

carcass down in the bottom of the divide and cover him with mud and leaves, then branches, and finally, place a large hollowed-out branch over the body. If necessary, he would weigh it down with stones.

That had been Alois' plan. He had thought through every detail. He had liked the logic of such a burial—so much better than being choked by clods of earth, his dog was not a damned potato!—but now he saw that Luther would not move on. And he, Alois, regrettably, was no longer strong enough to carry him up and down this trail for the next half mile. Therefore, it must be here. Afterward, he would go back to the farm, get a pick and a shovel and dig a grave in this copse, which was, in fact, a green and decent place, enclosed by a half-circle of trees and some scrub brush, yes, it could be done here. Poor Luther.

So Alois turned the sitting dog on his back, looked into his face which had sickened in the last few minutes as directly and recognizably as the face of any old creature whose liver is rushing to the grave ahead of him, a sad old face to be certain, and Alois unbuckled the flap of the sheath that held his hunting knife, laid the point of the blade at the center of the arch of Luther's rib-cage and pushed it in to the hilt. The dog's face contorted, the sound of his

expiring came out of him and it was hurtful to Alois' ear. For it was much more human than he had expected. Then, the dog's face passed through many expressions. His look settled finally into the face it would hold for the first few hours of its death before all began to decompose. Luther now looked like a young dog again, and some indefinable self-esteem had returned as if he had always been more beautiful than anyone had realized, and could have become a great warrior if it had been asked of him when he was young, yes, he did look like a warrior as his features composed into this near-final pride.

It was a better death than he had hoped for, Alois decided. All the same, he felt hollow. He was pleased with his acumen, he had made the right choice, but he was startled by the changes he had seen in the last moments of the dog.

Alois had six and a half years left to live, yet on this afternoon in the forest he passed a junction on the road to death and so he wondered afterward and often whether he was a better man or a worse one because of this commitment to dispose of Luther in person, and take the pains to bury him carefully afterward.

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In the course of a walk that Luther and he had been taking through the woods, the dog lay down to rest and died peacefully. That is what Alois told the family. Klara was the only one to suspect that more than this might have happened. For, on the same night, perhaps six hours after the dog's demise, Alois made love to her with a good deal of vigor. It was more than she had enjoyed in a while.

He had had a variety of insect bites from his second trip to the woods with pick and shovel to dig a grave for Luther. It had taken a while, therefore, to salve the bites and remove the stingers. By the time she completed her ministrations, they were both ready to make love. While she had no basis of

comparison, she was ready nonetheless to think that there might not be another man of Alois' age, only one year shy of sixty, who was so vigorous, this Uncle Alois, her man, a good man.

They had an agreeable few nights. Alois was experiencing what can only be called a transformation. He was loving her. That can occur in a marriage. Often, it is necessary. That is because most husbands and wives use the major part of their time together in excrementitious exchanges. Indeed, that is why they married in the first place. As the Maestro presents it, they needed to be able to exercise this petty cruelty at any moment to a dependable person who was close at hand. This was certainly the case when they were terrified of the rest of the world, but even the worst marriage allowed one species of magic. The fierce upbraidings one would have liked to present to the world (but did not dare), could now be delivered through critical judgments on one's mate. All that spiritual excrement! In marriage, it is there to be traded back and forth, a practice which mediocre participants find much more to their need than trying to contain it fecklessly inside.

Ergo, marriage is a workable institution—especially for dreadful people. Yet, it can also serve men and women who may be seen as average, or slightly

better than average. Like our Klara and Alois. And strange shifts do occur. Few of these reversals are permanent, but while they last, aeration is offered to what has been an airless union.

So, we are always alert for signs of a fresh breath in the relations of married people. We can use these shifts to shore up the worst of marriages for a period—should that suit our purpose.

This was not the occasion here. The shift in attitude was of their choice, and it caught me by surprise. Intoxicated by the full moon and the June air that came up at night from the fields, Alois lay beside her in a state of trust—he knew her fingers would make no painful mistake as she took care of removing each stinger—there were so many more of them these days given this lush late spring, but she was deft, she was purposeful, and he was at peace lying beside her. For this little while. Klara was a presence he had never been able to know—a mother hovering over him.

Night after night, their ritual took place. He even became so careless on occasion as to work without the veil. He was not seeking to be stung, he had, after all, acquired the skill to make fewer mistakes. Still, it is fair to say he did

suffer a few needless attacks, but they enabled her fingers to play their delicate movements on his brow, the cheeks of his face, the meat of his hands.

Metamorphoses do disrupt old habits of the mind. Sometimes, Alois felt as if his brains were cracking and creaking. He was entertaining ideas he did not believe could belong to him. He actually began to consider whether the pain from these bites was a means of paying for his sins. Just supposing—for in no other way was he ready to assume that he believed in sinning—but could it be that these little wounds were a way of accounting for bad things a man had done? Could it be a system?

What a notion! Up to the moment he had this thought, he had been enjoying some decent sleep. It came from the knowledge that full-chested Spartaner was out there below occupying a new dog-house built for him on the day after Luther's death. That had been no small task, but necessary. Not only was a guard dog entitled to his own sense of shelter, especially in a new habitat, but Alois' handiwork had established close feelings between the hound and himself.

New ideas, however, are too full of paradox. So, Alois twisted in the premise that guilt might be real. It gave too much dignity to all the weaklings

who huddled in churches. They walked around with a stone in their stomachs and a bigger one up their ass. But now, he couldn't scorn them any longer. For he had committed incest. If he had made love to all three of his step-sisters, that was not incest, no, not unless their father was his father. But had he not known that Johann Nepomuk was his father? Of course, he had always known it although he had chosen not to. It had been the sort of thought he had always managed to chase to the rear of his mind. Now it had come to the forefront. If Klara was not the daughter of Johann Poelzl, then she had to be his child ("Sie ist hier!") That was a fact as sharp as the knife that had gone into Luther. What if there was a God who knew about things like this?

In common with most humans, however, he had the mental force to sweep his worst thoughts away. He was hardly ready to relinquish the soulful pleasures present each night in the wake of the needles removed from his flesh.

On these June evenings, his pains would resonate within. He did not look to divert any of his modest agonies by searching for happy thoughts. Instead, he was there, ready to accept the message that came to him from this mysterious province of pain. To Alois, it was a species of music, replete with

new sensations for the mind and heart, full of its own clarity even as it spoke to his flesh. He laid himself open to the soaring voice of each pain, as rich in amplitude as a choral group. In truth, he was exhibiting the saintliness of a sinner.

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Too little is understood about these matters. Saintliness is present in everyone, even among the worst of the worst. While I would not characterize Alois in this manner, he is looking, nonetheless, to pick up a morsel of beatitude at small cost to himself. He does not know that offering one's skin to the rhapsodies of small torture is but another means of avoiding one's fears of divine retribution. Since he has come much too near to acknowledging his incest, the upsurge of saintly sentiments was soon replaced. By morning, he was thinking like a policeman again. When an officer of the law detects a vice in himself, he knows enough to start looking for its presence in others. Soon enough, he began to worry about Alois-Junior and Angela. Was there

something unworthy going on in that quarter? He did not like the tone of the conflict that was developing between the boy and the girl over who could or should ride Ulan.

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

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

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

"I am not."

"You are. Admit it."

"No. It is simple," she said, "I do not want to get up on Ulan. What for? If I learn, and am good at it, what then? You will still keep the horse to yourself. I will have to beg for rides."

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

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

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

"I am not."

"Yes, that is it."

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

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

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

Alois-Senior overheard this conversation. As he approached the barn, he was in time to witness young Alois' reaction. The boy was unable to stop laughing.

At this moment, Alois told himself that maybe it was for the best if the boy did spend all that time out there riding the hills, yes, better for all if he carried on with some farm-girl, rather than fooling about with Angela. She was not even a half-sister. She was a full sister.

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

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

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

This upset Alois. She was too artful at keeping her distance. He certainly did not approve of female sophistication in girls as young as Angela.

The manner, indeed, by which she drew in her hips. Where had she learned to do that?

Klara had no such concerns about Angela. It was Alois-Junior who offended her most. Since they could not send the boy back to the Poelzl farm, they must do something with him here. After all, she had learned one simple lesson from life. It was that most situations were not comfortable. So, a poor solution to a problem could sometimes prove better than no solution. She had learned as much from her father and mother. If the Poelzl children kept dying, her parents had managed at least to love the few who were left.

While she could not even bring herself to like Alois-Junior, and no solution was in sight, still she must decide upon one. Her husband was not going to plant potatoes again next summer. That was obvious. And putting in beets might prove just as unsuccessful. His bees, however, had been acceptable. Perhaps they could do something in that direction.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"He will always be wild," said Alois.

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

"I must think about this."

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

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

Alois went back to his books. Over the next couple of afternoons, he dredged up some of the history, culture and ancient traditions of apiculture from the several tomes he had collected on the subject, and soon decided that he would give a small lecture to the family. It would be designed for Junior, of course. Something like his expatiations in the taverns of Linz and Fischlham, but better, worthy of Der Alte.

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

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

He was prepared to give whole funds of new information at the midday Sunday dinner. Get into the Greeks and the Romans. Since he rarely spoke at such times, as if to rebuke Klara for spending the morning in church, the meal was generally consumed under the overarching profundity of his silences, but

now it was his sense that a full exposition would impress Alois-Junior, and the number of countries involved might be enough to stimulate his respect. He would have stories to tell about the Bassari in Senegal, the famine in Kilingula, the Mbuti of the Ituri forest and the honey hunters in southern Sudan.

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

Yet, when it came to deploying such erudition over the table, he decided to give the lecture up soon after he embarked on it. Perhaps he had crammed too much knowledge into himself. Klara kept nodding with approval, but whether it was for his words, or the apple strudel she had made, he could not really say, and Angela kept nodding with an expression that spoke of school-house miseries. The three younger children were half asleep, and Alois-Junior, who had shown a bit of interest, began to wilt.

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

What a mistake to have given that lecture at a midday meal. It was obvious. When the boy was eating, he did not like to think. Could he be just like his father?

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

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

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

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

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

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

He had now arrived at the obstacle that stood between them like a fence. Yesterday, for the first time, he had taken a jump with Ulan. It had been a hedge, and not that low. It could have thrown both of them. But he had known. He had to take the jump. And he did. This was not the same, and yet in one way it was. He would have to do it again.

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

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

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

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

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

"I must tell the truth. It is."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Well, you are always getting stung."

"That happens. In this work, it will happen."

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

Now, Alois lost his temper, that valuable but dangerous temper he was always schooling himself to keep locked within. Now, there was no help. His temper was out of the gates.

"Boy," he said to his son, "you are not equipped to go out in the world. You have no schooling. You have no money. And you think you will be able

to talk your way into money? That is nonsense. All you can know is how to get your farmgirls to flap their tits at you and spread their legs. Why? Maybe they believe they will get lucky and pick up a husband as lazy as themselves. Maybe they will, and then I will have to look at grandchildren as ugly as your girlfriends, and you will have to work on her father's farm."

