

and Edmund stayed so close to him at the beehive that Klara had to make a littleveil and sew up white pants to go with a white shirt and white gloves. Klara protested: "The boy is too young." But Alois insisted, and so the two were out at the hive a great deal.

Before long, Alois had fallen in love again, a charming love, indeed, for he knew it was bound to be his last true romance. He adored Edmund. It was not only that his little son was so clever, but that he was, in addition, tender and sweet. "If I had ever met a woman so perfect, I would have married her for forever," he would repeat to himself as a joke. He did like humor that was bifurcated. He could picture the look of woe—would it even be jealousy?—on Klara's face if he ever told her this, and yet he also laughed for his own tenderness—for the boy and for Klara, too. So much of all that was good in her that he was never about to declare (not to her—never spoil a good woman.) was part of why the boy was so nicely balanced. He had, as Alois measured it, his father's intelligence and his mother's capacity for loyalty. An excellent mixture.

Yes, so bright. And Edmund loved the bees. He did not even squeak too much when some of the sluggards crawled over his gloves on their way

back to the hive entrance. Once he even received a bite inside his glove but didn't cry, after Alois said, "Oh, we must keep this a secret. Your mama won't let you play here again if she knows."

"No, father," said Edmund, "she will listen to you."

"It could cause trouble," said Alois.

"That is true," said Edmund and sighed. "Too bad," he said, "it hurts. I would really like to cry."

At which they both laughed.

Once, back in the house, they would play Customs. Alois even put on his old uniform (although he could hardly close the waist) and they pretended that Edmund was trying to smuggle a valuable coin past a border inspector.

"Why is my coin so valuable?" asked Edmund.

"Because it was owned by Napoleon," said Alois. "He used to keep this guilder in his pocket."

"He did not," said Edmund. "You are teasing me."

"No, I am not. It is part of the game."

"I like that."

"Yes, but just you try to hide that coin from me."

"I will if you promise not to undress me."

"No. I will just tickle you. Then you are bound to confess."

"I won't," said Edmund, giggling already, and stepped into the parlor closet to hide the guilden. Struggling beneath the coats hanging in there from the rack, he knew where to put the coin. He wedged it into the cuff of his boot. That way, he didn't have to undo the laces.

When he came out, Alois stared at him with a fair share of the malevolence he used to direct at suspects who were being interviewed.

"Are you ready to confess?" he asked.

Edmund was hardly frightened. He began to giggle.

"Very well. Since you are so insolent," said Alois, "I will have to pat you down," and proceeded to tickle him under the arms and on the belly until Edmund dropped to the floor in a puddle of pure helpless mirth. "Stop it, Daddy, stop it," he cried out, "or I will have to pee."

Alois desisted. "But you are not ready to confess."

"That is because I am not smuggling anything."

"You are. We know. You have Napoleon's coin."

"Try and find it," said Edmund and began to giggle again.

"Oh, I will," said Alois, and with a quick move pulled off Edmund's boots, shook them, and watched the guilder fall out. "Now, you are under arrest," he said.

Edmund was furious. "You cheated," he said, "you cheated. You did not obey the rules."

"State your case."

"You said you would just tickle, but you took off my clothes."

"These are not your clothes," said Alois, picking up a boot. "Clothes are garments. This is footwear."

"You just changed the rules."

Alois made a face. "That," he said in a deep voice, "is what we like to do in Customs."

For a moment, Edmund was uncertain. Then he began to laugh. Alois laughed so hard and so long that once again, he began to cough which, at first, was fine—he could clear some phlegm—but then his coughing did not halt for many seconds, then a minute of paroxysms which brought Klara over to the parlor from the kitchen. Alois rolled his eyes at her and took a tentative breath. Had he come close, he wondered, to a hemorrhage of his lungs?

Now Edmund had begun to weep. "Oh, Papa," he cried out, "you must not die, you must not die," and the sound of his voice kept all response away from both his parents—he had seemed so certain of the outcome.

"Papa, I know you will not die," he now said in amendment. "I will ask God to forbid that and He will listen. I pray to Him every night."

"I don't pray," Alois almost said. Still cautiously in balance from the reverberations of attack, he did not speak but he did shake his head at Klara. These pious women were the real smugglers—to steal across the border of a young boy's mind, especially when he was so bright. Some day, Edmund might be a legal eminence in Vienna, one of the wealthiest and most powerful barristers in Austria, and yet his mother had to offer this religious pap, good oats for horses.

All the same, Alois was not yet ready to correct her. Religion was necessary, perhaps, for the very young. For now, he would leave it at that. There was so much beauty, Alois decided, in the boy's love for his mother, and yes, most certainly, his father.

Up in his bedroom with the door locked, Adolf took his revenge on the sounds of laughter he had to hear from below. He chose to masturbate. The

image he held in his head was a picture of Luigi Lucheni that he had seen in the Linz Tages Post. It was the assassin's small mustache, fixed to his upper lip just below his nostrils, a dark little daub of a mustache. That certainly excited Adolf. Once, at a time when he and Angela had still been sleeping in the same room, he had caught a glimpse of her pubic hair just as it had begun to manifest itself, no more than a patch of dark down, and Luigi's postage-stamp of a mustache was close in resemblance.

The combination had to excite him—that small peek-a-boo into Angela's privacy so much like the mad murderer's upper lip—he grew twice excited when he heard his father coughing away like still another maniac.

-2-

On one of his occasional visits to the Burger-Abends, Alois, no longer willing to remain a quiet presence, prevailed on himself to speak. This was after listening to the "Atheist-in-Residence," a member who delighted in assuring all the others that "I am the only brave man in our ranks since I have been blessed. I do not have to believe in God." To Alois' critical eye, he was a scrawny chap, but a long-invested member—his grandfather had been one of the founders of the society. Nonetheless, it did seem that the man had little else to offer. So, Alois decided to speak up and declared that each intelligent

human had to decide for himself whether the Deity did exist, but he, for one, was certainly opposed to the sanctimony of all those pietists who would run to church at every drop of rain in their lives. He would attend on one day only of the year and that was the Emperor's birthday. "In my opinion, it is Franz Josef who is to be celebrated. Especially after Sisi's death."

He soon discovered that he was dealing with a class of people who had a special attitude about such matters. While they did seem to feel superior to unseemly devotion in religion, yet they were prepared to be formally observant. They were church-goers.

If Alois had been a client, I could have alerted him. To be privately superior to religion may be a privilege of the upper classes, but going to church is the keel to maintain social life in the community.

One of the older gentry did reprove Alois by saying, "I would agree that it can prove unsettling to be among those who become over-enthusiastic about every last Saint's Day observance. So often these rites become a haven for unhappy women. But let us recognize that without religion, we would suffer chaos. It is the most dependable deterrent to madness in all of world history."

Alois was ready to take up the argument. "Nonetheless, good sir," he said, "permit me to suggest that religion does offer its own kind of madness. Just think of such highly immoral Popes as"—he knew the list—"Sixtus IV, Innocent VII, Alexander VI, Julius II, Leo X, and Clement VII. Simony was not only their daily practice, but a cardinal's hat was waiting for every one of their illegitimate sons. Some of them even killed their enemies. I would declare that to be madness. Yes, good sir, that was madness in the opposite direction, I would go so far as to assert."

He sat down, pleased that there was at least a modicum of courteous applause from a portion of the burghers, but then had to recognize that the applause was formal—every speaker would receive at least, a minimal response—but indeed a chill had come upon the room. He had been too outspoken. It made him decide, most unhappily, that he should not return soon to the Burger-Abends, and when a month later he did come back, he chose to be silent.

In compensation, the evenings were diversions. These gentry certainly knew more than he did about high styles of living. They were knowledgeable about everything from gourmandize and antique collecting to interesting

innovations that would soon appear in indoor plumbing and electric lighting. Again, he had to feel the insufficiency of his own experience.

No surprise, then, if at the Burger-Abends, he thought often of the young officers for whom he made boots when he was working in Vienna, dreaming all the while of a beautiful young woman who would put together exquisite lady's hats before sharing his bed in the evening. Now, on the way home from a Burger-Abend, a wealth of pity could pass through him for what had never come to pass.

Let me suggest that the intensity of such feelings can charm the heart of a saint. Self-pity is able to reach the finest operatic heights—if at considerable expense to oneself—and Alois was paying too much. In compensation, his dreams at night had begun to bother him. He had now developed the fearful intuition that sleep was a marketplace where the dead could return in order to remind you of your personal debt to them. So he thought of Johann Nepomuk and his mother, and then he had to brood over his two dead wives. What if they met in this marketplace of sleep? What if they came to agree with each other concerning their former husband? He would then be facing a cabal. "That might even be more dangerous," he told himself, "than for two of a

man's former mistresses to become friends, and be ready to compare accounts."

One of the gentry had made that remark at the Burger-Abends, and it occasioned the heartiest burst of laughter. Of course, the fellow was an old roué from one of the best families in town. Alois had enjoyed those words enough to make them his own, and even served them up at the tavern. He did notice that the louts laughed at this with as much gusto as the gentry.

Adolf liked the new school in Leonding. It was a short walk from the Garden House, and less strict than the monastery. While he was, once more, an excellent student, he could hardly wait each day for school to end. The Kumberger Forest outside Leonding was full of small caves and wooded draws and glens—splendid enclosures where one could prepare an ambush. So, he began to recruit schoolmates to join the battles, and they even began small encounters in the late afternoon, although the major event every week was reserved for Saturday morning.

Adi was also reading the novels of Karl May, and that altered many of his techniques. Of late it had been the Boers versus the English, but Karl May had wrote about a brave man named Shatterhand who was always ready to protect white settlers against American Indians.

Not all of his recruits chose to be on Shatterhand's side. That was because an Indian could steal up on a settler from behind, get an arm around the other boy's neck, and declare, "You are scalped." Then the Indians could run back to their dens in the forest before the white settlers responded by charging into any copse where they might or might not be hiding. The settlers

had long sticks to serve as rifles and any Indian touched with a stick was dead for the rest of the game and would have to go home.

On the other hand, Adolf was scalped once by a boy quick enough to dart around his protectors. Adolf declared it illegal. "You do not attack leaders," he said. "You are an Indian and they believe in the vengeance of the war-gods. So they do not attack high officers like myself. They do not dare. A terrible vengeance would fall on them."

