think you are the most beautiful."

She would hug him to her breast. It was only a year since she had stopped feeding him and he missed that pleasure. Now, he would gorge on the cream puffs she often prepared for dessert, indeed, would keep eating them until Alois Junior would complain audibly if Klara was present, or in her absence would crack a knuckle across his head. Klara, prey to new uneasiness at how little attention she cared to give to Adi these days, would defend his right to the cream puffs. "He is so little, Alois," she would say, "he needs them more than you."

Klara, however, was often too tired to cook. The temporary servant made cream puffs that tasted like sour milk. Besides, Klara was feeding Edmund all the time, or so it seemed to Adolf. He felt a recurring pang, a new sorrow so prevalent that it began to blend with the sad undertone of the church bells in Passau, so many, so frequent. In his ears, it sounded as if she was always feeding Edmund even when the infant was asleep.

Now, when he tried to ask the familiar question, she would laugh unhappily. "Oh, I am a tired woman," she would say, "I am not beautiful, Dolfchen. But your sister Angela will be."

Adi did not agree. Angela was undependable. Angela could pinch him cruelly for no reason that he could see. She could be nice, but she was treacherous. "You are the most beautiful," he would say, and his mother would shake her head.

Meanwhile, Alois was away most of the time in Linz. One week after Edmund's birth, Alois had made the transfer to take up his new and important duties. Since Linz was fifty miles east of Passau, it was a trip long enough trip to keep Alois from returning to his household more often than once or twice a month. All the weight of his tobacco, his heavy thumb, his strong voice so able to vibrate through Adolf's body was not often present now to stifle the air and send a quiver through the boy's bowels, no, the house was empty during the day, Angela and Junior were away at school, and Adi could be alone with his mother and the infant. But Klara still had little time for him. The loss was an insult. And then, at night, he no longer could count on his cot. Often, Alois, Jr., would take it, and Adi did not always like to move over to Angela's bed. She would tickle his body everywhere and sometimes tell him that he did not smell good. "So, your breath is rotten," she would say. Often, he would put a blanket on the floor to escape her.

Left this much alone, he was afraid to go outside and play. The cries and yells boys would make on the street sounded fearsome to him. He knew he had to be brave; he did not wish to be. Not particularly. He spent his time looking at the illustrations in a book his father had bought about the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. How he would like to be a brave soldier! How afraid he felt.

Alois, Jr. solved the question at Klara's bidding. One afternoon he came home after class, pulled Adolf out of the house, then led him to a field where a number of boys too young for school were playing at war.

Alois, Jr. studied the group for a few minutes before deciding that the leader of the two small armies was a big stout five-year-old. "This is my brother," Alois told him, "and if you let anyone hit Adolf, you will hear from me." He tapped the boy on the arm hard enough to leave a memory, and departed.

When Adolf came home that evening, Alois, Jr. took him aside. "From now on," he said, "I eat the cream puff's first. As many as I want. Don't try to cry, momma's boy."

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

Next day, he wandered over to the game by himself. He was more afraid of Alois, Jr.'s derision if he did not go, than of the blows he might take in the battle.

Actually, there had been little enough punishment in the first day's ongoing battles. The fat boy had certainly taken good care, shielding him with his body from every assault on their redoubt. Besides, the game had been simple, and it had not taken Adolf long to grasp its principles. The boys had divided into two teams who took turns charging at each other. When they met, a game of tag resulted. Once tagged, you were dead. Such melees lasted but a minute or two and then they would then count the losses. Once in a while, given the clamor of the charge, somebody might get knocked down. It even happened to Adolf when his leader was waylaid by two boys from the other team. Before he could take account, he was lying on the ground with dirt up his nose. Someone on the other side had given him a rude shove in the back.

He did not cry. It took an absolute effort of his will not to make a sound, and then he had to negotiate with himself once again not to weep when he saw that no one was applauding his new-found stoicism. To the contrary, his team was now rallying for a charge on the other's bastion. Still, he did not cry even if his feelings were as bruised as the scrape on his cheek and his knee.

He managed to get through the next hour until dark. He avoided every contest. He had discovered that he was quicker than the enemy soldiers he could flee from whenever they tried to tag him. Then, to his delight, he tagged one Frenchman in the next raid his side made. They were resuming the Franco-Prussian war of 1870, and he was in the good German army.

On the second day, his face was in the dirt again. More boys were present, perhaps as many as twenty, which came to a total beyond the highest numbers he could count. Action was everywhere and it was hard to dodge the rush.

He hated being knocked down. The fat boy was always rueful about it and begged him not to tell his brother. Adi had the pleasure of patting him

on the back and telling him there was no cause for fear, not a word would he say.

That night he could hardly sleep. The others played like fools, but he felt already that he more than they did. He was thinking that in time to come, the fat boy, Heinrich, would be his lieutenant, and he, as captain, would make the rules. He was not certain of that, but still, the way they fought was stupid. He knew better. He was in love with the game. He played it every day. For the first time in his life he was aware of another presence as beautiful as his mother and as awesome as his father.