He had gone too far. He knew it. The fear he had been secreting was as loose by now as his temper. It had been a large mistake to speak his mind.

Alois-Junior was infuriated. To speak of the children he might have as ugly—outrageous. "Yes," he said to his father, "I have seen you as a farmer. Your knowledge is out-dated. Even Johann Poelzl, stupid as he is, knows how to farm. You don't."

"So, I am now stupid? You are the one to speak of such a matter when you flunked out of school. And then you lied about it. What a stupidity! I have lived with this foul and rotten news for too long. I can come to only one conclusion. The answer to why you lied to us and tried to write a counterfeit letter is that you are indeed an idiot."

"Yes," said Alois, Junior, "and you are different. You have beautiful children. Do you know why?" The boy's breath was coming so quickly that

his voice went up in pitch. He was all but singing his way (high-pitch) through the next words, "Yes, you find your women, you fuck them, and then you forget them. And my mother dies."

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

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If young Alois had been a client, I would have convinced him not to get up. His father would have been saddled with a guilt the boy could have ridden for a year. But since I had no control in this matter, Junior rushed at Senior, grabbed his legs, and, in turn, threw him to the ground. Turn for turn.

Knowing his life was at a crossroads, he made the error of helping his father stand up. He had to. For he knew an incommensurable terror in the immediate moment after upending Alois-Senior. There was his father prostrate and looking like an old man. So Junior picked him up.

To be knocked down was bad enough, but to be assisted to his feet by a youth with an open pimple on his face and the beginnings of a ridiculous little

brown mustache? Having sprouted but a few lank hairs, that mustache was an insult all by itself. He began to beat upon Junior until the boy fell to his knees, whereupon Alois kept pummeling him further even as his son lay on the ground.

Klara had come out of the house by now. She begged Alois to stop. She wailed. And that was just as well. For now, Junior did not move. He lay motionless on the ground and Klara kept screaming.

She believed she was shrilling for the dead. "Oh, God," she managed to cry out, "I cannot believe what You have allowed."

I saw a rare opening. She was without her Guardian Angel—not a Cudgel near. Angels often flee from people who scream too loudly—they know at such moments how close the man or woman is to us, and they feel outnumbered. For devils rush in to attend such outcries. To add to the tumult, there was Adi giving vent to the most penetrating set of shrieks.

And Klara was vulnerable. I saw my moment. I reached her heart, I touched her thoughts. She believed Alois-Junior was dead, and his father would spend the rest of his days in a prison. It was her fault, all her fault. She had told the father to get close to the boy even when she knew better. Since

the sum of her experience had told her that the majority of one's prayers to God were not answered, she prayed now directly to us, she called upon the devil, she implored him. Only the pious can believe the devil has such powers! "Save the boy's life," she implored, "and I will be in your debt."

So we had her for the future. Not as a client. Merely attached to a bit of her soul. Unhappily, these changes are never whole and immediate. But at least, we had entrance.

She was a true gain. When Alois-Junior began to stir, she was convinced that she had received a direct response. She felt the full responsibility of an oath. Unlike so many with whom we traffic, she was the essence of responsibility. She would never betray an oath. In consequence, she felt damned on the spot. And she was full of grief at the pains she must be rousing now in God. What a nun she would have made!

Our most significant gain was with Adi. He had seen his father beat young Alois into the ground. He had heard his father utter a groan remarkable for the fullness of its woe. Then as Junior began to stir, Adi saw his father stagger off into the woods, his stomach heaving and Klara's apple strudel now extruding from his nostrils. In consequence, unable to breathe, Alois felt as if

he must evacuate a cannon ball from his esophagus. The midday dinner was surging up and down in his gullet.

That is time enough to spend on Alois-Senior. My attention was for Adi. The boy had voided everything, urine, feces, food. He was half out of his senses with fear that his father would return and beat his head into the ground. I could not ignore so direct an opportunity for my skills. I was ready to engrave this beating into Adi's memory. Again and again, I returned the same images to his mind, until—given his certainty that it would all be done to him as well when his father returned, I managed to brand his mind with a clear image of himself lying close to death from the beating his father had given him. He not only ached in his limbs, and his head hurt. He felt as if he had just risen from the very ground where he had been beaten down.

In later years, at the height of his power, Adolf Hitler would actually believe that he was the one who received the beating. On many a night during the Second World War, he would tell the tale to his secretaries and to his military adjutants as they sat at table after evening mess. He would be eloquent. "Of course, I deserved a whipping," he would say. "I gave real trouble to my father. My mother, I recall, was distraught. She loved me so,

my dear mother." He would remember himself as being just as brave as Alois-Junior, yes, he had stood up to his father. "I think that is why he had to beat me. I must have deserved it. I said terrible things to him, words so awful I cannot repeat them. Probably, I deserved this good beating. My father was a fine strong decent man, one Austrian who was a real German. Still, I do not know that a father should ever beat a son so close to death—it was too close."

Yes, he could tell stories about his childhood to bring tears to the eyes, and pure sorrow to the hearts of all who listened. It had not come all at once, this immaculate bedrock of a lie I had fixed into those folds of the brain where memory is stored. My art was to replace a true memory by a false one and that can be equal in its exactitudes to removing an old tattoo and substituting a new one.

Moreover, this fiction would enable me to develop his future incapacity to tell the truth. By the time his political career began, he was in command of an elaborate artwork of lies ready to support even his smallest need. He could shade the truth by a hair or, equally, subvert it altogether.

Working properly on a client is, as I say, a slow process, and it took many a year to convert this particular scoring of his psyche over to a full

installation. The grown man would have been ready to die in the belief that he was telling the truth when he declared that his father had almost pounded him to death. From time to time, I still took pains to reinforce the keel of this one absolute lie. It was worth it. For the Maestro often pointed to my work on this matter: "There is no better way to usurp the services of a high political leader," he would tell us, "than by this direct method. They must not be able to distinguish certain lies from the truth. They are of considerable use to us. Ideally, then, they will not even know that they are lying."

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By nightfall, several events of exceptional nature were initiated by Alois-Junior and that was as soon as he realized that his father had headed off to Fischlham.

While the tavern served no drinks on Sunday, there was a house on the outskirts of town where you could buy a stein of beer in the pantry.

Alois had never visited before. It had been altogether beneath his notion of what a reputable retired official of the Crown might consider reasonable leisure activity, but this was one of the few times in his life when he had to have a drink. His knee throbbing from the first fall, his head aching from the

discharge of his rage, and his heart sore, he hobbled across the fields into the sunset and took in close to a gallon of beer.

Nobody had to help him home. There were offers, but he rejected them—it was still early enough in the evening for the sky to retain some light and with a full sense of his own dignity, he made it up over the first hill out of Fischlham, and almost up the second before he lay down in a pasture to sleep. He awoke a couple of hours later with his head not six inches away from a monumental cow flop the size of a derby hat.

His hair was clean. He had not rolled into it. If he had believed in Providence, he would have offered thanks, but it was just as well he did not, for by this time—it was after ten—decently rested by his impromptu slumber, he came up over the last hill, and saw the embers of a fire not thirty feet from his front door.

There had been no wind that night, which certainly saved the house, but no more than ash remained of his three Langstroth boxes, nor any sign of bees except for those poor tens of thousands who had been roasted to a microscopic crisp, as well as a startling sense of gloom clinging to the walls of his home.

Klara met him. If she had been weeping, she was, by now, dry-eyed, and as crisp as the husks and butts of the hive colonies. A harsh odor arose from the last black lees of the honey.

Alois now knew a part of his wife's heart had been soured forever by the fact that on this, the worst of all nights, he had found a way to drink so much beer. He reeked of it from six feet away.

Detail by detail, she told him what had happened. The boy had ridden off on the horse, and then he had come back when they were all asleep, or pretending to be—she would admit that they were by now afraid of him. He had gathered together his clothing, tied it in a sack, attached it to the saddle of the horse and had gone off again, allowing them to breathe.

Yet, just half an hour ago, safe as they hoped themselves to be now in the beginning of sleep, Spartaner began to bay, and howled with such ferocity that she almost left her bed to investigate. But then he yelped once and made noise no more, he just whined a little—like a puppy. And the horse neighed as young Alois rode off again. A minute later, the flames had begun. She had known almost at once what was happening. Adi, as alive as a deer in flight, kept running between the house and the beehives. "He has set them all on fire.

With kerosene," cried Adi. "I know. It is like it was before." And he was laughing as much as he was weeping, not certain whether this was a terrible event or another glorious act of incineration.

She had not been able, Klara informed him, to put out the blaze. She and Angela had done what they could, which was to throw pails of water on the walls of the house closest to the flames. More than that would have required the presence of a man.

They had even heard the last sounds of Ulan's hooves as he trotted away. Nor would the boy be back. Had he left any way for himself to return? She did not think so.

Worst of all—Spartaner had been poisoned. In all the hubbub, they did not look at him too closely that night, but by morning he was obviously ill, and then, to make matters worse, he did not even die until the end of the week.

BOOK X

TO HONOR AND TO FEAR

-1-

A letter came in August. After that, they did not hear from Alois-Junior again. In the course of a trip to Linz, Alois-Senior learned that Ulan had been sold to a horse-trader for half of his value, and that might be enough for Junior to live in Vienna until he could find work.

On many a late afternoon, Alois-Senior would walk down the trail that was used on the night when the boy set out for the road to Linz. Senior would come to an old stump, now his favorite seat in the forest, and there he would listen to the birds.

At rest on these amputated remains of what once had been a noble oak, he would mourn the bees he had lost, and dream that he had come back early

enough on Sunday night to chase the horse and boy through the forest until brought to a halt by the pangs in his lungs.

This fantasy accompanied a long summer of mourning for all he could name as lost, and then he would grieve even more for what he could not name.

So the summer passed. He hired a man to assist him in mowing their pastures. He baled his cuttings, and sold the hay in Fischlham. With no hives left to worry about, he had no fear now of swarming, no calculations to be made of how much feed to give in the after-season to the colonies, no further examinations of the health of the hives, no further estimates as to how many old bees had died but were not yet replaced by new-born, no tremors at the thought of mouse invasions, no need to consider whether he should put up netting to keep birds away, nor any need to weigh the boxes, no more pondering whether enough pollen had been collected by the foragers to provide them with protein for the winter, and no Queen to locate. There were not even any Langstroths to repaint. No records to be brought up to date. He was done.

Sitting by the stump, there came an afternoon by the end of summer when the more caustic tastes of mourning finally passed through some vent of

the mind, and he said to himself, "I am relieved that I do not have to worry about my bees any more. I loved them, but their loss is not my fault."