Nonetheless, he was also discovering a fair amount of difficulty at keeping recruits who were his age under his service. They wished to be on a more equal footing. He had to let them slip away even as he brought in younger boys.

He even took Edmund along, Edmund who was now five years old and certainly the youngest to participate. Nonetheless, the older kids liked him, even if Edmund could hardly be worth much when attacks began. Still, Adolf gave him special training. He liked having him alone in the forest. He could command Edmund then, which, of course, he was not able to do at home. There, Klara would protect Edmund, Angela would protect him, and Alois certainly did.

Adi could remember that they used to safeguard him from Alois-Junior, but that had been more justifiable. After all, Alois-Junior had once planted a turd on the end of his nose. He didn't do such things to Edmund. But he did giggle at the thought that if he could do it, what a joy it would be to hear Edmund scream. Once, out in the forest, he even poked Edmund in the back with a stick, and told him it was a hornet, which, of course, Edmund mentioned to Klara. He knew it was not a hornet.

The story worried her. She could sense the animosity in Adi. Was it worse than Alois-Junior's spite? Yes, she decided, it was worse. Adolf and Edmund were blood brothers.

By now, Adi was having trouble with some of the stronger kids. One or two even gave promise that it could end in a fight. He had never had a fist-fight, he had always known how to avoid them, but now he took a vow that he would not allow anyone to beat him. He would do what was necessary, even if that meant he had to do it with a rock in his hand. Visions came to him on the edge of sleep. He saw a boy he truly feared staring at him with a blood-spattered head. Could that happen? Several of the soldiers who had quit his army were now back. Were they ready to give him trouble?

Tough kids were afraid of real superiors like their father, their mother, their older brother, or their enemies—anybody who was stronger than them. Yet they were not often. That was the secret to their weakness. They were not smart enough. So, they could not trust the quickness of their thoughts. A leader had to be ready for the treachery of others. He would make that point clear. A leader would have to face jealousy.

Meanwhile, soldiers continued to leave his army. Soon there would be snow in the forest.

Then an episode occurred which ended these wars for the rest of the winter. On a day when no one felt warm enough to hide motionless in ambush, one troop declared that he was able to start a fire by rubbing twigs together. The others jeered, but Adolf said, "If you can make a real fire, then I give you the order to proceed."

The boy did. Once the fire was lit, all went off to find fallen branches dry enough to burn. Soon the fire was not only blazing but ready to advance into the surrounding brush. Since there was no water handy, they tried to stomp it out. They couldn't. Smoke rose into the sky.

They quit the fire one by one, they retreated, then they ran until they were a quarter of a mile away. Adolf began to explain to the others, all twenty-odd, that they must not tell anyone.

He needed me then. I was offering the power to look into a compatriot's eye and decide whether he would be strong enough not to give them away.

"Yes," said Adolf, "if any one of you tells anybody about this fire, we will all have to pay for it. And then we will want to find out who told. And there will be consequences. A brave soldier does not betray his own comrades."

One by one, two by two, they left the forest. By now, the fire had grown to a size visible enough to bring teams of horses, fire-men and water wagons out from Leonding.

On the way home, Edmund said that he would tell one person, their father. "If you do," said Adolf, "I will be severely punished. And then you will have to pay for it."

"I do not believe you," said Edmund. "Our father would never permit it. So, don't you try to hit me."

"It is not me you have to fear. It is everybody else who was there and will be punished. They will be waiting for you. All of them. If necessary, I will be the one to let them know you couldn't keep your mouth shut."

"I have to tell our father. I promised."

"What did you promise?"

"I promised that I would tell him about anything that bothered me."

"All right. That is all right for you to do on other matters. But not on this. I tell you, the others will beat you up. I will not be able to protect you. I won't even want to!"

"I feel sick."

"You always were a snot-nose. Go throw up."

-4-

Alois had his own suspicions about the fire. He held Edmund on his lap and looked tenderly into his eyes, but before he could ask a question, Edmund threw up again. Alois decided to let it go. He was convinced that Adolf had had something to do with the blaze, but Edmund's life could become be a misery if he forced him to talk about it.

Moreover, there might be repercussions. If he knew that Adolf was one of the malefactors, it would be expected of him, as a good citizen, to inform the authorities. Once he did, however, they could fine him. So, Alois wiped Edmund's spew off his own shirt and hugged him tenderly. He also made a point over the next few days of not looking Adolf in the eye too closely.

A week passed with no further consequences, and Adolf began to feel close to Shatterhand, the man who could rise above crisis and catastrophe.

He would have short conversations with Shatterhand. "A fine job, pardner," would be the whisper in his ear whenever he thought of the battles he won before the fire had happened. That was the highest praise, for it came from a hero so fearless that he lived in a special heaven.

That winter, Adolf came to read a book by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, an author who spoke of a force that could shape history. This force depended on the presence of a "Fuehrer cast of Iron and Fire. The people will honor him as a savior and forgive all his sins."

Of course, Adolf's class had also been offered Kant and Goethe and Schleiermacher, but he felt that most of these authors showed too much respect for reason. Which bored him. His father, for one, was always speaking favorably of the virtues of reason. "Human nature is undependable," he would tell his family at the kitchen table. "It is not to be relied upon for government. What enables stable societies to work is the power of the law, not the people." He looked around at the table and decided this might yet be of interest to his son. "It is legal constitutions that are needed, Adolf, and then only when

constructed by the finest people. It does not matter if it is a democracy or a monarchy. What is important is that reason receives the profound respect it deserves.”

Adolf preferred Jahn. Reason, he decided, was like the sirens that swim in the Rhine and lead you to your death. Even while you drown, they sing sweet songs to bewitch your head. Personal strength was of more importance than laws. Great strength could enable you to become a savior of your people. That would take care of your sins. All sins could be forgiven, yes, if you were a great savior. Smaller matters would disappear.

Whereupon, he rejected Goethe and Schiller. Their humor annoyed him. It was too personal—as if they were much too pleased with what they were doing. Not serious enough, Adolf decided. The other two, Kant and Schleiermacher, he simply could not read. After Jahn, his highest pleasure came from the fairy tales of the Grimm brothers, also assigned to his class. Those were good stories, and deep! He delighted in acting them out for Edmund who was too young to read but always ready to listen. He explained to Edmund that the Grimm Brothers had written tales to show children how important it was to obey their parents and their older brother, even—hemmed

in by the logic of it, he had to add—and their older sister. Then he spoke of one story called The Girl Without Hands for which he made up whatever dialogue he could not remember. "This is about a father who has been ordered by the Devil to cut off the hands of his young daughter." When Edmund shrieked, Adolf spoke in the voice of the father, explaining it to his daughter. "I don't want to do this, dear daughter. But I must. These are orders. It is not for me to question orders that have been given by a very high authority. So, I must obey."

"What does the daughter say?" Edmund asked.

"Oh, she is obedient. Very obedient. She says, 'Father, do with me what you will. For I am your child.' Then she puts her hands right up on the chopping block. Her father picks up a big cleaver and he does it."

"That is so awful," said Edmund. "He chops off her hands?"

"With one big whack! But she lives happily ever after."

"How?" asked Edmund.

"Her father takes care of everything." Adolf nodded. "I could tell you a worse story but I won't."

"Tell me."

"It is about a girl who was so disobedient that she died."

"What did she do?" asked Edmund.

"It doesn't matter," said Adolf. "She was disobedient. That is enough. They bury this disobedient girl, and what do you think? It is hard to believe, but she remains disobedient even after she is dead. One of her arms keeps pushing up out of her grave right into the air."

"Is she very strong?" asked Edmund.

"The devil is helping her. What else—that is the way it happens. So when her relatives see that arm up in the air, they come out to her grave and try to force it down again. They can't. The arm is too strong. So they start to cover it with a mound of dirt. But her arm knocks all the dirt off. Then, her mother goes back to the house and picks up the heaviest poker in the fireplace. When she returns to her daughter's grave, she starts beating on the arm until it is broken. That way, the arm can be folded back under the dirt and the girl is able to find some rest."

Edmund was shivering. He was crying and laughing at once. "Would you do something like that to me?" he asked Adolf.

"Only if you should die and I would see your arm sticking out from your grave. Then, I would have to do it to you. I certainly would."

"Oh," said Edmund, "I don't like that."

"It does not matter what you would like. It would have to be done."

"Tell me one more story."

"It would take too long. I'll just give you the end: It's about a queen who boils a child to death. Then, she eats the body."

"You have to be a queen to be able to do something like that," said Edmund. "Isn't this so?"

"Yes, you probably have to be a queen. Especially if it is your own child that you are boiling," Adolf replied, "but nobody can take these matters for granted."

"My mother would never do that to me."

"Maybe not our mother, but I cannot say what Angela would do."

"Oh, no," said Edmund, "Angela would never do something like that to Paula or to me."

"Don't be so certain."

Edmund shook his head. "I know you are wrong."

"Do you want another story?"

"Maybe not.

"This one is the best," said Adolf.

"Is it truly the best?"

"Yes."

"Then maybe I don't want to hear it."

"It's about a young man who is ordered to sleep with a corpse. In time to come you, too, may have to sleep next to a dead man."

At this point, Edmund shrieked. Then he fainted.

Unfortunately for Adolf, this last conversation was overheard by Angela. She was standing now in the doorway shaking her head. Adolf had time to think that his luck was foul.

Angela knelt, and patted Edmund's face until he could sit up again. Then she went to tell Klara.

His mother now called him Adolf on every occasion when she had to scold him. "Adolf. This was dreadful. You are going to be punished."

"For what? I did nothing bad. Edmund loves the stories. He kept asking me for more."

"You knew what you were doing. So, I am going to tell your father. I have to. He will decide on your punishment."

"Mother, this is not something to bring father into."

"If I don't tell him, then I will be the one to look for a worse punishment. And maybe I will. Maybe I will buy you no present at Christmas."

"This is so unfair," said Adolf. "I try to entertain my kid brother. But he is a brat."

"Do you accept what I say? No gift for Christmas?"

"Yes. If you think that is fair, I have to accept. But, Mother, please look into your heart when the time comes. See if you will still see me as guilty then."

Klara was furious. This was even worse. He was certain that she would change her mind and buy him a good present after all.

So, that evening, she did tell Alois.

His father had no doubts. He chose to give Adolf a severe whipping. It was the worst since they moved into the house in Leonding. But this time,

Adolf was determined to make no outcry. He thought of Preisinger all the while. He made no sound. He stiffened his body.