Indeed, he did prevail. A season went by, but he thought up a better game. The battlefield was wrong, he had decided. War was not two armies running at each other. War was also surprise, was trickery. War was maneuver! (While he did not know the word as yet, he had arrived at the concept without our help.)

He was five years old, but he was able to convince his new playmates that they needed another kind of battlefield. He proposed a hill in the next meadow. Each army (whether five or six boys—once in a while, seven or

eight) could group on opposite slopes. Then they would not be visible to each other until one side crossed the summit.

Once he had convinced the other boys to a new site and a new mode of battle, he soon conceived amendments to the rules. Each side, he argued, must charge up the hill in a two-pronged attack. If a total of six boys were on each side, then each army must divide into four soldiers and two. If the attackers who charged up with four men, met only two to face them, those two were automatically captured. No tagging was necessary. (He still detested being knocked down.) If, on the other hand, four attackers met four defenders, then the attackers lost.

But improvements had to be made. He could see that his innovations had dampened the fire of the game. When the flank which had four boys coming over the hill met four defenders, the encounter was no more than a flat-out surrender. So, tagging, to his dislike, had to be reinstated. This brought up the beginnings of a formal debate in the open-field legislature of these five-year-olds for he wished to insert a special amendment. The captain on each side—he had become, as foreseen, the German Captain (and Heinrich was his lieutenant)—must not be captured. The leader must not

even be touched. With preternatural eloquence, he made his major point.

"The highest officer must always be respected."

He had had to argue long to gain this point. Only a few of the troops were that ready to change the rules, and he had to find allies one by one. (It did not hurt that stout, sturdy Heinrich was always by his side.) In time, he prevailed. He had come to amaze himself at how well he could speak.

11

It may not be agreeable to disturb at this point the modest tenor of our narrative, but I must still intrude at this point. These war games are the first occasions in Adolf's boyhood when I was instructed to take an active interest in his development.

Let it also be understood that the interjection cannot be brief. Our investiture of humans is considerably more complex than their limited view of the matter. The everyday understanding of the average man or woman merely underlines an intrinsic naivete on these matters. The basic premise is false. We do not seize people with Satanic entrapment, then keep them eternally as our vassals. To use a crude and contemporary American example, Avis versus Hertz or McDonald's vying with Burger King comes

closer to the mark. The Dummkopf is usually in competition with the Evil One when it comes to investing powers in a client. When the man or woman has potential, sole possession can almost never occur. Manipulation and counter-manipulation can go on for years, and rarely does our side or the other realize victory. Not even over one disputed human! (Indeed, after a series of battles, any particular soul that is actually captured whole by one side or the other often bears more resemblance to a victim than a prize.)

There are two cardinal elements that determine much of the contest. The first is the individuality of the particular human who is invaded, or infiltrated, or invested, or damned, cursed, or blessed. Given the readiness and/or recalcitrance of the souls we are doing our best to develop for ourselves, most putative clients prove of varying importance to us. Those who are most difficult to approach are often the most valuable in their service.

Conversely, those people who are easier to enter are often the least useful. It takes little to traduce a drunk or an addict. We can polish what is left of their charm, we can decimate the confidence of their families, if mother, father, et al, seem in the main to prefer to live in the hegemony of the

Dummkopf, but all this is easy work. There are small gains for our ultimate ends (which are, of course, to take, indeed, to capture human nature and bring it through a transmogrification from the vision of the D.K. to the eventual project—yet for me to name!—of the E.O.)

So the truism that the difficult is more valuable in the end than the easy is countermanded by the second essential element in the contest—which is the differing economies of Divine and Satanic energy.

I can allow that even in the higher cadres of devils and angels we hardly know who has more time or strength to spend on a specific contest although I would suspect, however, that the Dummkopf is considerably more powerfully endowed (and vastly more wasteful) whereas our E.O. seems obsessed (to those of us who must follow his instructions) with the importance of economy itself and its rude budgetary demands. The E.O. is always obliging us to forecast what the expenditures in effort will be when attempting to bring in a putative client. The notion of hard, thereby, is restored to its intrinsic difficulty. To spend years on a promising client who eventually resists us more successfully than we had anticipated is not only a budgetary blemish on the record, but also a general loss. To prevail, the

E.O. is always instructing us, we must choose our targets with more acumen and instinct than the angels. (Let me here repeat the better term for them—the Cudgels. Angels are not necessarily angelic.)

Over the millennia, if not the eons, our E.O. has evolved certain principles from which he rarely diverges. (This assumption of gender is for convenience's sake.) We are always instructed to remain alert to any approaching copulation which promises high heat, God-daring practices, and low intent for that can offer us early investiture in the just-conceived embryo. Done well enough, we start with an advantage over the D.K. on many a newly-conceived human.

Of course, our targets are obvious. Rarely do we fail to attend the couplings of rich and powerful people. Nor do we ignore the occasional wretchedly poor couple whose rites partake of incest, or, to the observers, are attended by angels. The latter is a demanding task—it is hard to slice through a blockade of angels. Yet it seems—I speak here for myself—as if the E.O. has never been able to accept his failure to be present in the hour that Jesus Christ was conceived. The result: He was soon visited with a half-brother whose powers were at least comparable to his own.