At this juncture, I did not have to pay daily attention to the Hitler family. They would be in Hafeld until they left. I was hardly concerned. One of my developed instincts is to know when the humans under my study are ready to change at a good rate, as opposed to when they are virtually inert.

In truth, that is how we measure Time. Except for those occasions when the Maestro assigns us to arenas where history can be shaped, we live reflexively. We, too, are in need of fallow periods. For me, the quiet summer of the Hitler family went by like a passage of sleep. I tended a little to my other clients.

Alois, meanwhile, was marooned in the pall of a long and lackluster meditation. He was worrying to a modest degree about the value of the farm. If he were to sell it, could the price match what he had paid? Or would a potential buyer recognize the beginnings of neglect? That became the focus of his attention. Nothing, he decided, can be more subtle than the onset of neglect. While he did feel more relaxed than in many a year, it did nag at him that he was leaving all too many chores to the women—certainly those which

did not call for a man's strength. He did nothing with the vegetable garden. He thought of buying a new dog; instead, he examined the paint on poor dead Spartaner's dog house, and decided it was not yet ready to peel in the summer heat.

They did not seem to need a new dog. With young Alois gone, he did not have to entertain any fears of an irate father skulking in the neighborhood. No parent of Greta-Marie Schmidt was likely to appear on the doorstep—he could give thanks that that particular young lady was not pregnant, for if she were, he would by now have known all about it. And the smuggler who lived on the other side of Fischlham hardly entered his thoughts. Somehow, given the absence of Alois-Junior, that phantom of a malefactor also seemed far away.

Senior's real worry was that he might become habituated to idleness. Even a few minutes spent in doing nothing at all, had once been guaranteed to annoy him. Now, he felt a little too contented by the drift of a cloud, or, for that matter, a curl of cigar smoke.

Such peace could prove expensive. A farm that remained unworked—no matter how tidy one kept the house, the barn, and the yard—might never

look right. Not to a potential buyer. A small part of Alois continued to run uphill in his sleep. It was as if his unplanted fields were now reproaching him.

The economic facts (which he calculated over and over on separate pieces of paper using separate stubs of pencil) was that no matter how observant he and Klara might be with expenses, sooner or later, they would be obliged to spend more each quarter than his pension.

So, there might come a time when he would have to decide that it cost too much to go to his miserable tavern in Fischlham. That would double every indignity. He had to recognize a fact. He was missing Linz! There, at least, you could find a drinking-place with intelligent people. What it all came down to was that they must sell the farm. He knew it would not happen quickly. These days, the less work one did, the longer it took for anything to get done. Moreover, very much against his will, he was beginning to feel remorse about Alois-Junior. What an ungovernable emotion! Was it incumbent upon him as a father to forgive his son? Yet what if Alois-Junior was also full of remorse? He could not bear the thought of that boy alone in a poor room, sitting on a mean cot, his eyes full of tears?

He might as well have had an amputated forearm whose nerve-endings were still alive at the elbow, Alois-Senior began to think again of Hitler and Sons, Apian Products. Because he need invest no essential belief in the idea, the dream, perversely, was sweeter than before.

He even brought it up with Klara. If she had felt at a good and considerable distance from her husband all summer, if she could not forgive him for being such a helpless drunk on that terrible night, nonetheless, her sense of duty still prevailed. "If you want him back, if you truly want him back, I will not stand in the way." That is what she said. That was what she felt obliged to tell him. She even felt a sense of shame, for her quick hope was that they would not find him.

No such drama was going to develop, however. A letter without a return address came a few days later from Vienna, a vile letter. "You killed my mother." The phrase was repeated several times. Then, the letter declared that the son would yet be famous, and the father would twist in his grave.

Alois could not believe what he read. The rest was worse. "You were a terrible farmer, and the reason is clear. You are, as I happen to know, half-Jewish. No wonder you cannot be a farmer." And there were so many

misspellings in the letter that out of a sense of shame for his son, Alois-Senior had to write it out all over again before he felt able to show it to Klara. As he wrote, his hand shook badly but the original, with its ink blots and errors of syntax, was too abominable to show. The boy had always been able to speak well.

All the same, those awful words had to be shown to Klara. Alois-Junior could only have received such rank ideas by listening to Johann Poelzl. That pious hypocrite! How the old buzzard must have gossiped to the boy!

Klara, however, kept the discussion well away from Poelzl. She only said, "I did not mind that thought so much. I used to think this was your reason for not going to church."

He was indignant. "It did not bother you to believe you had a husband who was half-Jewish?"

"How could it? Alois, you have always said that a man who hates Jews is uncultured. So, I knew. It is not appropriate to hate Jews. It is a sign of ignorance."

"But that does not make me Jewish."

He had a headache, sudden and fierce. Old memories of the earliest taunts at school now came back. When he was six years old. Of course. That had been the talk in Strones and in Spital.

"It never bothered you to think I was half-Jewish?" he said again.

"No. I was always so worried about our children. I wanted them to be able to live." She could not keep her eyes from watering—not with these recollections at the root of her tear-ducts. "So I was glad to think you were part Jewish. I thought maybe that could give a little fresh blood to our Adolf and our Edmund and Paula."

"But I am not at all Jewish," he said. "We must be clear about this. Old Johann Nepomuk once told me who I am. I am his son. I am your real uncle, yes."

"He told you? He said such words?" She knew her grandfather Johann Nepomuk well enough to understand that he could never utter such a speech. Not in that way—not so directly.

"He," said Alois, "suggested this information to me. He did state that he knew who my father was. And then he said, 'This man was not Jewish.' He did not have to say more. It was clear. There was only one way he could

know. So, that was that. The next time a boy called me a Jew, I gave him a good poke in the face and broke his nose. That was one fellow who was left with an ugly mug." Alois began to laugh at the recollection. Then he laughed even more as if to signify that he was not heartsick. "And all these years you thought the opposite?"

She nodded. She hardly knew whether to be relieved or disappointed. She had always felt excitement sneak into her at the thought of being wed to a man with such blood. Jews did forbidden things in bed. That she had heard. Maybe Alois and she had even done these same forbidden things—was that not so? And Jews were reputed to be intelligent. That she had also heard. Now, she was truly confused.

Alois, thinking of Johann Poelzl, could have boiled the old bird for soup.

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The reader may recall that when I presented myself as the narrator of this novel, I appeared as an SS man. Indeed, I was one. Over that period in the late 1930's, I was invested corporeally in a particular SS officer. I lived and functioned within a man named Dieter. At a price. We do not engage in total investiture unless the stakes require it. For our personal cost is direct. One has to relinquish the stimulation of living in more than one consciousness at once. Demonic power is thereby diminished. One has become a simulacrum of a human.

So, as Dieter, I did make inquiries in Graz in 1938 about Hitler's grandfather. The only way I learned, however, that the true father of Alois was Johann Nepomuk came by information I received directly from the Maestro.

At that time, I was not able, obviously, to name my source. In the SS IV-2a, we were obliged, like any other intelligence organization, to be credible, at least, among ourselves, and so the only way to explain to Himmler what the origin of my information had been was to fabricate the sources.

There is a complication. An extraordinary source like the Maestro enables us to inhabit two eras in Time simultaneously. If, living as Dieter, I had been made privy from the start to the actual carnal events in Strones in 1837, then the letter sent to Hitler in 1938 by the son of Alois-Junior would have presented no problem. I would have known that Hitler was not Jewish. Still, I would have been at an impasse convincing Heinrich Himmler of such a fact. To make it credible, I needed to use a means of information-gathering with which he was familiar—human sources.

I believe the Maestro concluded long ago that he must quarantine the memories of his devils if he wished to keep order in his share of the world. So, as just indicated, we do not often employ our potentiality to live in two

periods at once. Nonetheless, our instincts do reach beyond human intuition. I would warrant that the memories we are not encouraged to recall are there nonetheless to serve as our guides.

I mention this condign matter because the question whether Jewish blood is present in the family has reared up so suddenly for Alois and Klara.

He was in a fury. His rage at Johann Poelzl would soon subside into what would be no less than a lifelong grudge—his heart would lift on the day that Poelzl died—but his fury against Alois-Junior rose up again.

Senior was in the moil of such an inner storm that he could not stay in bed with Klara. For the first time in all the years that they had lain side by side in the dark, he had to get up on this night, dress, pace the floor, try to sleep on the couch, try to sleep on the floor, and succeeded, of course, in keeping both of them awake.

Klara knew she would have to pay directly. "Don't say a word," she told herself, "do not touch this subject ever again."

While I cannot speak with the authority of those devils who were implanted by the Maestro in medical school and internship, I will say it is

possible that the cancer which would end Klara's life in 1908 could have taken a large step forward on this miserable night.

Too much had happened to her at once. She had lost possession of a long-cherished idea. Because of the certainty that all her children with Alois were one-quarter Jewish, she believed that her last three had been provided with more opportunity to stay alive. If she had one notion about Jews, (and she could not really say she had ever met one other than Alois) it was that no matter what their faults might be, and she had heard the most awful stories from friends, relatives, even storekeepers, the truth was also obvious—those Jews knew how to survive. To be so disliked, yet still be among the living! (Some were even rich.) Klara had always been impressed, therefore (in absolute privacy with herself—whom could she talk to about this?) that she did have three living children, saved in good part by their Jewish blood.

She was not one to allow herself to be bothered by niceties of logic. If Gustav, and Ida, and Otto had all died much too soon, she could attribute that to her side of the family. But Adolf had survived, and then Edmund and Paula (over whose health she prayed every night.)

Now, her confidence was breached. If the three remaining children continued to live, it would not be because of some blood preservative in their veins. There would be no such advantage.

A large reason not to sleep. What was worse, she was ashamed of her cowardice. How could she have accepted the idea that Alois-Junior should be invited back? Lying there, listening to Alois-Senior going back and forth, thumping the floor with his body as he lay down, she was soon suffering her own rage. It was shocking. She could not believe what she was telling herself. If it were possible, yes, she could kill Alois-Junior. Only, she knew she could not. She would not ever. But the effort to repel such a fury in herself throbbed in her heart—which is to say, in her breast—with such force and such detestation that, yes, it is possible—this could have been the night when the breast cancer which would yet burn with hell's pains in her chest, might have begun. Since the answer is not easily available, I prefer to take return to Alois trying to sleep on the floor.

The immensity of his rage on this night was that he had betrayed himself. That spoiled all the joy that is also implicit in rage, a notion that is too infrequently considered. Rage, after all, can offer the same nourishing

sense of self-righteousness that is available on more ordinary occasions to the most hypocritical of church-goers. The core of such pleasure is never to be angry at oneself, only at others. Yet, here, on this night, Alois was infuriated at the cost of his own deeds.