Alois was beginning to feel as if he had Junior back on his hands.

Another criminal to deal with!—which excited even more rage.

Between each blow, Adolf was thinking of how Alois-Junior had run away. That was one memory he could use. He would make no sound. He could be as strong as Alois-Junior. If he did not cry, then his own strength might become great enough to justify whatever he might yet want to do.

Strength created its own justice. He called upon the force of command that had been with him after the fire in the forest when he ordered them all never to speak of it. Yes, he had been full of fear then, but he had called on his force of command. Then he had lived for days in the fear someone would talk. I had been with him, of course, through that turmoil. Adolf's confidence was so fragile that I had to maintain his ego then at full erection. (Egos are prey to the same weakness that hardons exhibit when unsure of what comes next.)

So, yes, I was there to monitor the whipping of Adolf, and fortify his resolve. If it was most important to him that he not weep, I had to be ready to diminish the intensity of Alois' blows whenever I thought the boy might break.

Equally, I was ready to increase his father's force, whenever it flagged. There were moments when Alois' fear of over-straining his heart was in direct opposition to my desire to salt Adolf's will. Let his hatred for Alois become intense enough to serve many an uncommon purpose ahead.

Nonetheless, balance is also crucial to our activities. I could not allow antipathy to his father to become excessive. Immense hatreds in childhood which find no dependable outlet can leave a client unstable. While high imbalance was altogether acceptable for me in Luigi Lucheni, that would not do for Adolf. We had put in too much effort on the boy. We did not care to have to deal in the future with endless errant impulses and blind rages. Indeed, one product of this heavy whipping was bound to be detestation of Edmund. That made me uneasy. Edmund had remained in such a sorry state after hearing the tales of the Grimm Brothers that Klara had had to lull him to sleep with lullabies. Adolf, lying in the next cot, felt as bruised thereby as if he had fallen out of a tree, indeed, his feelings were outraged by Klara's apparent indifference to him that he decided to run away. Right there laying on his cot he so decided—aching bones and all. He even made a point of telling this to Edmund as soon as Klara had left the room.

"It is all your doing," said Adolf. "So, I must go."

Immediately, Edmund leaped out of bed and ran to tell his father. Yet, when Alois came up the stairs to collar the potential runaway, Adolf said, "It's a lie! My brother is always telling lies. This one I will not forgive him for. This lie is atrocious! I'll get him for this!"

"You'll get him, will you?"

Alois was not ready to give another beating. His arms were aching more than Adolf's. Still, he was sufficiently concerned to lock the boy in a room on the ground floor whose only window had bars. Alone, Adolf tried to squeeze his way through. He soon discovered, however, that his clothing, particularly the metal buttons on the shirt, seemed to make the difference. They keep getting caught on the bars. So he took off his clothes, rolled them up in an overcoat, put them just outside the bars, and stark naked, attempted to wriggle through once more. He was so overheated with fury and righteousness that he did not feel the cold of the open casement window nor hear the sound of his father's boots returning to the room. Only at the sound of the door being unlocked did he pull away from the bars, seize a table cloth and wrap it around himself. Alois, entering, the brass key still in his hand, took in the situation,

and roared with laughter. He yelled for Klara.. When the boy began to move, he was kept in place by a look until Klara came through the door. Then Alois pointed to Adolf with a masterly scorn and said, "Look at the toga boy, our Toga Boy!" Klara shook her head and left the room. That roused Alois to a full harangue: "So, you were trying to run away. I tell you, it would not be such a loss. All the same, I forbid it. Not because I would miss you, Toga-Boy. I would not. I forbid it because I would have to call in the police to tell them you are missing, and they might put me in jail." Alois knew this was an outright exaggeration, but he was full of momentum. "How your mother would weep! Her son is lost and her husband is in prison. Shame has come upon the Hitler family! All because of Toga-Boy!"

Adolf had stood up to the whipping, but now he was in tears. My work on his ego would have to be redone.

-5-

Alois did have regrets. That night he woke up worrying whether Alois-Junior had been a product of too many beatings, and the next day he was walking with Mayrhofer, the subject came up of parental punishment. Alois declared that he never engaged in corporeal chastisements. (He even said to himself, "Oh, you are lying like a thief.") But Mayrhofer's good opinion was crucial to him, so on he went: "I never strike my kids. I must admit, however, that I bawl them out frequently." How could a parent not? "Adolf," says Alois, "is the one I have to scold most. I tell him his behavior is bad. He can be a miserable urchin. Sometimes I say to myself, 'I'll bash him yet.'" Alois said

that on purpose. It would serve as an explanation if it were to come out that he had struck Adolf.

In truth, however, it was even becoming more difficult to seize him. The boy now had a way of sliding and turning, a product perhaps of his skill at the war games. Usually, he succeeded in getting away from Alois after one off-centered slap on the rump. And for those times when his father did manage to turn him over his knee, there was no great arm left to give the whipping. How sodden was Alois' heart on such occasions. It had been much more enjoyable to lash him verbally, so directly enjoyable to call him "Toga-Boy." Alois kept the mockery in play over the next few weeks, and Adolf reacted by coming down with an attack of measles.

Such a connection is, of course, much too simple. In Leonding, at this time, others his age were also in bed with the disease. It was certainly contagious, but Adolf had, in effect, been physically lowered by the last small host of unfortunate events. His army had to cease operations after the fire in the forest, and now the jeers about Toga-Boy rankled his skin. The worst news for him, however, was to hear that Der Alte had died. An obituary had even appeared in the Linz Tages Post, such news forwarded all the way from

Hafeld, but then, the event could be seen as sufficiently unusual to be worth a description in newsprint. By the time his body had been found, he was in a sad state of decomposition. "Such," observed the Post, "is often the fate of lonely hermits." To make matters worse, his bees had perished in the cold.

Adolf truly mourned him. The old man had always been so gracious to him. Other than his mother, Der Alte had been the only adult to treat him as if he were important.

In turn, Alois retained enough sour feeling about Der Alte's masterful lectures to be rewarded now with a keen trace of pleasure—a most unseemly reaction to have, after all. So, to compensate—he hardly knew why—he did buy Adolf an air-gun for Christmas. It was a solid gift, ready to pump out pellets with enough power to drop a squirrel or a rat, and so would yet prove its value to the boy, but not as yet. Most definitely, as Alois could note, Adolf was still mourning Der Alte. Indeed, Alois had the impression that his son might even be crying in his sleep. He did look frightful in the morning. Then he came down with the measles.

Klara kept the house in a rigid quarantine. No one was allowed to visit Adolf in the hitherto unoccupied maid's room on the second floor. Only Klara,

wearing a gauze mask, would come in to look after him, and she would wash her hands afterward with a hideous-smelling antiseptic.

He had a rash, he had red eyes, he was not allowed to read, he suffered boredom, he complained endlessly to his mother of the monotony of his existence, yet was almost glad when she went out again. The odor of the antiseptic that she brought into the room was near to intolerable.

It worked itself out, however, as a mild case. The white spots in his throat and on his tongue disappeared in a few days, his rash lessened, his disquiet increased. He was obsessed with how filthy he felt, for was that not exactly the way they all thought of him? Diseased and therefore filthy. He worried about where Der Alte might be now that he was not only dead, but had been left alone to rot.

-6-

A last word about Der Alte might be fitting. Adolf still hoped that Der Alte, rot or not was on his way to Heaven. Such a sentiment in my client impressed me because I was not ready to believe we had carried him over to Hell in high style. In truth, I do not know much about Hell. I am not even certain it exists. The Maestro has kept us, after all, in enclaves. They are well sealed. We are not supposed to know what we do not need to know.

To keep up our morale, therefore, we are reminded constantly of how much cosmic pretension there is in human affairs. We are frequently brought back to Nietzsche's immortal remark, "All priests are liars."

"How could it be otherwise?" the Maestro says. "The Dummkopf is not about to open His secrets to individuals distorted enough to choose the

ministry or the priesthood, to dominate gullible audiences with descriptions of how the Lord will reward their belief when they die. Priests are, indeed, liars. They do not know a thing about the highest matters. Nor, for that matter, do any of you."

Leave it then that I know nothing of the final destination of Der Alte. I do suspect he was the sort of long-term client that we are often obliged to ignore by the end. Certainly his use for us had dissipated. So, it is possible that he was ready to beseech Heaven to grant him final acceptance, and who knows—the Dummkopf, from what we are told, does accept some of our clients for reincarnation. As I have mentioned, the Maestro is not vigorously opposed to this. "Let us have the pleasure of picking up this piece of small fry again if the Dummkopf is so foolish as to give Der Alte another chance to pump up his vanities."

In contrast, all throughout his illness, Adolf did think often of Der Alte and of Edmund. He was certainly not as generous in feeling for his brother. After Adolf recovered from the measles, Edmund came down with a severe case. I will save the reader from too detailed a description of the turmoil and then the agony that reverberated—that is the word—through the Garden House

as Edmund's condition worsened. His face swelled. He became incoherent.

The doctor warned the family that he might yet suffer from encephalitis.

In their bedroom, Alois knelt beside Klara, and they began to pray for Edmund's life. Alois even said, "I will believe in God if Edmund is spared. May I die if I do not obey this vow."

We will never know whether Alois would have been true to such a promise—a lifetime of mental positions fortified one by one over the years would have been ready to sally forth and attack the vow at every future turn. Still, at one point he did say, "God, take my life, but spare the boy," and he meant it.

Then, Edmund died.

Prayer is an expedition beset by peril to those who pray. We, for example, have a power—which can prove most expensive to call upon—that enables us to block even the most essential, heartfelt, and desperately important prayers, and we will exercise such powers when the stakes demand it.

Cheap prayer, on the contrary, we encourage. We see all that as adding to the Dummkopf's Fatigue, adding to the Dummkopf's Indifference. Cheap

prayer wearies Him. Cheap patriotism enrages Him. (Cheap patriotism is is, after all, one of our most successful provenances.)

The point is that despite Alois and Klara's prayers, blocked or not, Edmund did die on February 2, 1900, and the family was left in indescribable condition. I even felt as if I were one of the mourners. Edmund was the first child for which I had entertained so curious a set of sensations as love (or at least some representation of what might be whole-hearted liking) sufficient to explain the warmth that inhabited me when in the presence of that child. I had not known what I might be feeling. I only knew that even as Adolf was not ready to contemplate his brother's death (for, indeed, he had a secret to bury as direct and powerful as the arm that protruded from the grave) so was I not ready to contemplate it either. I, too, had been culpable.