Fortunately for us, Jesus proved to be another Son much at odds with His Father. Jehovah, indeed, was often as incensed with the rebelliousness of the good son as with the powers of disruption and superior wit of the older (given our Prince's capture of so many of the forces of the night.)

Nonetheless, we consider ourselves fortunate that the covenant between the Dummkopf and Jesus is as full of oxymorons as the Vatican itself, not to mention Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Judaism, Lutheranism, Sufism. But why go on? Whether the real situation is that the E.O. wars against the Lord with a small but well-integrated army, or can only muster a guerrilla force against a behemoth, the prevailing fact of our existence as devils and demons is that we live within the parameters of an ongoing mean-spirited budget. You may believe that our projects are chosen with discretion.

For example, we are present and usually active (as previously stated) at the copulations more likely to satisfy the needs of the near future—that is, the next half-century. Yet, paradoxically, the E.O. does not invest that much interest in the early development of children. "It is too soon to tell," he will often remark, and sometimes adds: "The work we have done in the last hundred years has done much to shape the young without our need to

intervene,"—a reference to the prodigious conflict of interests in the whole of society now.

That is the prevailing set of remarks he offers when we wish to pursue certain children. Almost always, our petition is not granted. "In the early years of life," the E.O. is forever reminding us, "there are too many accidents, frequent surprises, and relatively little structure in the character forming." The prevailing judgment is that it is enough for us to keep a modest but ongoing record of the main events of those families in which we are interested. "In the first few years," he will also remark, "a child is a study in the need for love and the development of the will. Since the D.K. has large resources for the supply of both, and is relative indiscriminate in the way he metes it out, we can rest on our oars. Love and the development of will are so naturally at odds with each other that we rely on the D.K. and his Cudgels to mess it up beautifully without our intervention. This is particularly true with Catholics. To capture a child's philosophy too early is to ensure later rebellion or severe meanness of spirit."

Indeed, his general strictures are as follows: No intervention until the age of three (except in the most unusual cases, and even there, as late as the

nineteenth century, an extraordinary child of that age is always in danger of being carried off abruptly by one grievous disease or another.) From three to the age of seven, avoid any intervention which has no specific purpose—a most important tenet for any devil seeking to invest some of his random talents, or worse, his proclivities in a particular boy or girl. We had, in effect, to argue our case much like a lawyer before a highly critical judge.

After the age of seven, it was easier. The E.O. looked upon the next five or six years as—indeed, he termed it this—the Age of Clods. “They are now encountering the world in its most basic form—the school years. Nearly all of them rush to habit, routine, and stupidity as their forms of insulation. These are the years when the average ego begins to take shape in all of its readiness to lie, mis-remember, distort and forget—all in order to keep the young ego in some readiness to support the ongoing project, oneself. There is no need to pick up any of them at this time, not unless they are, against all likelihood, possessed already of incredible potential for us.”

Our hunt began with adolescence. The E.O. made it more than clear: that now we were at the first promising stage of intervention. The D.K. was here ready to invest relatively large resources in very young men and women

who hardly knew what to do with their sudden intrush of increased will and their desire to procreate. Most promising targets were now open to us. Only in the most dubious situation did we have to argue the case for a serious effort of investiture.

I have proceeded this far into the topography (or do I really speak of the architecture?) of our processes of selection because it was altogether out of our normal standards of practice that the E.O. should instruct me directly to pay strong attention, and at once, to the five-year-old Adolf Hitler.

Now, having been present (by proxy) at his conception, it had been a matter of course to keep my several cohorts (of minor devils and ready-for-quick-attack demons) on the quick concerning the Hitler family. We did not intervene, but we did keep abreast of their activities. We used to call it our milk-runs, a term we used long before it was adopted by U.S. Air Force pilots in the Second World War. Any one of our minor devils could pass by a house at night and ingest the small storms, inertias, and joys of the previous day or week or month (depending on the frequency of the milk-runs in that town or county or province assigned to us.)

I knew the history of the Hitler family, therefore, in the years since Adolf had been born, at least in such detail as it was imparted to me by the separate devils who kept track of the hundred or more of our potential projects in that region of Austria. If what my agents offered was as modest as the narrative I have presented until now, it sufficed. At the time, in reviewing Adolf's early years, I confess that I saw no large promise in him. He was outrageously in need of love and damnably vulnerable. The odds were that he would either perish early, or creep through life with a crippled ego. At least, so I would have judged it if not for the possibility that the E.O. had been as present at his conception as Gabriel at the Christ's. If that was not definitively a likelihood, still it was never to be ignored!--even on most hard-working nights I had his family included on the milk-run.

That set of sentiments were overturned altogether on the day that Alois, Jr. dragged him off to the war game. The E.O. intervened. I received a direct message: "Take care of Adi. Stiffen his spine. We will lose him altogether if we don't take steps."