If Junior had turned out badly, it was his fault, his fault alone. By such a light, he was among the worst of human beings, a weak father. He had spent his life obeying orders, and then enforcing them in the Customs Service, he had revered Franz-Josef, a gallant, great, and good king who embodied hard work and discipline. His guardianship of his own nature had become a species of homage to Franz-Josef. Yet, he had implanted none of this sense of respect in Alois-Junior. Was that because he did feel guilty about the boy's mother? Yes, he had treated Fanni badly, so badly that he could not be stern with her offspring. That had been a lack of discipline in himself.

It took every hour through the darkness of this night for his rage to subside. It was not until the first light of morning—a dim light that came with shrouds of rain at dawn—that he was able to speak from one part of his mind to the other, and so could issue a few orders on what his future conduct with

Adi must become. He was not going to make the same mistake he had allowed with Junior.

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Now, whenever he wished to bring Adi to his side, Alois would whistle. It was a fine drill of a whistle, sharp enough to hurt the ear. Nor did he reduce the intensity when the boy was within arm's reach. In the tavern, Alois was now fond of saying, "If you are raising a son, do not let go of the whip. I speak from experience."

More than once, Alois said to Adi, "Time and sacrifice were wasted on your older brother. You, Adolf, will not waste my time."

Adi was paralyzed with fear. I had to wonder how the final effects of this could serve our purposes. We certainly know how to use humiliation and self-abasement as a tool when working with manic-depressives. If we look to

drive a client into a violent act, a series of humiliations can stir the subject into oscillating too fast between the poles of his depression and his mania. Soon enough, there is an eruption.

I did not see, however, why we needed anything so drastic here at so early an age. The Maestro was, however, not urging me to restrain Alois, and the father was drenching the boy's spirit with wretchedness. Adi was being given a purview of the anguish that attaches itself to ineradicable melancholia.

These are established means for seeding suicide. So, I could not know what ultimate purpose the Maestro had in mind. The boy was delicate enough for it to go wrong. What a disaster, and for so little.

Yet, the Maestro often surprised us by such moves. He was a gambler, and often ready to take bold chances with the lives of our clients. There were occasions when the Maestro, entertaining an ambitious future for a young client, would be ready to encourage such family torture and, on occasion, incite it. I think he saw it as a species of inoculation.

Naturally, these gambles could make for future instabilities. Once we implant a deep sense of humiliation in a proud client, we also set ourselves the task of converting such a wound into a strength. That can prove difficult. It is

often equal in its demands to what it takes to transmogrify a coward into a hero. Yet, when we succeed, when the psychic abyss of a would-be suicide is transmuted into promontories of achievement, an immense gamble has succeeded. The once-humiliated wretch has now acquired the power to humiliate others. That is a demonic power, and does not come easily. I went through many years, indeed, when I was ready to give up on this project. After the death of Edmund in 1900, of Alois-Senior in 1903, and of Klara in 1908, Adi was jobless in Vienna, and all too timid in the world. He had quit school too early, was an avaricious reader who remained hopelessly superior to what he read (particularly when he could not understand it) and, in addition, was lazy, prone to temper tantrums, and possessed of an ego as swollen as a gangrenous limb. All the same, he was desperately afraid of virtually all meetings with human beings, and had no love-life with women, none whatsoever. Yes, an unmitigated mess.

I was depressed. This project to which I had been attending since his birth nineteen years ago, still remained an outrageous gamble. Unless some historic changes could thrust my protégé into prominence, he would end up as one more failure. The upheavals in Germany and Austria after the First World

War were still more than a decade away. My role was to continue to be a jockey on a horse running against unbelievably long odds. I could foresee further demotions for myself.

All this is not of much interest now. We know, after all, what happened to the horse. And I was the one who rode him--with occasional but crucial help from the Maestro. And he certainly did learn, and far better than his father, how to humiliate others. He did come a long way from the rigidity of his limbs each time he was paralyzed by his father's whistle.

Nonetheless, Adi was not reduced altogether. He was always ready to plead his case before Klara.

"Mother," he told her, "my father now looks at me as if I am always guilty."

She was aware of this. The whistle had become a needle in her own ears.

"Adi, you must never say that your father is wrong," she told him.

"But what if he might be wrong?"

"He does not wish to be. Perhaps he makes a mistake."

"What if he is very wrong?"

"It will not remain that way." She nodded. She did not know if she believed what she said next, but she said it nonetheless. "He is a good father. A good father always realizes sooner or later that he may have been going in the wrong direction." She nodded again as if to oblige herself to believe such words. "There can be a moment," she said, "when the father recognizes that he, too, can be in error." She put her hand to the boy's face as if to cool the fever in his cheeks. "Yes," she said, "he hears his own words and realizes that they are not correct. So, he changes."

"He does?"

"Absolutely. The father changes." She spoke as if this had happened in the past. "He changes," she repeated for the third time, "and now there is order in what he says. Now, it goes in a good direction. Because he is ready to change. Do you know why?"

"No."

"Because you were able to tell yourself that you would never cause him confusion. You would not do that because he is your father." She held Adi by the waist and looked into his eyes.

Klara had been the first in the family to recognize (and she was still the only one) that Adi could be spoken to as if he were ten or twelve years old. "Yes," she now said, "it is best when there is no confusion in the house. So, you must never accuse your father. That might cause him to feel weiblich. And for him to feel weak is very bad. You cannot expect him to admit that he has a weakness."

At this point, she began to speak of ehre-fucht. To honor and to fear. She explained the importance of these words. They had been imparted to her by her mother. Johanna used them when speaking of Johann Poelzl. He was, her mother all but said to Klara, a hard-working but very unlucky farmer—who in the family did not know that?—and yet her mother had always treated Poelzl with ehre-fucht as if he were an important and successful man. "That is what my mother taught me, and I now tell it to you. The word of the father is the law of the family."

Klara said this with such solemnity that the boy felt it come into him as holy strength. Yes, some day he would have a family and all who were in it would honor him and they would fear him. At this point, his need to urinate (which always afflicted him in these years whenever he was on the point of

developing large thoughts about himself) spoke up. In the midst of his mother's peroration, he almost had an accident, but did not—not if he was to be entitled in the future to these emoluments of honor.

"Yes," she said to her son, "the word of the father has to be law. Right or wrong, one must never argue with his word. You must obey him. For the good of the family. Right or wrong. the father is always right. He must be. Otherwise, all is confusion."

Now, she referred to Alois-Junior. "He did not have ehre-fucht," she said. "Promise me that will never be said of you. Because, now, you are the oldest brother. You are important. That boy who used to be your brother is as good as dead."

Adi's body was now wet. His perspiration might as well have been illumined by sacred light. Just so complete was the importance of this sentiment. I entered his thoughts long enough to tell him, "Your mother is correct. You are now the oldest brother. The younger ones will honor and respect you."

Yes, Adi understood, and nightly I worked upon his mind until this concept became a mental certainty equal to one of those well-paved avenues of

the mind that are always ready for heavy mental traffic. On many a night I told him again that Alois-Junior was totally separated from the family. Alive or dead, it would not matter.

Alois-Senior was of no small aid to me. By December, he wrote a new will. It stipulated that in the event of his death, the son named Alois was to receive no more of the estate than the minimum prescribed by law. "The smaller the better," he added. Since the act of drawing up a will re-engaged all of Senior's long-developed sense of proper official procedure, he also added: "This is stated in the full recognition of the seriousness of such an act by a father. In my years as a Chief Customs Officer for the Crown, I warrant that I became most familiar with the responsibility that must always be seriously attached to such grave decisions."

Whereupon, having completed the re-writing of his will, he whistled for Adi and read portions aloud to him.

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Alois' decision to write a new will came after he knew that he would be able to sell the farm. The buyer had been referred to him by Herr Rostenmeier, who had even offered his good advice to Klara about this matter.

"Dear Frau Hitler," he had said, "your farm will only find a buyer for one reason—because it looks good. Is that not exactly why your husband bought it in the first place?"

"I will not say that has to be untrue," said Klara. (For her, this remark was equal to flirting with Herr Rostenmeier.)

"Yes," he said, "it is good you recognize this. I believe you will be able to sell your property to people who are less experienced at farming than

yourselves, but—" he held up a finger—"more well-to-do, not so? You must have the patience to wait. Soon enough, one of these comfortable people will come along. And when he does, you must please send him to me. I will be your friend. I will know how to answer all the questions that are asked."

The wealthy house-hunter did arrive, did like the look of the house and the land, knew even less about the pitfalls of husbandry than had Alois, and the sale took place. If the price presented no profit, neither did Alois suffer the loss he feared. The finality of the transfer convinced Alois-Senior that the end of this dream that he might live his last days on a farm could be put to rest together with any hopes that the oldest son would yet bring him some reason for pride. No, it was now up to Adi. He was not nearly so lithe nor so strong as Alois-Junior, nor nearly so good-looking, but as bright, perhaps, and obedient. He was certainly obedient. Whistling for him had become a pleasure. The response was always quick.

In his heart, however, Alois-Senior did keep the equivalent of an old photograph. There still were nights when he would sit on the oak bench and muse again on the Langstroth box he had built for himself. He would pat the

seat as if to recall the sound of the slap he used to give that wooden box in the old days, yes, that nice and solid slap to stir up his bees.

That is far down the road. History (for those who have lived in it for as long as myself) is seldom recalled as all-fascinating. It is such a bed of lies. That is the only reason I could recommend the life of a devil to would-be aspirants. We know so much about how it happens, how it really happens. Who could ever wish to lose such riches? Yet it is not inconceivable that this is exactly what I have done by revealing my relation to the Maestro. Perhaps the perversity of our diabolical natures does bear some relation to that curious human nature which forces its way into existence between the hazards of urine and excrement, yet will later dream each night of a noble life.

BOOK XI

THE ABBOT AND THE BLACKSMITH

In the summer of 1897, after the sale of the Hatfield property, the family moved to the "Gothic Lodge" in Lanchester, and, until the end of the year, they would live at that inn. Leaving behind the responsibilities of the farm, opened a few small but surprising changes.

Abbot, for example, had begun his true retirement. Indeed, he was obliged to recognize how much he had aged in the last couple of years. He felt, for instance, no interest in the crops and cattle in the Chantry. Where, they seemed to have no interest in him. Indeed, he did not mind.

-1-

In the summer of 1897, after the sale of the Hafeld property, the family moved to the Gasthof Leingartner in Lambach, and, until the end of the year, they would live at that inn. Leaving behind the responsibilities of the farm opened a few small but surprising changes.

Alois, for example, had begun his true retirement. Indeed, he was obliged to recognize how much he had aged in the last couple of years. He felt, for instance, no interest in the cooks and maids at the Gasthof. Worse, they seemed to have no interest in him. Indeed, he did not mind.

I would even say that Alois was temporarily content. Since that could prove good or ill to our purposes concerning Adolf, I kept a close eye on the father's modest activities. To my surprise, he did enjoy walking down the streets of Lambach, and took a proprietary interest in the medieval flavor of the town. Lambach had only a population of 1700, but it could boast of a Benedictine monastery founded in the 11th Century, and Alois even paid one visit there as a formal matter of respecting long-established culture.