-7-

On the day of Edmund's funeral Alois told Klara that he would not go. At first, he could not even give a reason. He stood there like a pillar of stone.

Then, he began to weep. "I cannot control my feelings today," he said. "Would you have me break down in church? A church that I hate?" For the first time in their marriage, she raised her voice in anger. "Yes," she said, "this church that you hate. But I go to it for peace. For a little peace, a little consolation. I am able to speak to our Gustav then, and to Ida and Otto, and now"—it was her turn to burst into tears—"to Edmund."

They did not quarrel. They wept together. She said at last, "You must stop being so hard on Adolf. He is now your only hope for a good son. Why must you beat him into the ground?"

Alois nodded. "I will make a promise," he said. "That is, if you will stay here with me today. For I cannot go to the funeral. I will not be able to keep myself together." Before he could finish speaking, he was weeping again. He hugged her. "I need you," he said. "I need you to stay with me in this house." He had never said that to her before. He could hardly believe he was saying it. "Yes," he declared, "I will take a solemn promise. I will not strike Adolf again."

It is a mistake to interrupt a husband and wife who are in pain, but I cannot resist remarking that in my experience, few marriages exist where a vow is not countermanded by a secret covenant.

Yes, that is our Alois, he has already told himself, "No, I will not strike Adolf again unless he does something awful," but then, Klara was not of one piece now either. She was beginning to wonder if it was the fate of her family to be destroyed. Indeed, she was not ready for the funeral. This once, let God pay attention to her.

So, Klara told Angela that she must represent the family. "If people ask, just say that your parents are stricken. This is true," said Klara. "I don't trust myself to go, and your father cannot. I have never seen him weep before. He

is near to out of his mind. Angela, it is so terrible for him. I cannot leave the man alone. I must not! So today, you will act as the woman of the family. For today at least, you must be the woman."

Angela said, "You have to go to church with Adolf and me. It will be a scandal if you don't."

"You," said Klara, "are much too young to worry about scandal. Tell them we are ill. That has to be sufficient."

"Will you stay here at least, will you promise to stay in the house?" asked Angela. "I am afraid he will want to go out. He will want you to bring him to the tavern. He will get drunk so it doesn't hurt so much. You must not leave the house."

"It depends on your father."

"You are his slave."

"Silence yourself!" Klara said.

So to Adolf's surprise, he and Angela went to church by themselves. When asked for a reason, all Angela said was, "Before we go, you must take a bath. You smell awful again."

-8-

Alone with Alois, Klara could not bear to think of each and every death in her family, not only her children, but the deaths of her brothers and sisters. "Cannot God have mercy?" she asked herself. She felt a frightening exhaustion, as if she were standing in an old house and the floor was about to give way and she had no interest in saving herself. She was tired of believing that the fault must be her own.

I have to admit that I was tempted to approach her, but I knew this would be refused by the Maestro. What, after all, could be gained by looking to pick up a client like Klara? We could put the Cudgels in disarray for losing her. But what labor there would be to train so new and difficult a client.

Indeed, I soon recognized that Klara was having no more than a rebellion is common among pious people. Piety can also serve as a wall, there to keep the pious from recognizing how profoundly angry they are at God—this God who has failed to treat them by what they see as their proper right. Since this illicit wrath is usually submerged in pestilential waters of modesty and guilt, they do not make sterling clients for us, although, in the event, we do use some. Pious people can derange those in their family who are less pious. Repetition kills the soul.

On this long day, Klara and Alois stayed at home. Given the cleavage left in his ego, he felt so savaged by the loss of Edmund that he had to look into the fact of his incest. He wondered whether he and Klara were polluted people. If so, Edmund might be better off dead. Again he wept.

When, at one point, Klara began to have second thoughts and said, "Maybe we should go to the church after all," he was seized with fear. "For me to break down in public," he said again, "that is worse than death." Now Klara asked herself, "What is wrong with weeping in church when one's heart is broken?" She began to wonder. Was Alois evil? Did he belong to the Evil One? Did she? What of the vow she had taken when Alois-Junior seemed

lifeless on the ground? Perhaps it was better, yes, actually better, that they did stay away. For evil people to attend a funeral might hurt the departed.

Slowly, over that long day, as they remained at home, she felt an awful flush in her breast. Was that her fury with God? She, too, was now afraid to go to church. Yes, how could one ever dare to bring such fury into a holy place? That would be like taking another vow of allegiance to the foul one.

-9-

At the funeral, Adolf heard none of the words. His head was ablaze. In the hour that Edmund died, Alois had said to him, "You are now my only hope."

"Yes," Adolf said to himself, "it is true, my father used to see Edmund as the only hope. That is what he really was saying. But actually, he hates me. He thinks I was cruel to Edmund."

Yet Adolf refused to agree that he might have mistreated Edmund. "It was no more," he told himself, "than the way Alois-Junior used to treat me."

All too soon, however, he began to feel full of dread. How deep and unrelenting might be the anger of the angels!

Just a few days before he had been the first to come down with measles, he had taken Edmund for a walk in the woods. Still fearing then that the fire might yet have its consequences, he was uneasy about Edmund's loyalty. So he picked up a twig on the path and scalped him with a slow, ritual move. One drew a short stick in a circle around the captured soldier's head just above the forehead, above the left ear, under the back of the head, and then back above the right ear to return to the forehead. Adolf did this to Edmund and said, "Now, I own all that is in your head. Your brain is mine."

"How can you say that?" said Edmund. "That is stupid."

"Don't be a fool," said Adolf. "Why do you think Indians wanted scalps? It was because that was the way to own the mind of the person they had just captured."

"But you are my brother."

"It is better for you that your brother owns your brain than some stranger. A stranger could throw it away."

"Give it back to me," said Edmund.

"I will when the time comes. But only when the time comes."

"When will that be?"

"When I tell you. Not before."

"I don't believe you. I don't believe you own my brain. It feels the same."

"Oh, you will see a difference. You will yet feel little headaches. They will bother you. That is the first sign."

Edmund was ready to cry but he would not, he did not, and they walked home in silence.

Now, in church, Adolf's heart was beating in time, step by step, with the pace they had taken all those weeks ago on returning from the woods.

It can be said that he was now feeling a most peculiar pain in his heart from this recollection. It was as sharp as a splinter driven under one's fingernail.

Looking to lose such pain, he told himself not to think about Edmund any more. Not on this day. Indeed, he prayed to God to be able to cease thinking of Edmund and (with my help) succeeded to the degree that one can remove nearly all of a splinter that is under the nail. The fragment that

remains, however, has now become a root ready to offer more constant discomfort.

I can say that Adolf was absolutely not ready to think of the very last time he had seen Edmund, and so that memory festered in his heart.

It was his turn now to be ready to weep. He thought of how Klara used to call him "Ein Liebling Die Gotter." "Oh," she used to tell him in those years, "you are so special." He remembered how she said he was "a beloved of God." That was true, he told himself. He had survived. He had not been like Gustav and the others. Perhaps he had been selected by Destiny for some special purpose.

I could see the extent of the reconstruction that now lay before me. I would have to bring all of Klara's once-loving words back to Adolf; restore him once more to what he knew when he was three. Yes, he, Adolf, had been the one selected to go on living.

Now, to the contrary, he had begun to feel that his mother would be ready to abandon him, just as she had abandoned Edmund. Why, then, must he feel so guilty? Let her be the one to feel these pains. She had pretended to love Edmund and yet she was not here in church. How awful. So unfeeling!

-10-

Even as the brother and sister came away from the grave, the mourners did pay attention to Angela who was embarrassed at knowing how red-faced she was when she tried to speak of how terrible were her parents' feelings. "It is so frightful a day for them—they are both in bed. They are too weak to stand." On she went, embarrassed, red-faced, and yet excited to be the center of this occasion.

Once they were alone, however, and could walk off into the forest, he did say, "Why do I know that my mother will not come to my funeral?"

Angela berated him: "Klara is the finest person I have ever known. The kindest. No one is more good! How can you say something like that? She is suffering for your father. He loved Edmund so much!" And when in payment for this remark, Adolf looked venomous, she added, "As well he should. Edmund was a beautiful child. I cannot say that of you. Even on this day of your brother's funeral"—she had to repeat it!—"you still have an unpleasant body odor."

"What do you mean?" he answered. "I took a bath. You know that. You even forced me to. You said, 'Going to the funeral, smelling as you do Get into the tub,' and I told you it would take too long to boil the water. What did you care?"

He had had to use cold water. It had been a splash and a wipe, no more. Maybe he still did smell. "No," he said now, "I forbid you to speak that way to me. I do not have an unpleasant odor. I did take a bath."

Angela said, "Bath or no bath, Adolf. You just may not be a very good person."

He was so furious with her that he stepped off the forest trail into the snow. She, just as upset, just as angry, followed him. The moment they were

out of earshot of any person who might have been at the service, she yelled at him so loudly that he ran off, "Not a good person. An awful one. You are a monster."

Alone in the forest, Adolf began to have fears of his own death. It was so cold in the snow. He had pictures of Gustav and Ida and Otto and Edmund. And, now in his mind, he saw Edmund's arm rise out of the grave. He recalled the look of terror in Edmund's eyes as he listened to the Grimm Brothers fairy tales.

When Angela caught up with him, they walked home silently to find their father with a red and swollen face. Alois turned to him, weeping, and said, "You are now my life." He embraced Adolf and began to weep all over again. How false were his words, thought Adolf. Alois still believed that Edmund was the only hope. He could not even pretend that anything else was true. "I hate my father," Adolf said again to himself.

-11-

Several nights after the funeral, I prepared a dream-etching where an angel spoke to Adolf long enough to tell him that his cruelties to Edmund would yet be justified. Why? Because Adolf's life had been spared in infancy. There was a special purpose yet to come. He need only remain loyal to every command he received from above. In this manner, he could escape all ordinary death. He would yet become God's gift to the people, fierce as fire and as strong as steel.

It was a carefully worked-up dream, but I did ask myself whether such a belief was being implanted too soon. It did suggest that he would never die.

Of course, that is not at all impossible to believe. It is indeed difficult for any human to picture his or her own death. In secret, the soul does expect to be immortal, and to a degree, this may even be true. Many humans are born again. I would not wish to suggest that they are born again by way of a church ceremony under the passing hand of a priest or reverend, nor born again by being upended in the river, no, they are born again through reincarnation. The Maestro has stated that this is part of a conceptual scheme developed by the D.K. "He does see Himself as an artist—as the Divine Artist. But he is a blunderer—so many of His creations are botched. A good many are disasters which He then plows back into the food chain. That is His only means of removing His multitudinous meaningless spawnings from choking the existence of the rest. Indeed, there is more art in his food chain than in the rest of His creation. Yet, I will admit, He is dogged. He is still looking to improve His previous creations." As the Maestro describes it, the Dummkopf is bound to try over and over, even with many of His most unsatisfactorily developed humans. And that is why few men and women really believe that they will cease to exist. They would say it aloud if not for their fear of appearing ridiculous. Indeed, their real anxiety is that the new life, because of the ways

in which they wasted the last one, might bring them closer to the cloud of the Dummkopf's Wrath, closer than any previous incarnation. One's new position in life might well be a reflection of how badly the last life was lived, and so the rebirth would offer a pure example of human Hell. While the Maestro does not impart such answers to us, I am convinced that there is a region in the unconscious of every human being where belief does exist that one is immortal, part of the scheme, so to speak, that conceived of life in the first place.

I may as well add that this conviction of personal immortality does cause us considerable difficulty. Many of our clients, particularly late in life, come to the conclusion that if they atone for their sins, they will be reborn. That can play havoc with hitherto dependable men and women. They are not, after all, completely unbalanced on this certainty. No matter how abominable and unrepentant are a few of the humans chosen by Him to be born again, he probably does feel there is something exceptional present even if it failed to develop properly on the last time out.

At this point, I even began to wonder whether the Maestro had developed his own species of reincarnation and so might have input on some

of the D.K.'s councils. It is, obviously, too large a question for me, but the Maestro does seem to know which of our clients have been chosen for rebirth. Yet to speak of this with greater authority, I would have to know how the D.K. envisions the future of His Creation. Is it comparable to the ruthlessness of our Maestro? Is ruthlessness indeed a necessary passion in these divine matters?

-12-

A few months after Edmund's death, Klara began to have fearful thoughts. Was it possible that Adolf's attitude to Edmund had been more than cruel, even unforgivable? Angela told her that when the brothers played together she had overheard Adi terrifying Edmund with fairy tales from Grimm, the very worst ones.

From her bedroom window, Klara could see Adolf shooting at rats, while sitting on the cemetery wall. She would flinch each time she heard the popping sound of the discharge. For her, the air-gun was equal to an ugly voice. She felt as if she could hear disaffected spirits coming up to her from

the cemetery. When someone is not a client, we can still exert a modest everyday influence on them, and in this case, I certainly did not wish Klara to be impelling Adolf more deeply into his depression so I did lay atmospheres upon her sleep to suggest that Adi was not evil, but suffering terribly. This technique is always there to work with any mother who retains some love for her child, and so, over a period, the situation did improve. Klara came to recognize once again how great was the need to soften Alois' feelings. The boy's dreadful mood, she told her husband, was even beginning to affect his marks at the little school in Leonding and all this after he had been doing so well there. Since Adolf was very bright, she said, the explanation had to be that he was mourning for Edmund. "But he is also afraid of you," Klara dared to say, "he hates disappointing you. Alois, you must become again a good man to your son."

Those were heartfelt words, but they only succeeded in reminding him of Edmund. Adolf, alas, was not Edmund. All the same, he nodded.

"I will do what I can," he said. "Sometimes my heart slams shut like a door."

Once aroused, however, she was not about to close off her own feelings. She must find a way to be near again to Adolf. His heart could also shut like a door. So, she chose to remind him that the year was 1900—they were in a new century. “Adolf, this will be your century,” she told him. “This century will belong to you. I know it. You will do wonderful things in time to come.”

He did feel important that she spoke in such a tone. Of course, he hardly knew whether to believe her. How could it be his century? At this point, he felt incapable of accomplishing anything of high worth. So, he nagged her. “Is it really so?” he kept asking. Perhaps he went on for too long. At last, her tongue slipped enough to uncover the truth, “You are the one I must love,” she said. “And I do. I must love you, and I do.” He brooded over her phrasing. He was aware for the first time that women were not there just to love you because that was their duty. Instead, they could offer love that was real, or a substitute that was not as dependable.

Here, the Maestro intervened. “Do not,” I was told, “encourage any undue interest in women. Let him remain fearful.”

-13-

On late overcast afternoons in early spring, when there was a fog, and the odors of moss and mold rose from many a tombstone, Adolf would sit in the damp of the low cemetery wall and wait in the dusk for rats to come out. When they faced to the west, their eyes would shine in the sunset, even in a clouded sunset, and so would offer sharp targets. When he was able, however, to hit one with his air gun, he did not feel up to approaching the corpse. It was too close to evening for him to be ready to step down into the cemetery from the low wall.

Early morning, however, before he was off to school, he would go by, and if no dogs or cats had been ready to dare the graveyard at night, and the cadaver of the rat was still intact, he would inhale a first hint of the aroma of carrion and that would stir his mood. He wondered whether comparable manifestations had gone on in Edmund's flesh.

Even by spring, he did not feel ready to go back to the forest. He kept to his perch on the cemetery wall.

In turn, I had decided not to discourage Adolf's guilt. Indeed, this instinct was soon corroborated. While the Cudgels were partial to guilt since they were invariably looking for more atonement in their clients, we usually chose to calcify guilt, leave it, so to speak, bone-dry, even if that did raise a risk that we were narrowing their future possibilities, a delicate choice in this situation, but I had to be ready to raise Adolf from his depression before it grew too extreme. Depression can descend into aberration. On many an evening, Adi sat on the cemetery wall wondering what he would do if Edmund's arm were to rise suddenly out of the grave. Would he run? Would he attempt to talk to Edmund? Would he ask for forgiveness? Or would he pelt the limb with his air gun?

All through the winter, the spring, and the summer of 1900, the memory of Edmund's illness remained like a dead weight on his chest.

It was not hard to discern the reason. Adolf still possessed some funds of conscience. Even as self pity is the lubricant we use most often to smooth the entrance of the heart into uglier emotions so does conscience become our most determined antagonist. The Cudgels whip their people into shape by way of their conscience. We, in turn, when dealing with the most advanced of our clients, do our best to extirpate conscience altogether. Once accomplished, we then proceed to build up a good substitute for conscience, ready and able to justify most of the passions that the Cudgels seek to repress: greed, lust, envy, gluttony—no need to list the sacred seven. The point is that when a facsimile of a working conscience is properly developed by us, our clients' ability to justify their ugliest acts becomes exceptionally strengthened. We have then succeeded in releasing conscience from the shameful memories that obliged it to develop in the first place, and I can add that we are most successful when the all-but emptied remains of the old conscience are stubborn enough to vie with one's new sense of strength, and so are felt to be a useless scourge, an enemy to one's well being. (Murderers who take pride in their daring have

usually succeeded in banishing all conscience.) Or, to put it otherwise, a good deal of the dread that humans feel when the angels wish to punish them, can now be obviated by violent acts, particularly by killing others. So we benefit from war. Our work is easier then. It is calm periods that call upon the skills of advanced devils like myself. I will say that it is not at all routine to convince a man or woman to slay another. Left to themselves, they worry that murder may be the most selfish of the acts. Primitives certainly know that to be true. Ready to sacrifice an animal for one of their feasts, they are wise enough to ask forgiveness before they raise the knife.

In turn, I was now ready to fortify Adi's sense of the power that murder can offer the murderer. Of course, he was too young for our developed techniques, but I did work up a dream-etching where Adolf was a hero in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. This entailed the suggestion that he had been there in his previous life almost two decades before he was born in 1889. It was not difficult to bring him to believe he had massacred a platoon of French soldiers who had made the signal mistake of attacking his lonely outpost. Of course, such a dream-etching was gross, but it did prepare a base on which to

lay more sophisticated impulses later. Standing by itself, the Franco-Prussian dream-etching was a pure wish-fulfillment.

May I say that we knew all about wish-fulfillment long before Doctor Freud had anything to say on the matter. Our approach to human psychology must of necessity go far beyond all those good Viennese doctors. Indeed, we smile at the superficiality of so many of Dr. Freud's analyses. That is his fault. He wanted nothing, after all, to do with angels or demons, and was willfully determined not to recognize the engagement of the Dummkopf and the Maestro in large or small human matters.

On the other hand, a small portion of praise can still be given to Freud for his delineation of the ego. That concept has become one of the tools by which humans have become almost as adept as we are at assessing shifts of self-worth within.

Be it said that the state of Adolf's ego had become the focus of my attention. It would do no good to keep raising his estimate of his own worth if, at the same time, he was terrified that he had helped to kill Edmund. Because he did not wish to believe it, he most certainly did feel guilty and the worst of it was that I hardly knew the answer. Had he, or had he not?

The facts were simple—which is to say that the deed was clear, but the consequences were not. On a morning when Angela was working with Klara and Paula in the garden and Alois was out for his walk, Adolf found Edmund playing alone in the room that they had shared until Adolf's illness.

Adolf walked over and kissed Edmund. Simple as that. I must admit that I was impelling him. If, personally, I certainly did feel something comparable to affection for Edmund, there was little I could do about it in this situation. In those days, I was not prepared to defy any order given directly by the Maestro.

"Why are you kissing me?" asked Edmund.

"Because I love you."

"You do?"

"I love you, Edmund."

"Is that why you scalped me?"

"You must forget that. You must forgive me. I think that is why I caught the measles."

"Can that be the real reason?"

"I think so. Yes. And that is why I must kiss you now. That is the way I can give you back the scalp I took."

"You do not need to do that. So far I have no headaches"

"We cannot take a chance. Let me kiss you again."

"Isn't that bad to do now that you have these measles?"

"Between brothers and sisters, yes, but not between brothers. It has been established medically that brothers can kiss even when one has measles."

"Momma said we must not kiss you. None of us."

"That is because she is a woman and does not understand that it is all right between brothers."

"You swear?"

"I swear."

"Let me see your fingers when you swear."

Adolf was impelled most definitely by me then. He held up his hands, fingers out-stretched. "I swear," he said, and kissed Edmund repeatedly, a boy's kiss full of slobbering, and Edmund kissed him back, full of his own slobbering. He was so happy that Adi did love him after all.