Lambach could also point to a church, Paura, that had been built in the shape of a triangle with three towers, three gates, and three altars which certainly made Paura an edifice unique enough to become part of his daily promenade. It had the strangest effect on his thoughts. He began to wonder whether he had had a previous life here hundreds of years ago. Might he have returned to some shadowed hint of another life? He did not dismiss the notion. He could have been a medieval knight? Why not? It would certainly account for his boldest qualities as a man. Der Ritter Alois von Lambach!

Normally, he would have scorned such thoughts, but Alois was, by now, ready to brood just a little about the possible dimensions of death.

If it be asked once again how I am aware of such new concerns when Alois is, after all, not my client, I will reiterate that we can enter some of the mental workings of those humans who are closely related to an important client. Their casual thoughts are usually available and during periods of transition, we like to remain alert to their unvoiced themes. Alois' meanderings about death came to me, therefore, without hindrance. He had come to decide that most people believed in secret that they would always live, that they would not cease to exist.

As a corollary to this broad surmise, he was obliged to ponder the nature of God. If such a Divinity did exist, would He not be so busy with the world's affairs that He could hardly afford interest in any but exceptional people? Since most humans, by Alois' measure, were of minimal importance, there was bound to be small attention in the Above concerning the average person. To Alois, this was a stimulating thought. Religious people were always taking it for granted that God had a personal interest in them, but Alois had seen too much of life to believe that any higher power would have the patience to put up with clods. To the contrary, life was here to live, as indeed he had lived it, and reincarnation—well, maybe that was not so inconceivable. You could

receive, thereby, your due reward or your punishment. Yet, if so, then he, Alois, must have been one hell of a licentious knight. Contemplating such a possibility put Alois in an excellent mood. New ideas were exactly what he needed, he now decided.

-2-

These fresh thoughts may account for the reception Alois gave to a request from Adi that he be allowed to join the children's choir at the Benedictine monastery. Klara could hardly believe her husband would say yes. She had, for that matter, come close to warning the boy not to ask, but the impulse caused too much anxiety. What if God wanted Adi to be in that choir? If that was the case, then she could be interfering with the Lord's purpose.

So, young Adolf, spiritual hat in hand, did approach Alois, and managed to say that the monks told him he had a good voice. With his parent's permission, he could rehearse after school.

If it would be asked why Alois would be amenable to allowing any son of his to study with monks and priests, his answer would have been immediate. "I have made careful inquiries. These Benedictines conduct the best school in Lambach. Since I wish Adolf to do well in life, I choose to send him there despite other objections I will retain."

Adi loved the school. Soon enough, he knew that he was seen by the monks as one of their best pupils. In turn, Alois was delighted with his marks. The boy was not only taking twelve required courses but was receiving the highest grade in each one of them. Alois was, therefore, in a benign mood.

"Let me tell you," he said, "when I was young, I, too, could lay claim to a good voice. It was a gift from my mother. She was once the soloist in the parish church at Dollersheim."

"Oh, yes, Father" said Adi. "I remember how well you sang on the day we first came to Hafeld from Linz. Your singing was so good."

"Yes," said Alois, "A few old ditties did come back. Do you remember the one that upset your mother?"

"I do," said Adi. "Ach," she kept saying, 'not for the children!'"

They laughed. The memory prompted Alois to sing the same lines from
"Mein Guter Kamerad."

"He was the best I ever had,

"Together through good and bad,

"The drum called us to fight,

"He was always on my right.

"A bullet flew toward us,

"Meant for him or meant for me?

"Into his life it tore,

"At my feet a piece of gore."

Alois laughed and so did Adi. They remembered. That was when Klara
had cried out, "No, not for the children!"

Now, Alois' voice grew even more resonant.

"My friend,' I said, 'I cannot ease your pain,

"But in life eternal we will meet again,'

"Mein Guter Kamerad, Mein Guter Kamerad."

Alois now declared in a voice made husky by the song, "Yes, I will give my permission. That is because I have come to believe in your future possibilities. You are to be rewarded for the excellence you have shown in your new school."

To himself, Alois was thinking, "Of course, I will not encourage him to go too far. No need for this one to end as a sickly priest."

Adi, however, was wondering whether if one day he might become a monk, or better, an Abbot. He loved their black habits. An image of heaven—his heaven to come--quivered in the rose windows. The boy was ready to weep before the power of Grosser Gott Wir Loben Dich:

"Holy God, we praise Thy Name,

"Infinite Thy vast Domain,

"Everlasting is Thy reign. . .

"Fill the Heavens with sweet accord,

"Holy, Holy, Holy Lord."

While he sang, I was encouraging Adi to believe he might rise supreme over all these monks and thereby was instructing him early on the joy of holding authority in one hand and mystery in the other. Indeed, he had a model. The Abbot of this monastery was the most impressive man Adi had ever seen. He was tall, his hair was silver-gray, his expression was elevated. To Adi, he was as handsome as a king.

One time, alone in the room at the Gasthof that he shared with Angela, he lifted her darkest dress off its hook, and draped it around his shoulders as a vestment. Then he stood up on a stool. He knew he must speak in a low voice so as not to be overheard by anyone in the hallway, but he also felt as if he were living in the dim light of the church itself, wholly at peace with its powers and its darkness.

So, with Angela's garment upon his shoulders, he enunciated a prayer addressed to St. Michael the Archangel. He heard it every day at Mass and the power of the language filled his mouth. He was engraving the sounds on his palate for the moment when he would be alone in the forest speaking to the trees.

But first, he did his best to repeat the sermon which had preceded the prayer. "These fires of hell," he said aloud, but softly, "will reach into every pore of your body and will melt your bones and your lungs. A terrible odor will arise from your throat. The stench of the body will be heinous in its suffering. Terrible odors will follow. This is the fire that will never end."

He staggered as he stood on the stool. The language had been so powerful. He had to take a few breaths before he was ready for the prayer.

"Thy Glorious Majesty, we supplicate Thee to deliver us from the tyranny of the infernal spirits, from their snares, their lies, and their furious wickedness—O Prince of the Heavenly Host, cast into hell Satan and all evil spirits who wander through the world seeking the ruin of souls, Amen."

The prayer did excite him. He felt most excited. Was he receiving a sign from above? Or, were these fires from below? He was having his first erection. He also felt like a woman. It must be the odor of Angela's dress. So, he threw that away from him, jumped down from the stool to kick the dress, then picked it up, sniffed it again, and was abominably disturbed. He still felt like a woman.

It was at this point that he knew he must do what many students were doing. He must start smoking tobacco. He did hate the smell. He had been breathing the fumes of Alois' pipe since he had been an infant, and he had never liked it, but now the need to smoke tobacco was imperative. He must feel like a man again, yes, purely a man, not half and half.

-3-

Over the entrance to the monastery was a large swastika carved into the stone of the arched gate. It was the coat of arms of a previous abbot named von Hagen who had been Abbot Superior in 1850. It is possible that von Hagen had been enjoying the similarity to his own name since the swastika was called a Haken-Kreuz, a hooked cross. So, he had had it installed over the gate.

Not too much, I hasten to add, is to be made of this. This von Hagen's swastika was subtly carved. It offered no suggestion of the organized furies yet to come.

Nonetheless, there it was, a hooked cross, and on his ninth birthday, Adolf was smoking a cigarette under it as the meanest of the priests under

whom he studied, notorious among the students for his silent tread, happened to come by, and caught young Adolf in the act. The cigarette (a twist of his father's pipe tobacco rolled into newspaper) was pulled right out of his hand and stomped upon by the cleric with all the frenzy of a man who is squashing a nest of cockroaches.

"This act of smoking," said the priest, "is as bad as a crime." Adi began to weep before the priest even added, "It is possible that the devil has already entered into you. If that is so, you will die without another happy moment, not one, not ever again." Then the priest gave an evil smile (as evil, I must say, as any we are reputed to give.) He was summoning up the powers of anathema he had assembled through the years.

Adi was hysterical. He swore that he would never go near tobacco again. So soon as he could speak, he made a point of stating how much he disliked smoking. "Oh, Father, I knew it was wrong. I detested it always."

At that moment, he ran down the stone steps of the entrance in order to throw up in the grass. The execration had come forth from this priest with such an aridity of soul that it entered into Adi as a full abomination. He could not breathe. The long nose of this priest had been as malignant as his lips, thin as a

knife edge. Yet in the midst of suffering this whole set of atrocious feelings, Adi was already calculating how to seek forgiveness from the Abbot. He knew he would be sent over to that office just so soon as he stopped vomiting.

Before the Abbot, he burst into tears again. He had the inspiration to say that he did not want this squalid act to interfere with his desire to become a priest. How much he wished to repent, he declared. When he was done, the Abbot even said, "Well, someday you may yet make a fine priest."

The sincerity in Adi's voice resonated with the full inspiration of an outright lie. One taste of anathema had been enough. He was now disabused forever of the thought of living as a monk or a priest. Only his admiration for the Abbot remained intact.

It had been a profitable day for my endeavors. Given the many clients I had to oversee in that part of Austria, I cannot claim to have been always in the right place at the best moment, but on this occasion I was, and our mean-spirited cleric who was, of course, one of my finest clients in Lambach, had certainly been alerted by me to the fact that young Adolf Hitler was smoking tobacco under von Hagen's hooked stone cross.

-4-

Adi's veneration of the Abbot was retained. It lived as the echo of his first infatuation, even as his hatred of the priest who had excoriated him did not diminish. And the good memory of the day that Alois gave him permission to sing in the choir was lost.

By now, it was also obvious that his father favored Edmund. Once, after Adi had given him a shove, Edmund even dared to poke back. "Don't you touch me," he said. "I am just as good as you are."

For that remark, Edmund was hit hard enough to encourage him to wail with all the power of four-year-old lungs.

When Klara descended, Adi said, "Alois-Junior always used to hit me. Nobody ever cared about that."

Alois now loomed overhead. "You had your mother to protect you from Junior," he said. "I remember. She was on your side even when you were in the wrong. This used to upset Junior very much, and maybe I did not pay enough attention!"

Alois chose, therefore, to give Adi a spanking. It was stinging to the boy's behind but without real force. Alois still lived in fear of the uncontrollable fury with which he had beaten Alois-Junior.

Since these quarrels between Adi and Edmund resounded through the inn, Klara was embarrassed, but the innkeeper and his wife, content with the rent provided by the Hitlers, made a point of treating Klara with the greatest respect as if she were the perfect example of a fine, middle-class lady. Of course, Klara never believed her. She began telling Alois that the family needed to find more space at much lower cost.