Edmund came down with the measles. And the disease did prove fatal. We were responsible for his death or we were not. I knew no more than Adolf. So I buried such questions under the powers of wish-fulfillment. Night after night a new platoon of French soldiers was massacred in Adolf's sleep, and if there had not been all the other problems with which he had to contend, I think he might have been ready to move his psychic strengths over to rigorous belief that murder offers power to a murderer.

BOOK XIII

ALOIS AND ADOLF

Obviously, Adolf Hitler's later readiness to exterminate humans by the millions and the gas chambers was not at this time an active longing. If I speak, therefore, of a year like 1941, it is to make up direct connection to 1930 in the months after Edmund's death. While it is apparent that I was engaged already, pulled by the Nazis, into intensifying the cause, even then, that boy, young Adolf Hitler, could yet harbor a high regard for the gods of Rome, and in that manner believe that his own soul would live in the future. I also find it interesting that in the beginning of 1941, close to the last few months of his life he wished to be crowned. The nearest aspect of his life had always been his body, and sometimes had something that towards which people often

-1-

Obviously, Adolf Hitler's later readiness to exterminate humans by the train-load and the gas chamber was not at this time an active longing. If I speak, therefore, of a year like 1944, it is to make no direct connection to 1900 in the months after Edmund's death. While it is apparent that I was engaged already, guided by the Maestro, into intensifying the sense, even then, that he, young Adolf Hitler, could yet become a high agent of the gods of death, and in that manner believe that his own end would not be like others, I also find it interesting that in the beginning of 1945, close to the last few months of his life, he wished to be cremated. The meanest aspect of his life had always been his body, that somewhat foul-smelling flesh towards which Angela often

reacted as if his soul were bound to it. Yet, this late in his life, such understanding was false. By then, his soul—by any but our measure—was much more befouled than his torso. Of course it is also true that when one holds the power to select whole ranks and categories of people to be liquidated, one does become an overseer of death and such leaders are in immense need of a very hard shell to their ego, hard enough to feel no intimate horror over the price to one's soul. Most statesmen who become leaders of a country at war have usually risen to such eminence because they had already installed the ability not to suffer sleepless nights when obliged to think of the casualties on the other side. They were ready to call forth any bloody deeds they needed. At their disposal was the mightiest of all our social engines of psychic immunization—patriotism! That is still our most dependable lever upon the masses, although it may yet be replaced by revealed religion which shows every promise of becoming a weapon of mass destruction.

If these are the conclusions I have come to, I must also warn the reader: Our Maestro detests our biggest thoughts. He speaks of them as vapors. He reminds us to return to more modest matters.

I think that by the end Hitler shared this sentiment. In 1944, one of the worst years of his life, with the war going badly, the Fuehrer, out at his underground retreat in East Prussia—The Wolfschanze—liked to tell his secretaries passing anecdotes over dinner. As, for example, how his father, on many a night, would lay a whipping on him. But, he assured his secretaries, he had been as brave as an American Indian under torture. Never did he make the smallest sound. On he went, regaling the ladies with these modest tales of his heroism. By then, being much more aged than his actual years—fifty-five—Adolf was ready to enjoy the advantages of old age. He delighted in receiving the admiration of women without having to pass through the anxiety of deciding whether he should consider copulating with them. His sexual spirit, so wholly unlike Alois', had never committed itself to seeking the glories or disasters of new fornication. (The fear of embarrassment was prodigious in Adolf and we looked to keep it that way—one more small tool at our command.) Given the sum of the levers and buttons we had installed in the Fuehrer by then, an earthly companion was not in the least necessary to our aims.

Of course, the story he told the secretaries was a shameless exaggeration. On occasion he would even speak of two hundred strikes delivered by his father's hand.

Once, in the late 1930's, talking to Hans Frank, he told him, "When I was ten or twelve I had to go late at night into this stinking smoke-filled tavern. I made no attempt to spare my father's feelings. I went right up to the table where he sat staring at me doltishly and I shook him. 'Father,' I would say, 'it's time for you to come home. Up you get.' And often I would have to wait for a quarter of an hour or more, pleading and scolding before I could get him to his legs. Then I supported him home. I never felt so horribly ashamed. Oh, Frank, I know what a demon alcohol can be. Because of my father, it was the bane of my youth." Indeed, he told the story so well that Herr Frank even repeated it in the course of the Nuremberg trials.

-2-

Actually, Alois happened to be drinking with care. He did not dare to take too much. The fact that Edmund had died and so would not be there to greet him in the morning remained close to unendurable. He would feel as if he had consumed a bowl of ashes in his sleep.

On many an evening, he now needed to be alert because he was going often to the Burger-Abends, and the gentry were certainly more cultivated than himself. So he was not ready to get drunk, not when he needed these people. They could lift him for an hour out of his worst moods. Without such elegant diversion, he would have to spend his night, whether in drink or sober,

brooding on the young one's death. And so he became a regular and was usually present all four nights a week at whatever was the inn chosen for that date. If, in the beginning, he had been stiff in his entrances and departures, the condition was eased by the quiet compassion he was now being offered. A general courtesy met him when he entered and many offered their warmth when he left. "This is the good side of the gentry," he told himself. At Customs, he had always seen them as chilly in their manner except when they had something to hide. Then they were over-friendly.

What impressed him now was that one of the members present most often at these Burger-Abends was a rabbi named Moriz Friedmann who had been a member of the Austrian District School for eighteen years. Alois could see that the other gentry were respectful of Friedmann and this certainly helped to reinforce his notion that humankind could be divided into those who were cultured and those who were not. If a Jew could be acceptable to a Burger-Abend, he told himself, then so could a peasant born into the lowest circumstances, yes, even if it were never to be mentioned, a child born illegitimately to a woman who slept on straw in an abandoned cattle trough. No, he was not about to drink too much on these evenings. Adolf never had to

bring him home drunk. Given the decent welcome the Burger-Abends gave him now, he felt much too much warmth toward them. Indeed, the more he thought about it the more he concluded that he had a right to belong in their society because he, too, like Rabbi Moriz Freedmann, was a special individual. Something like six hundred Jews were living in Linz at this time which, given a population of sixty thousand, meant that there was one such man or woman in one hundred. Most of these Jews came from Bohemia and were actually not as crude as one would expect—so he would have told Klara if she had not supposed he was Jewish. Indeed, many of them were assimilated. They didn't walk around in old caftans smelling of stale places. Many were professionals or manufacturers, and many, like Moriz Freedman, had honorary federal posts. So, yes, they had come from the outside and so had he.

By now, Alois felt (just like Mayrhofer) that the town tavern was too raw. Given his grief, the loud tavern voices could bring him close to tears whenever he thought of Edmund. Of course, he drank more at the tavern—but what an unmanly sight it would be, bursting into tears.

-3-

Adolf entered Middle School in September of 1900, close to eight months after Edmund's death. Provided he was able to pass all his grades over the next four years—no routine matter—he would be out by his fifteenth birthday. His preference had been to attend the Gymnasium with its curriculum focused on the classics and art rather than the Realschule where emphasis would be given to practical disciplines.

Alois and Adolf had discussions concerning this. Sometimes, Klara would sit in the room, sometimes not, but the point at issue was the Gymnasium. Adi felt he could work there to good effect. His talent, he declared, was for art. Looking to put Alois in a compliant mood, he added that

he was also looking forward to studying the classics. Alois was scornful. "The classics? Even, your spelling in German has deteriorated."

Klara spoke up. "Our boy is upset. Naturally, that affects many other things."

"I can appreciate some of his unhappy thoughts," said Alois, "But what you say is neither here nor there. I see no use in trying to enter the Gymnasium when he is not going to prove acceptable." He chose to look into Adolf's eyes. "Since you seem unable these days to speak German all-so-correctly, how, in the name of what your mother calls the Good God, will you do anything with Latin or Greek?"

At this point, Alois chose to speak to him in Latin. Not to test him, but to mock him. Absque labore nihil," said Alois.

"And what does that mean?" asked Klara sharply. How cruel of Alois! He made a show of lighting his pipe, pulling smoke in slowly, then releasing it at leisure before he said, "Without labor there is nothing,' is what it means," he said, offering up the smoke with small cultivated puffs of his lower lip. "I would say that applies to one's choice of schooling. The future for most young men today is likely to be in the technical subjects." He looked into his son's

eyes once more as if to confirm what small readiness there would be to study the ancients. "Yes," he said, "in the Gymnasium the students must master their grammar in Latin and in Greek. Those are fine knowledges to acquire. It would give you superiority over others for the rest of your life. But there is nothing without proper labor, and that school, Adolf, is not for you. Nor do you require courses in Ancient History or Philosophy or Art. In very few of them do I believe you would excel. It is better for you, in my opinion, to go to the Realschule. Not only is their practical teaching what you need, but I can help you to get in." (He was thinking of Mayrhofer's assistance.) "The other one will be too unlikely, no matter what efforts I put forth. One look at your spelling and they will send you home."

Alois knew that he could ask some of the Burger gentry for recommendations to the Gymnasium, but to what end? He would lose so much more than he could gain, and to no point or purpose. He sighed.

-4-

Linz was five miles away, and with its sixty thousand inhabitants, the city was twenty times larger than Leonding. A trolley car was available once an hour, but should Adolf miss it, there was a long walk across fields and forest before he reached the Realschule, a most forbidding edifice on dark days.

Each morning, he would be reminded in one or another manner by his father, his mother, or even Angela, that he was the only one left of Alois' sons and so the family must be able to count on him. Klara's homilies about honoring and fearing one's father were back in force, even if he was being

asked to honor such sentiments in the face of Alois' view that he might be bright, but was also spoiled enough to live in danger of becoming useless.

Before long, he came to loathe the Realschule. Gone was the pleasure he had taken in Hafeld, in Lambach, and in Leonding at how he could excel in class. Now when he entered, the dark halls shared the gloom that sat on his chest. He thought often of the day when Alois, weeping over Edmund's death, had come close to suffocating him with the force of his embrace even as he kept repeating, "Now, you are my only hope,"—and such hope was full of tobacco breath. Yet, even as Alois was speaking, it was as if he was offering these words to the air. Could the atmosphere ever believe in such a lie? And this recollection of his father's assertion, so full of misery and mistruth was now attached to the portals of the Realschule.