Klara had also decided that Angela was much too old to keep sharing a room with Adi. Indeed, Angela had complained that one of her best dresses had dusty shoe-prints all over it—that had to be her brother's doing. Klara

decided not to accuse him. He would deny it. The true problem remained; they had to move. Nor was Alois opposed. Adi's quarrels with Angela had been getting on his nerves. One time, he had said to Klara, "You wish me not to touch him, but he's very trying."

"When children fight," said Klara, "it can be the fault of both."

"Well, I am not about to put her on my knee."

With true perturbation, Klara said, "Of course not."

"In any case, it is the boy. I repeat: I find him trying."

Klara now decided to tell Alois about the day Adi was caught smoking. In the hope that Alois might feel sympathy, she said, "Adi needs kindness. He needs that so much. After the Abbot forgave him, Adi told me, 'I didn't know a big grown man could be so kind.' Alois, he needs a little kindness from us."

Alois shook his head. "No," he told her, "you are his slave already. You had better understand—it is all to the good that he started smoking. Maybe in time to come he will like tobacco so much he will even become a real guy." At which point he laughed and laughed, until he began to cough.

Klara thought, "Yes, one tough guy, full of phlegm."

It could be said that Klara was beginning to have a few private thoughts. For years, she had felt that was not suitable for her. Now, however, she was entertaining a secret project. She had come to the conclusion that it was time for Alois to buy a nice house for the family, but she knew he was not yet ready. His present plan was to move to the unused part of a nearby grain mill. That would be considerably cheaper, and offer a good deal of space, and Angela would at least have her own room. That move would be temporary as far as Klara was concerned. Later, her step-daughter would require more. Let her enjoy some of the opportunities that Klara had never had. She wanted Angela to make a fine, middle-class, marriage. And for the present, at the least, she certainly deserved to have her own room. She was such a good step-daughter.

So, Klara accepted Alois' desire to move to the mill. There would be endless work, but Angela was finished with school, and ready to take on her part of the task. It was as if Angela was not only her step-daughter but ready to become the best friend Klara ever had, and certainly more loyal than Fanni.

Early in the winter of 1898, they did rent a floor on the upper story of the grain mill. Its owner, one Herr Zoebel, kept four mules to activate the

grinding wheel. To add to the clamor, there was also a most active blacksmith shop at the rear of the ground floor worked by a big fellow named Preisinger. Upstairs, it would be a war against dust, but Klara was not unhappy. One reason was Angela. At different hours of the day she could be Klara's maid, a younger sister, or a devoted friend. That left Klara free to enjoy some time alone with Paula.

-5-

From infancy, there had not been a morning when Klara did not whisper to Paula, "You are so beautiful."

But now, although she was not yet two years old, Paula seemed deliberate enough in her development to leave Klara full of foreboding.

Alois did not notice. It was enough to dandle Paula on his knee and repeat, "You will be my darling, my princess." He was ready to dream of a time when this child would be the loveliest young lady in town. What an event her wedding would be!

On a given day, however, after a visit to the town doctor, Klara came home with the news of what the doctor had to tell them about Paula. Their daughter might be retarded.

Klara had had forebodings. The comparison between Edmund and Paula made it clear. At two, their little daughter could not use a spoon without spilling most of the contents, whereas Edmund was able to manage the trip from the bowl to his mouth not long after he was a year old. At two, he could dress himself, even begin to wash himself. Paula could not. She would lie in her cot like the rag-doll she hugged to her breast.

Long before he was two, Edmund knew the words for arms, legs, fingers and toes, even his belly-button. Paula would giggle but knew none of these words.

During the doctor's examination, she could not keep her balance when trying to stand on one foot. By the age of two, Edmund was already kicking a soccer ball. Now, Paula looked blank when the doctor asked her, "What do you do when you are cold?"(or hungry? Or tired?)

Klara, to help Paula said, "Sleep," which Paula then repeated, but that annoyed the doctor. "Please, Frau Hitler, no help," he said.

"Yes," Klara now told Alois, "the doctor says she is backward."

"He doesn't know what he is talking about."

"Alois, it could be true." Klara began to weep. "I have been worried."

Alois fell into a depression. His old gifts of perception, so skilled at spotting a smuggler across a Customs shed, were now addressed to examining Paula's smile. It seemed to him that her eyes were much too vacant.

An ugliness of mood descended upon the family. While Alois was off on his walk, Adi would look to badger Edmund. To Klara, that was intolerable. He would snap at Adi. Later, she would feel disloyal, but the truth was that Edmund had become the bright light of the family. He had certainly grown right out of his runny nose and dirty pants. It was like the fairy tales Klara used to read to him. He had turned into a charming four-year-old, as full of future promise—in Klara's opinion—as a prince, and it had all happened since they left Hafeld. Edmund did have the sweetest smile, and the funniest face. Klara had to laugh at him. But Adi was reacting badly. Soon enough, he formed the habit of sticking a leg out just far enough to trip Edmund as he ran by. Edmund, however, would not complain, just get up and keep running back and forth along the floor of the loft.

It would have bothered Klara a good deal more if she had known what Adolf's secret desire had become. It was to hit Edmund as hard as he could, and get away with such an act. Everything about his baby brother infuriated him. Edmund's eyes were so blue. Everybody commented. But his own eyes, Adolf decided, were deeper, a better blue, even if Edmund received the praise. In Adolf's opinion, Edmund had a face that was squashed together. How he would have liked to squash it a little more.

Worst of all, Edmund was always receiving praise for taking such good care of Paula. Adi felt as if he had been the first to see that Paula wasn't too bright. He could have told them, but instead his mother and Angela were impressed with how much Edmund loved Paula.

Klara was even glad that the big, sweaty blacksmith, Preisinger, was down there in his shop hammering away at all times because Adi seemed to like this one man anyway, and stayed down there a good deal. That was better than trying to keep watching for him upstairs while he sat there waiting for Edmund to run by.

-6-

At this time I had to move from Austria to Switzerland, and was active in Geneva for the next few months overseeing the transmogrification of a petty criminal into an impassioned assassin.

Given the variety of clients I had developed in the area of Linz, I had to return to Austria more than once to take account of their condition, and so was able to keep up with events at the grain-mill in Lambach. I will not, however, speak of those matters until a little more is related about my assignment in Geneva. To those readers who are, by now, wary of these expeditions off to other narrative venues, I will add that this time, I will not be absent from young Adolf for more than an interesting chapter or two.

Moreover, a few pages of my text will quote Mark Twain. He was never my client—I would not have dared to make that attempt! In truth, if such a possibility had existed, the Maestro, given his admiration for great writers, would probably have looked to undertake such a seduction on his own.

In the event, Twain, a most complex man, was not considered suitable material. Some of his associates were, however, and so I knew enough about him to respect the passion with which he wrote about the assassination of the Empress Elisabeth in Geneva on September 10, 1898. Married in 1854 to Franz Josef, she had long been considered the most beautiful and cultivated queen in Europe. Her favorite poet was Heinrich Heine. What added to the lady's exotic status was that after the double suicide in 1888 of her beloved son, Crown Prince Rudolph, and his young mistress, Baroness Vetsera, the Empress dressed only in black. That tragedy, known to all of Europe as "Mayerling," was an event in which I had played no small part. Indeed, that may have been why I was chosen to shepherd Luigi Lucheni after he had been sighted as a putative assassin.

"He's a dreadful piece of work," the Maestro said, "but made to order for us. A most unbalanced little malefactor. He sees himself as a serious

philosopher, and is sincere in his belief that only the most exceptional individual deeds will leave a lasting influence on the public. So, go to it!"

I worked with Luigi Lucheni. I expanded the gaseous irresolutions of his psyche, then compressed such vapors until they were as focused as a blowtorch. Assassins do need more than a few magnifications of their ego.

I did not fail. Lucheni, an impoverished young man, chose to become an anarchist after he came to live with the Swiss. In Geneva, he found revolutionaries who accepted him, at best, with misgivings. His fellow Italians chose to call him Il stupido (which doubled the daily compression of his spirit.) It helped me that he was being ridiculed by those who should, he felt, have been ready to applaud him. "Convince them by way of your actions," I kept saying to him. "You are here among us to take the life of someone who is very high among the oppressive classes."

"Who is this person?" he asked.

"You will know when you see him. Or her."

Poor Empress Elisabeth! She was so proud and so poetic that she allowed only a few bodyguards to escort her when she was on vacation. Even then, they had to stay at a remove of ten paces from her person. No matter that

strangers might approach. After all, it was invariably a tourist asking for an autograph. So, as she stood by herself on a promenade along the banks of the Rhone, Lucheni came up, took out a rat-tail file, and thrust it into her heart.

He was immediately apprehended, his quarters were searched, and his diary examined. All the world soon knew that he had written: "How I would like to kill someone—but it must be someone important so it gets in the papers."

He might have chosen Philippe, the Duke of Orleans who was also in Geneva then on a visit, but so was the beautiful Sisi—Empress Elisabeth. Sisi, I knew, would count for more. Even as I had led the anathematic priest by his long nose to the gateway where Adi was smoking, so did I direct Lucheni to Empress Elisabeth.

If it is discomfoting to the reader that I usually present myself as a calm observer, capable of a balanced narrative, and yet am also able to abet the most squalid acts without a moment of regret, let it not come as a surprise. Devils require two natures. In part, we are civilized. What may be less palatable (and apparent) on most occasions is that our ultimate aim is to raze civilization. Such an enterprise must be able to call on one's readiness to do what it takes—

a fine expression I picked up years later from a minor client who worked on a film crew.

In any event, the immediate effect of the deed was exceptional. I will, however, leave that description to Mark Twain himself.

-7-

The author was resting then in Kaltenlangteben, a small Austrian town forty miles from Vienna. By way of the failure of his investment in the Paige Compositor, a new linotype machine, he was bankrupt.

So, he left Hartford and travelled through Europe giving popular lectures for fees large enough to absorb some of his debts. He happened to be resting in Kaltenlangteben when the murder of Elisabeth occurred, and wrote to a friend: "This murder will still be talked of and described and painted a thousand years from now."

I cannot begin to speak of the elation with which I read those words. My own opinion of the importance of the deed had now been confirmed by a

master of prose. Indeed, Twain was so powerfully affected that he soon wrote a essay full of the incomparable flow of his language although later, for a myriad of reasons too labyrinthine to catalogue, he chose not to publish it. I, however, came into possession of these pages by way of one of his servants.

The more one thinks of the assassination, the more imposing and tremendous the event becomes. The destruction of a city is a large event, but it is one which repeats itself several times in a thousand years; the destruction of a third part of a nation by plague and famine is a large event, but it has happened several times in history; the murder of a king is a large event, but it has been frequent.

The murder of an empress is the largest of all events. One must go back about two thousand years to find an instance to put with this one. . . . The assassination of Caesar himself could not electrify the world as this murder has electrified it. For one reason, there was then not much of a world to electrify. The news traveled so slowly that by the time it reached the remoter regions, it was no longer a fresh event, it was history. But the world is enormous now, and

prodigiously populated—that is one change; and another is the lightning swiftness of the flight of tidings, good and bad. "The Empress is murdered!" When those amazing words struck upon my ear in this Austrian village last Saturday, three hours after the disaster, I knew that it was already old news in London, Paris, Berlin, New York, San Francisco, Japan, China, Melbourne, Cape Town, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, and that the entire globe with a single voice was cursing the perpetrator of it.

... And who is the miracle-worker who has furnished to the world this spectacle? All the ironies are compacted in the answer. He is at the bottom of the human ladder, as the accepted estimates of degree and value go; a soiled and patched young loafer, without gifts, without talent, without education, without morals, without character, without any born charm or any acquired one that wins or beguiles or attracts; without a single grace of mind or heart or hand that any tramp or prostitute could envy him; an unfaithful private in the ranks, an incompetent stone-cutter, an inefficient lackey; in a word, a mangy, offensive, empty, unwashed, vulgar, gross, mephitic, timid, sneaking, human polecat. And it was within the

privileges and powers of this sarcasm upon the human race to reach up—up—up and strike from its far summit in the social skies the world's accepted ideal of Glory and Might and Splendor and Sacredness! It realizes to us what sorry shows and shadows we are. Without our clothes and pedestals we are poor things and much of a size; our dignities are not real, our pomps are shams. At our best and stateliest we are not suns, as we pretended, and teach, and believe, but only candles; and any bummer can blow us out.

And now we get realized to us once more another thing which we often forget—or try to; that no man has a wholly undiseased mind; that in one way or another all men are mad and one of the commonest forms of madness is the desire to be noticed, the pleasure derived from being noticed. . . . It is this madness for being noticed and talked about which has invented kingship and the thousand other dignities. . . it has made kings pick one another's pockets, scramble for one another's crowns and estates, slaughter one another's subjects; it has raised up prize-fighters and poets, and villages' mayors, and little and big politicians, and big and little charity-founders, and bicycle champions, and banditti chiefs, and frontier

desperadoes, and Napoleons. Anything to get
notoriety; anything to set the village, or the township,
or the city, or the State, or the nation, or the planet
shouting, "Look—there he goes—that is the man!"
And in five minutes' time, at no cost of brain, or labor,
or genius, this mangy Italian tramp has beaten them
all, outstripped them all, for in time their names will
perish; but by the friendly help of the insane
newspapers and courts and kings and historians, his is
safe and will thunder all down the ages as long as
human speech shall endure! Oh, if it were not so tragic,
how ludicrous it would be!

I rushed to present this to the Maestro. I do not know that I had taken
myself so seriously ever before. I knew that I was, at last, an actor in history.

To my woe, he was scathing. "I may value great writers," he said, "but
look how Mark Twain exaggerates the event. It is hysterical. A thousand
years! That is absurd. Sisi will be forgotten in twenty."

I did not dare to ask, "Does the event serve no large purpose?"

My thoughts were heard. "Oh," he said, "it's a bit of help. But you, like
Twain, are much too impressed by mighty names. They count for so little once

they are gone. I'd like to clean the snobbery out of you. It's not the name. Only an exceptional client that we develop ex nihilo—or virtually ex nihilo—can affect history to our continuing advantage. But for that, we have to construct him from first brick to the last. Killing Sisi offered no such value. It was not at all conducive to ongoing social unrest. The riot at Khodynskoya is still serving us, whereas knocking off Sisi? I tell you that if I were a gourmet picking a perfect peach off the tree, I might be able to enjoy some ten minutes of gastric excellence. That would be analogous to the pleasure we can take because of your nice work with Luigi Lucheni. But it must not give you any reason to lose your sense of measure." Here, he did smile.

"There was one nice advantage to it," he said. "Our great author did retain his good sense on that point."

Twain had also written:

Among the inadequate attempts to account for the assassination, we must concede high rank to the many which have described it as "ordained from above." I think this verdict will not be popular "above." If the deed was ordained from above, there is no rational way of making this prisoner even partially responsible for it,

**and the Genevan court cannot condemn him without
manifestly committing a crime.**

"Yes," said the Maestro, "when it comes to being aware of us, that good fellow, Mark Twain, must have been very near to saying, 'Ordained from below.' Thank God, he didn't!"

How the Maestro could laugh on these rare occasions when he felt merry.

-8-

I have, as I related, been at a distance from Lambach until after the assassination, and by then the Hitlers no longer lived in the grain mill nor even, indeed, in Lambach. They had moved to a larger town (Leonding, pop: 3000) and that, at first, was much to Klara's satisfaction, for it was the result of her subtle manipulation of Alois. It had taken her a long time to begin to understand how to motivate her husband. She had always been too God-fearing. She could not employ calculated tactics. Until they lived at the mill, it had never occurred to her that she might make him jealous. But she had come at last to understand that she had to put a little fear into Alois.

Klara, who had never been able to believe in all these years that she was worthy of her husband—he was still so preeminently an uncle—now came to realize that he might even need her. Even if he did not love her beyond measure—which was obvious—he needed her.

To Klara, for whom love could be no less than a covenant between all the members of one's family while remaining loyal to the love of God, it had never occurred to her that marriages might also exist on need. Indeed, one did not even have to like one's mate.

Armed with that thought, she was able to recognize that Alois was at an age to feel jealous. She, in turn, so long as she broke no covenants but merely bent them, might, yes, might, make Alois jealous enough to wish to move away from the mill.

This possibility resided in the form of the big, soot-covered man downstairs, the blacksmith, Preisinger. Adi was fascinated by him, Adi often spent hours at a time watching him work and listening to him talk. She could hear their voices even as she worked in her kitchen on the floor above and the sounds that came up were curiously engaged with those she made—the splash

of water from a pail to a basin seeming to be answered by a few ringing blows on an anvil.

She knew why Adi was eager to be with the blacksmith. The man worked with fire, and that was exciting to her. Yet, she was not about to ponder why. Fire pleased her so. She had known since childhood that God was everywhere, and so was the Devil. So long as one did not oblige oneself to think, the Devil could have no access. God would be there to protect your ignorance. Klara also knew that one had to pay a price for refusing to follow one's thoughts, but that was a less important obligation than to keep the Devil away.

So it was enough for her to understand that Adi would be full of awe as he watched the blacksmith heat a piece of iron until it was white-hot and then another piece, also white-hot, could be attached to it. Out of the joining could come further joinings ready to become useful objects and tools, anything and everything from carriage axles to broken ploughs.

Soon enough came an occasion when she had to visit below. The water-pump in the kitchen needed a repair on its cylinder. The crack was soon

mended but then, to her surprise, she stayed a little longer and talked with the man. Then, he invited her to come back whenever she would like a cup of tea.

To her amazement, this big bull of a man, this Preisinger, had nice manners. He not only treated her with the greatest respect, but he could converse nicely considering that he was as uneducated as herself. He did not brag, but did leave the impression which she found most agreeable (even as she had once had just such sentiments about Alois) that he was a person of natural importance. She could hardly believe how agreeable it was to listen to him as she sat in the one good chair of his shop while Adi stood beside her close to transfixed.

Preisinger's active business was not only with farmers in the area, and occasionally with travelers whose horses were having trouble with a shoe, but, as he explained, many merchants in the area depended upon him for repairs of all variety. Moreover, he was ready to admit, he could diagnose many an equine ailment. "I have also been, Frau Hitler, a veterinarian. Yes, I can say that. Because sometimes I have to know more than the vets."

"Can you really say that?" asked Klara, and blushed at her own straightforwardness.

"Frau Hitler," answered Preisinger, "I have seen valuable animals hobbled to where they could barely walk. Why? For the simplest reason. The veterinarian, however good a fellow he might be concerning other animal diseases, does not know as much about a horse's hoof as can be necessary."

"I suppose that is true," said Klara. "You have had so much experience."

"Young Adolf will tell you. There are market days when I have had to shoe as many as twenty horses, one after another. No stopping."

"Yes," said Klara, "how much work must there be when there is ice on the ground."

To which, he answered, "I see that you understand these matters."

Klara had to blush.

"Give me a better grip on the ice," Preisinger now said. "I hear that so much. Once, on a freezing day, I had to shoe twenty-five horses. Every one of those farmers was asking me to hurry up."

"Yes, but Herr Preisinger would not agree," said Adolf. "He told me, 'Speed is speed, yet one nail gone wrong, and that horse will never trust you again.'" Adi's cheeks were flushed. He could not tell Klara what else the

blacksmith had confessed. "Young fellow," Preisinger had said, "there were nights when I couldn't sit down because I had the horse's name on my behind."

"The horse's name?" Adi had asked.

"His hoof. I can recognize horses by their hooves."

"You can?"

"Old Clubfoot. Old Shoe. What name would you like? I will find it for you on my backside."

He had laughed, but then, seeing that Adi was bewildered, Preisinger was quick to add, "I am joking. Only joking. A good blacksmith knows that you can get kicked for your trouble."

"How often does that happen?" the boy asked. He was so obviously seeing the event in his mind that Preisinger removed himself quickly from such images.

"No longer," he said. "Not even once a year now. In this work, you have to be very good or you don't last."

With Klara, Preisinger did not proceed in such a direction. Rather, he was ready to discuss how he might take off old shoes and compound his own special caulk for the hole left by the old nails—he was proud of the various

kinds of problems he was ready to solve. While he spoke, she looked at the occasional imprint of horses' shoes on his dirt floor, there in the dark dust on the earth floor. She certainly did like this man. She could share his pride in the sea-anchor he was making for a rich man—no, no ordinary problem, an anchor—one had to be certain there were no weaknesses between the ring, the stock, the crown, the flukes, the palm and the shank.

After her third visit in two weeks, Preisinger insisted on coming upstairs with her one morning to collect all her knives which he then proceeded to sharpen in his smithy. Afterward, he refused all payment. What impressed Klara most was that his work clothes might be black with soot, and yet he moved with such a sense of where he was that no detritus was left in her clean kitchen.

Then, on a Saturday evening when he must have known that Herr Hitler would be off to the inn for his beer, so did Preisinger come by on a visit, dressed in his Sunday shirt and suit. That caused no little perturbation in Klara (and in Angela) but he, too, was uncomfortable and sat on the edge of the sofa.

Yet Klara would look back on this occasion with satisfaction. That was because when Alois returned, he was even more disturbed than his wife at the

sight of Preisinger, sitting on their sofa, huge hands clamped together in his lap. While he departed soon after Alois came in, he did bow to Klara and manage to say, "Thank you for your invitation."

Alois herded a number of accumulated furies until he and Klara were alone in their room.

She was contrite. "No, I didn't invite him." She shook her head as if to tumble a few bits of memory back into place. "Well, yes," she then said, "I suppose I did." She had been courteous, merely courteous. Adolf had been spending so much time down below with Herr Preisinger that she thought it would be polite to make a suggestion, no more, that Herr Preisinger visit them for her strudel. But only on some day or other. She had not specified. It had not been a true invitation.