His classmates, for the most part, came from well-to-do homes. They carried themselves differently from the farm boys and town boys he had known for the last few years, and he did not believe his mother when she told him: "Your father is the second most important man in Leonding. And the first, the mayor, Mayrhofer, is his good friend."

He doubted that their importance reached the city of Linz. No one there seemed to respect where he came from. Why, the Mayor, the most important man in Leonding, also sold vegetables in his store—a most elevated mayor! Adolf had not been in the school for a day before he felt uncultivated. In recess, he overheard two students speaking of the merits of the opera they had been taken to by their parents the night before. That was enough to give him pause, but then he began to think he had also heard a remark about himself: “This Hitler, he comes from the peasants.” It was obvious to him that he was being seen as a dolt who had to walk all the way to school from the provinces. Yes, on rainy days, he could take the trolley, but only if his parents gave him the pfennigs to afford it. An outlander! So many of these boys from Linz had never even seen Leonding. They probably assumed it was mud-ridden. They certainly had no idea of the beauty of Lambach's monastery. And then he could hardly stay for long after class and make friends with anyone. No, he had to plod back to the Garden house. His mock wars in the forest were possible now only on Saturday. There was no time to train troops or try out new rules of warfare.

Before long he was overcome once again with the thought that he was the person responsible for Edmund's death. Once more, he chose to talk to the trees. But the conversations had become orations. He inveighed against the stupidity of his teachers, and the repulsiveness of their stale clothing. "They are earning a pittance," he said to a stately oak. "It is obvious. They cannot afford to change their linens. Angela should smell these teachers. Then she would respect her brother!" He had other topics. To an old elm, he declared, "It is supposed to be an advanced school, but I can say that it is a stupid place. It is uncouth." He could hear the leaves murmuring in assent. "I have decided to go back to my study of drawing. I will do that at once. I know that I am excellent at capturing every detail of the most interesting buildings in Leonding as well as Linz. When I show these drawings to my parents, even my father approves. He says, 'You are an excellent draftsman.' But then, he must spoil it. He also says, 'You have to learn more about perspective. You have not found the right size for the people who walk in front of your buildings. Some could be eight feet tall, others are Pygmies. You must learn to draw bodies to scale. The people must be in proportion to the size of the building. Can you take into account, Adolf, whether they are nearer to the eye than is the

building? It is a pity you cannot get this right, because your drawing of the edifice, taken by itself, would be an excellent sketch. Then, I could appreciate the accuracy you bring to the most prominent element."

Of course, half-praise from his father was worth more than all of Klara's loving exclamations. It proved his point. Art was worth pursuing, not scholarship. "Scholarly work," he told the next grove of trees, "is pretentious. It is clear to me. That may be why my teachers show a lack of interest in my possibilities. They are snobs. They dance around disgustingly over boys who come from well-to-do families. The air of this school, therefore, has become intolerable to me." What he does not tell the trees is that the only students who will have anything to do with him during recess happen to be the ugliest kids in class, or the stupidest, or the poorest.

He believes in the wisdom of these old trees. They seem as wise to him as full-grown elephants. He would not want them to have a low opinion of young Adolf Hitler. An amputated conscience in one so young is always a work-in-progress, and what is left of the roots can seek approval in unorthodox places.

Some mornings he would wake up late and be obliged to take the train from Leonding to Linz. That bothered Klara. It was not a large expense but it was certainly unnecessary should the sun be out. She had a gnawing sense of loss when money was disbursed heedlessly. It even came down to the pfennings. She used to feel as if coins spent in such a manner fell into a well that was dry at the bottom and so they made an awful clatter when they struck—a blow to your spirit.

In contrast, Adolf had no bad conscience about taking the train whenever he could. Still, on those many mornings when he did have to walk, his route would take him across fine old meadows and he did become interested in the forts on the way, particularly after he learned that these crumbling towers were left over from the earliest years of the nineteenth century when the Austrians had lived in fear that come one year or another, Napoleon was bound to march his armies across the Danube. So, they had built these watchtowers. One morning, thinking of the workers who had put it together and the soldiers who had inhabited it, he became so excited that he had an ejaculation. Afterward, he was languid, but joyous. He was, of course, very late for school and was sent home with a note his mother was required to sign. She did not know

whether to believe him that he had missed the train. For the next few days, however, the pfennigs were available to buy a ticket and travel to school at his ease.

-5-

There was an irony of which Adolf's schoolmates were not aware. Far from being a mud-ridden town, Leonding did have an upper class and they owned fine homes. Indeed, they made up the corps of regulars at the Burger-Abends where the subtle differences of status between various members began to intrigue Alois. He was able to feel something like a geologist who digs through one level of strata, believing that he has acquired substantive knowledge, only to discover another level beneath with relics that confound the previous findings. The study began as a diversion until he recognized that his grief would not dissipate. He must continue to descend into his sorrow, step by

step, and all the while he encountered such fearful confusions on his route that he began to wonder if sanity was in question. For a few moments, he even believed that Edmund had been Fanny's child and so was a true son. He had to clap his hands together to signify that this had to be nonsense.

It was not always so fearful. In time, he began to feel as if he might be recovering from the death, perhaps even recovering his strength, even his public manner. Only not altogether. Not ever. There remained a hole drilled through his heart —

Nonetheless, these evenings seemed to be helping him. He needed to hear witty conversation. Occasionally, he was able to display some of his own wit. These were the smartest and best-educated people he had ever known this well socially, and, on good days, he did his best to enjoy it to the hilt, even took undue pleasure from little matters. On one night, for example, the beer had been imported from the town of Rheingau. A splendid beer. He was hardly about to confess to the other regulars how many pissy libations he had rolled around in his gut. And he did listen with high attention on another night when one of the gentry, obviously possessing a comfortable, even superior knowledge of wine, said in passing, "The British call this Hock. But that is

only because the Reisling they like so much comes from Hochheim." Alois had learned to give a self-satisfied nod as if each such bit of culture gained had always been in his possession. One night Silvaner was served in oddly shaped bottles called Bocksbeutel. A round of laughter followed. "Bocksbeutel" meant "Ram's Testicle." Alois' mood lifted sufficiently to wonder whether he should speak up. Who could know more about ram's testicles? Hadn't he once owned a well-endowed pair? Ask the ladies. But he did not dare to speak. He knew the difference between himself and these gentry. Most of them had spent their lives, at least in recent years, being able to stay in bed after the sun was up. Ergo, they were able to eat and drink well into the evening. If it came to it, they could go on to midnight. All those years, he had rarely reached midnight unless he happened to be in a new woman's bed. Sad to say, he might just as well have been a common laborer going to work with a loaf of bread, some liverwurst and a jar of soup. He could see these gentry, now in their retirement, getting up to have a light breakfast—Eggs Benedict!—then a ride around town. After which, they might enjoy a Petit Dejeuner (and these were two French words he had committed to memory after he recognized they were a reference to lunch, not to dinner.) Often in the late afternoon, these gentry

might enter their carriages and drive into Linz with their wives in order to have a five o'clock tea at the Hotel Wolfinger or Der Drei Mohren, founded in 1565. There they would listen to violins. What did he know of that?

Yet, if he had just a little more money to spend, and Klara was not always so concerned with expenses, it might make sense for him to buy a carriage and teach Adolf to take care of the two horses. Another dream to give up. Yes, it would be a rare late afternoon when he would have five o'clock tea at Der Drei Mohren or look at Der Haupt Platz from the lobby of Der Wolfinger, after which a visit to the opera. As he told Klara, such people were the ones in Leonding with the most elevated idea of themselves, the ones who could be described as belonging legitimately to the upper classes. "Forget about Mayrhofer," he told her, "he's a fine fellow but he's not the one I'm talking about. There are all these other people who come from very old families and often have six courses for dinner. I have heard of as many as eight."

Klara remarked, "I could do that for you."

"No, my dear, no," he told her. "I am not even considering such a venture. Because the secret is you can't offer fancy dishes unless you have

Nymphenberg porcelain to lay out, or can present Beluga caviar on good Meissen china, or serve French Champagne in proper wine glasses."

"Proper wine glasses?" she asked. To her surprise, she was in some pain listening to him.

"Yes," he said, "fine glasses. They give a ring if you flip your finger on them."

Indeed, he was invited to one of those dinners. He went alone. Klara stayed home to take care of the children. When he came back by the last trolley, Klara remarked that perhaps they should invite these people to their home. After all!

Alois replied, "They have indoor plumbing. Their bathroom is not an outside shed. The door to their bathroom does not have a hole cut into it in the shape of a half-moon. Our new friends, if they were such, would look upon such conditions as irresponsibly . . . droll." He had never used that word before. "No," he went on, "we cannot have guests of that sort. What could I say when they ask, 'Where might I find the water closet?' and I answer, 'Don't mind the hole. Nobody will peep!' Klara, we are not inviting anyone. They would be shocked to see that we don't get our water by turning a tap."

-6-

Late in January, five months after Adolf has begun his studies at the Realschule, Klara was requested to come to the school

Afterward, on the trolley, her eyes shut tight to control her tears, Klara did not know whether she had the courage to break the news to Alois. They had given her Adolf's report card and his marks were dreadful.

Indeed, when Alois did learn, it came on what was now the second-worst day of the year for him, the first of February. He was trying to be ready for the anniversary of Edmund's death on the next day, February 2, and in the course

of walking through Leonding, trying to think of nothing at all, he encountered Josef Mayrhofer on the street at midday. The Mayor then suggested something most unusual. Rarely did he leave his shop in the care of his assistants unless as Mayor of Leonding tasks were awaiting him in Town Hall, but now he proposed that they go to the tavern for a drink.

Once there, they spoke first of the oncoming weight of this first anniversary. They clasped hands tightly—good men in the grip of sorrowful emotions. Then Mayrhofer did something he had never done before. He said: "You must promise not to punish the messenger."

Alois replied with confidence, "You would never be the bearer of ill tidings," but already he could feel unseemly stirrings in his stomach.

Mayrhofer said, "I must ask you, do you have an older son with your first name. Is that not the case?"

Alois seized the Mayor's forearm so hard that he bruised it. Mayrhofer freed himself with an unhappy smile. "Well," he said, "you have punished the messenger already." He held up a hand. "Enough," he said. "I have to tell you that your son, Alois-Junior, is in prison now—a report came through today that circulates through the district. . ."

"In prison—? For what is he in prison?"

"Alois, it is for theft."

A low guttural sound emerged. "I cannot believe it," Alois said. He knew it had to be true.