"And you did serve him strudel?"

"Well, I had to. Does one offer a guest nothing?"

"A guest?"

"Well, a neighbor."

On it went. Afterward, she never knew how much of all this could have been planned. She would deny such a possibility. Nonetheless, it had worked out well.

Not two days later, Alois informed her that he had sent a letter to a friend in the Customs House at Linz inquiring whether real estate was available in Linz or nearby. "I am bored here," he told her. "The noise from below is becoming intolerable."

A week later, an answer came. There was a fine little house at a very good price in Leonding just five miles from Linz.

Klara and Alois knew that they would buy that house before they even went to look at it. Each was full of the same determination for altogether opposite reasons.

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This would be all I need to narrate about Preisinger (since they would never see him again after the move to Leonding) but I cannot leave the man without speaking of one of his final conversations with Adi now that he knew that Klara would soon be gone.

Needless to say, Preisinger had fallen in love. It could not be love with any lively hope for the outcome, yet he had felt a quickening in her. Conceivably, it might in time be a legitimate match. Her husband was getting old. So Preisinger, full of his own hard-acquired dignity, was desolate when he heard that she and the boy would soon be gone.

He acted, therefore, in the only way he could. He took the liberty of offering the depth of his working philosophy to the boy. He might be only nine years old, but by Preisinger's estimate, there was true eagerness to know more and in other circumstances this kid could have become his step-son.

"Why is iron so strong?" Preisinger asked, and replied to his own question. "Because it is in its spirit to be strong." He paused. Any further exposition would depend on the boy's reaction to what he would next be told. "Every material," Preisinger said, "has a spirit which is its own spirit. Some are strong, some are gentle."

Young Adolf did not reply but he did nod. Preisinger decided to proceed further. "Grass," he said, "will bend before every wind. It is ready to give way to every foot that steps on it. It is the opposite of iron. Even so, iron can be in the same earth out of which grass can grow. Yet, once iron ore is smelted you can make it into a scythe. A scythe is there to cut the grass."

"That is so interesting," said Adi, with real enthusiasm.

"Yes. You do not step on a piece of iron. Iron will hurt any foot that does not show respect." Preisinger's breath grew heavy with the ardor he felt

for his subject. "Yes, iron ore, once it is passed through the hottest fire, will turn into a unique material."

"Unique?" the boy asked.

"Unlike any other. Unique."

"Yes, that is so." The boy paused. He hesitated to ask his question, then did. "What is a will of iron? How is that made?"

Preisinger was delighted. "Think of how hot a fire must be to bring out the will of iron that is in the ore. Iron is strong against every force except the one that made it iron."

Preisinger went on to speak of the wonders of his trade, an outpouring he seldom allowed himself, but the boy was ready to hear it all. "It takes a man of force to become a blacksmith," Preisinger finally said.

Adi was so agog with the mysterious interchanges between the will of iron and the incandescences necessary to create it, that he would make the mistake later that night of trying to explain it all to Angela and to Edmund. Alois, however, happened to overhear this impromptu sermon and proceeded to roar with derision. "The mark of a truly stupid man," he announced to Klara,

"is that he takes his own occupation so seriously that he comes to believe it is superior to others."

Klara, now in the course of developing a few private opinions, decided that Alois had also puffed himself up to the sky when he worked at the Customs House. "This country would be bankrupt without us," he always used to tell her. As was her habit, she smiled at him and shrugged.

Nonetheless, Preisinger's discourses on the will of iron was to prove of considerable use to Adi after he received his first serious whipping from Alois. That came after the collapse of forbearance on Alois' part. The spirit of restraint he had been looking to develop as a protection for his heart and as an atonement for whipping Alios-Junior came to an end on a given night when Adolf was out playing soldier in the woods with a few students from the monastery and happened to stay out long after dusk. Normally, Alois had only to whistle as evening approached and Adi would race upstairs from Preisinger's shop or come whipping back from the nearby woods. Indeed, if he didn't arrive soon after the echo of the first whistle, Alois would put him over his knee and give him a token whipping. In secret—he would hardly admit it to himself—he liked the feel of Adi's buttocks.

On this night, however, Adi did stay out—the lingering light in the forest was exciting to him. He saw the last of the sun's disappearance as one more variety of fire. It was night before he came through the door.

Alois had been brooding over Paula's condition—just that day she had been trying to jump up and down a little (which, the doctor had assured Klara, would be a sign of development) but had soon given up. Despite Alois' coaxing, she had not tried again. That left him morose. Then, Alois had to whistle for Adi again and again. The interval became so extended that Alois decided that it was a willful insult. So, he gave the boy a real beating.

Full of Preisinger's precepts, Adi took a new oath. He instructed himself to have the strength to live with whatever came down on him now. He would fortify his will of iron. Even as the first blow fell, he was issuing further orders to himself to live with a will of iron, yes, live with a will of iron. He would fortify such determination by biting his teeth against each and every remembrance of sobbing before the priest and weeping before the Abbot.

Tears stood out in his eyes yet he would not allow himself to cry out. Preisinger's mighty biceps oscillated before his eyes even as he was being whipped. Let his father injure himself against a will of iron.

BOOK XII

EDMUND, ALOIS AND ADOLF

Landing was only five miles from Chus which enabled Alois to feel that he was near again to the active life of a real city, a longing he has not allowed himself to indulge in since he left it at Lombard.

For Clara, however, the house would have been more attractive if it had not been situated across the street from the town cemetery, but this was the only reason they could afford it.

On the other hand, their villa, so close to the sea, and with its own house and garden bordered by maples and oaks where

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Leonding was only five miles from Linz which enabled Alois to feel that he was near again to the active life of a real city, a longing he has not allowed himself to indulge in Hafeld or Lambach.

For Klara, however, the house would have been more attractive if it had not been situated across the street from the town cemetery, yet this was the only reason they could afford it.

On the other hand, their village church was just across the way, and their new home sat within a fine garden bordered by maples and oaks whose

limbs had grown into such artful shapes that a godly spirit must have been present. So Klara decided.

Nonetheless, Klara also felt at odds with Leonding itself. She feared the move could yet prove dangerous. Part of this uneasiness, I would warrant, came from her friendship with Preisinger. He had not only been nice, but also, yes, so strong. She considered that perilous. He had aroused an excitement that should belong properly only to her marriage. Now, on these streets of Leonding, many of the townspeople had sly faces thereto suggest that they know a little more than she did about these treacherous sides of human nature. While she had certainly lived in any number of more sophisticated places: Vienna, when she kept house for an old lady, Braunau with Alois, and then Passau, she had never looked for a life in any way outside her duties or her family. Now, she might be ready for something more. Only that was not permissible. So, for a time, she kept close to the new house. Forays out of her kitchen and garden were restricted to visiting the shop of Josef Mayrhofer who not only owned a fine grocery, but was a fine man and the Mayor of Leonding. There she bought vegetables two or three times a week, dressed neatly for the occasion and was always friendly to Herr

Mayrhofer, but invariably, she would say, "I can't stay. There's so much work waiting for me."

She was living with the conviction that she had given herself over to the Devil in the terrifying moment when she believed that Alois had just killed Alois-Junior. With the smallest prompting, that she could see the boy on the ground again—Devil, save Alois' son, and I will be yours!

Such vows, taken by pious people, retain some value to us even when the oaths become, in time, analogous to radioactive compounds that deteriorate to a half-life. We do, however, keep such assets on reserve. Klara, thereby, still feels her soul is imperiled.

No matter, she is quite attracted to Mayrhofer. He is more worldly than Preisinger and that could prove tempting. If they grew too friendly, she might ruin a good man.

I was witnessing a comedy. I knew nothing would happen. Mayrhofer was as proper as Klara. Moreover, he had already met Alois and both men had formed a quick friendship. Alois was drawn to a man who was smart enough to be Mayor, and practical enough to own a prosperous store. In turn,

Mayrhofer respected Alois's years of service in Customs, particularly his promotions. Before long, they were drinking together at the tavern.

All the same, this subdued flirtation between Mayrhofer and Klara remained alive, and I continued to enjoy it. Now that Mayrhofer, a man of honor, had become friends with Alois, he could not even smile too often when Klara was near. In turn, that was acceptable to her. Mayrhofer had a jealous wife. Alois had told her that the woman was a shrew who was always pointing her finger. "All of these women who come to the store," Frau Mayrhofer had already told her husband, "are just waiting to throw themselves at you." Indeed, Mayrhofer confessed to Alois that years ago, he did have a small affair. Just one. Then, his wife found out. His life had been a misery since. In turn, Alois was wise enough not to suggest that in this regard, his own life may have been more agreeable.

At first, they did drink only in the local tavern, but Mayrhofer soon confessed that given his position as Mayor, the premises were a little too raw for his office, and after some deliberation, he even invited Alois to a Burger-Abend, an evening for the town burghers, which was an occasion that took place on four separate evenings each week. The members could attend

regularly or rarely, but it was a lively occasion for the substantial individuals in Leonding to get together. These gatherings, explained Mayrhofer, rotated among the best four inns of the town, and were held for the sole purpose of good talk with good prosperous company. The object, as Mayrhofer explained tactfully, was not to get drunk, but to exchange good conversation. In fact, he did murmur that they had a few members who turned out unhappily, and sooner or later, "these tipplers were not asked to come back. We did it politely—as much as possible, under the circumstances—but it is essential, Alois, that a man must never appear to be even a hint unbalanced on these occasions. Merriment is certainly acceptable, but good manners are paramount."

"I have to agree," said Alois. "That is always the essence of fine and decent company."

So Alois was introduced, and went through the considerable tension of sitting in with the local gentry. He most certainly did not get unbalanced, and he did return several times a month to keep up his friendship with Mayrhofer who would go to the tavern no longer because of one dreadful occasion when a

drunken lout tried to insult him. The malcontent had been told to leave by the tavern owner, and did, but the place was spoiled for the Mayor.

During the day, Alois now spent his time working in the garden, or at his new bee-hive. He had purchased one Langstroth box, and to it added only a small population. As he explained to Mayrhofer, "Some honey for my family's use and gifts for friends—that will be sufficient." He was determined not to become involved again with apiary commerce. At Hafeld, the venture had taken over all of his thoughts. "It is equal to being enslaved by a force larger than oneself."

"So is the Mayoralty," replied Mayrhofer.

Soon enough, Alois grew so impressed by the Burger-Abends that he bought a book of Latin quotations which he looked to memorize. But, retaining the phrases was a treacherous enterprise. His greatest problem these days had been boredom. Now he had discovered its loyal assistant—poor memory!

The greatest counterbalance he found against the yaws of long, eventless afternoons at home was to play with Edmund. The little boy was more charming at four years of age than any of his other children had been,