Mayrhofer said, "You can visit him should you so desire."

"Visit him?" says Alois. "I don't think so." His back had broken out in a rash. He was full of sweat. He was on the edge of losing the last of his good manners, but managed instead to speak calmly and ruefully, even, with a dignity that was as externally impressive as it was caustic to his insides.

"The hardest thing I ever had to do in my life was to disavow one of my children," he managed to put together. "But, Mayrhofer, you must understand, we are such a good family. My wife and I have been careful to raise them properly. Yet, Junior was the rotten apple in the barrel. Without disowning him, the other children would have suffered. And now the three who are still alive—" he catches himself, but does not sob—"yes, these three will turn out very well indeed, that much I know. They will be good children, just like yours."

Mayrhofer says, "I thank you. I have good children, yes."

They sit and drink, and Alois begins to think of Fanni and although he considers it highly inappropriate to have such thoughts on such a day, he feels horny. He is certainly at loose ends. Could Fanni be speaking to him from beyond the grave? Was she jeering at him because of Alois-Junior?

That evening, at Klara's insistence, Adolf came forward to show his report card. Alois caught his breath, then said to her, "I must break my vow." Klara had been infuriated earlier, but now, not a little stricken by the expression on Alois' face, she felt as if she were betraying her son, for she said no more at this instant than, "I will not argue."

In tones sufficiently somber to pronounce the onset of a war, Alois stated: "I took a vow with your mother. It was at her request. I said that I would never whip you again. That was a year ago. We were thinking of the tragedy in our family. But now, you can be certain, I will break my vow. That is the only course to take when the vow has been dishonored by the person most protected by it. Come! We are going to your bedroom." Once more, he was holding his temper. It broke, however, so soon as he took off his belt and had Adolf across his knee.

At the first lash of the belt, Adolf told himself, "This will be my century. I will not cry out!" The blows were, however, so severe that he began to shriek. Alois had never used a leather strap before. A tongue of flame might as well have been darting out of the leather. He plummeted from one terror into another. His heart began to feel as if it would burst. He did not want to die! Indeed, he did not know what would end him—this scourge upon his buttocks or the galloping leaps of his heart, and at that moment, his father, seriously winded, eased off and stopped, pushed Adolf off his knee and said, "You can stop crying now."

Alois sat back, invaded by his own terror. He had begun to think of Alois-Junior on the ground.

There was no need for a dream-etching. The whipping was engraved in Adolf's memory. In the aftermath, Alois went into his own depression—to live as long as he had, and to be able to feel no confidence in the poor remains of his male line. He even started going to the tavern in the afternoon—a risky business. Would they hear about it at the Burger-Abends?

But the loss was too great to allow him to wait through the day and have no drink. So, for a time, he went only to the tavern. He no longer looked to

dominate conversation, and that was true loss. He could feel in full possession of exceptional powers when dominating a bar with his voice. Now, such transports were without interest for Alois. He even grew tired of drinking in the tavern. "I do not enjoy my beer now that Edmund is gone," he told Mayrhofer.

-7-

Adolf was also suffering. He had dared to show his drawings to the art teacher. His assumption was that the majority of his submissions would be chosen and so he would dominate the cork wall reserved for students' work. He had even rehearsed himself in what might be proper responses for the attention he would receive. He had thought of the quietly confident remarks he could utter, always in the best of taste, while receiving the compliments of his new compatriots. These fine moments would make up for all the former slights. It would also compensate for the poor marks on his first report card. He would yet be prominent in this school.

I must admit that I had a role in the decision that was to follow. While Adolf did have talent, it was nothing remarkable—I could see at a glance that he would never be an important artist. (Young Pablo Picasso, for example, was already by 1901 a young man in whom we were most interested.) By contrast, young Adolf Hitler produced drawings that were good enough to hang in his school room.

"Prevent this," was the instruction I received from the Maestro. "The last thing we need is a pumped-up mediocrity of an artist with a sour spirit at his lack of large recognition. Better to put him into a real slump."

I must say I was very much in position to accomplish this. Adolf's art instructor happened to be one of our clients. (Indeed, he bore a close resemblance to the mediocrity described by the Maestro.) So, I had to do no more than inflict a fearful headache on the man by besieging him the night before with an altercation between his rebellious son and his temperamental wife. Adolf's work was seen the next morning through the haze light-shafts of a migraine. None of Adolf's work was tacked to the cork wall.

He could not believe it. In that hour, he withdrew forever from the idea that he would ever look again for success in school. Like Alois-Junior, he would learn to live on his own.

Of course, he would not leave home, no need for that as yet. The thought of Toga-Boy still brought sweat to his back. No, he would have to wait. He would live among others while further developing, unbeknownst to these others, a will of iron.

Such thoughts were reinforced when the author, Karl May, came to town. He revered Karl May more than any writer he had ever read. So when word reached the school that Karl May would give a reading in Linz on Saturday afternoon at the hotel where he was staying, the Roter-Krebs, Adolf, having no money, had to confide in Klara that he wished to go. She saw his desire to hear a famous author as a promising sign for his studies. Moreover, she was still feeling rueful over her implicit collaboration with Alois just before Adolf's last beating, and so she gave him enough to buy a ticket at the rear of the orchestra. Adolf was, however, disappointed by the appearance on stage of Karl May. He might be well dressed, but his appearance was, nonetheless, lacking in elegance, and he was short in stature. These criticisms

ceased, however, so soon as May began to read aloud from his work. He had a rich voice and Adolf wanted to feel that the spirit of Shatterhand was also speaking from the podium.

On his return home, he did not speak of the evening. He had already sworn his mother to secrecy and he felt no need to hear his father's comments. But later that night, after he went to sleep, Alois, poking through Adolf's pockets on a good retired Customs' Officer's impulse, came across a ticket stub.

Next morning, his father chose to say, "I am not impressed with this Karl May. I hear that he has never been to America and so he makes it all up. In addition, he is a convicted criminal—just like your brother. So, if I were you, I would not save the stub?"

This May have infuriated Adolf even more than the beating. It certainly stimulated the beginning of a number of imaginary conversations between his father and himself. He could not, of course, trust his voice now when disagreeing with Alois, so he engaged in dialogues that could take place entirely within his own mind.

This obliged me to accept a risk. Imaginary conversations can become a mental quicksand, yet his spirits were now so raw that I deemed it necessary to allow him a few triumphs for his ego—even if they were only in fantasy.

The first imaginary conversation took up the subject of those young Czechoslovakians who were now living in Linz. Some were even going to class with him at the Realschule. But Adolf was not certain of his own attitude. He may have been ready to enter his first imaginary conversation with Alois, but he couldn't decide whether to join the pan-German position or, to the contrary, speak favorably of the Czechs.

His teachers were certainly pro-German, and his first impulse was to take up a position against them. However, the teacher's point of view had also been taken over by the German students in the Realschule. As pan-Germans they believed that Austria should belong to Germany. That was equal to saying: Out with the Hapsburgs along with the Hungarians, the Bohemians, the Jews, the Serbs, the Croats, the lot—all of that polluting lot. Good Austrians should become wholly German.

Adolf finally decided to take that side of the argument. His father was no pan-German. He certainly disliked the Prussians. They had, he often said,

exhibited intolerable arrogance toward Austrians, yes, he had encountered a good deal of such snobbery when working with German Customs agents in Passau who happened to be Prussian. He had had to deal with them every day. On the eventful evening when he made a full speech at the Burger-Abends, he had even said, "It is not cultured to insist that we Germans are superior to all other races of people. Indeed, we may be, but is it not rudeness to rub the noses of others in our belief? In addition, I would say it is highly impractical. What good is likely to come from such a program?" Then he had repeated his speech to Klara, Angela, and Adolf.

Moreover, there was a Czech named Karl Wesseley who had been, a fellow officer with Alois at Customs in their early years. In the last decade they had hardly seen each other, yet Alois still spoke of him as his oldest and best friend.

That was Adi's guide. He would speak derisively of the Czechs.

Here is the imaginary conversation that resounded in his head with all the force of a loud debate in a public theatre:

ADOLF: Your best friend is a Czech. How can you do that to our family? Czechs are not even worthy of being

called stupid. I speak from my experience of the students I know.

ALOIS: You do not know Czechs. They are interesting people. I have heard that Prague is a more beautiful city than Vienna.

ADOLF: Impossible.

ALOIS: You say "impossible" to your father? How can you dare when you have not even seen Vienna?

ADOLF: I can, because I know. You, sir, have no taste.

At that point, the playlet was over. Alois merely stamped his foot and looked absurd. It was all too easy.

For his next imaginary conversation, Adolf scoffed, therefore, at Crown Prince Rudolf.

ADOLF: If I were a prince, I would never commit suicide. How weak! How shameful! Rudolf hurt Austria. We will never be the same. No Prussian would ever do such a thing.

That was not a dialogue but a triumphant monologue. In his mind, Adolf could picture Alois affected by breathlessness, and fury—a wonderful, fury for the son to witness.

I intervened. If these conversations were not to degenerate into self-serving slapstick, then Adolf was obliged to give them depth. He had the tools. He had learned his arguments from newspapers, from authors like Treitschke and Erndt, as well as by way of his father's meanderings at dinner. He was capable of building an argument for Alois as well.

ALOIS: These pan-German Austrians have suffered prodigious defeats in Vienna and in Lower Austria. Even here in Linz, which is already a German city in its sympathies. Yet these Schoenerites are idiots who will never collect many votes here. They will get lots of applause, yes, when they speak to a group of Linzers as young and stupid as boys like yourself, but serious people do not vote with their passions. They vote for their interests. For their bank account, not for their heart. Especially the people in Linz, respectable people who shy away from the vulgarity of extreme change. The Pan-Germans in Linz offer nothing but ridiculous little newspapers that they print and distribute by hand. The fellows who do this job for them are so poor that their noses run in the cold. You, Adolf, are in such a hurry to support them but do you read their ridiculous offerings? Der Fliegilinzer Blatter—what a weekly! Absurd! Weak! Revolting. Even worse for the Alte-Deutsche Blatter—

another weak sister. There are not interesting political people. This is all a cult. Filthy and secret.

ADOLF: You are totally mistaken, Father. I happen to know better. In school, my fellow students are devoted to the Alte Deutche. They love the cornflower, which, as you may even know, is the emblem of the vigorous Schoernerist movement. But perhaps you are ignorant of why students wear the cornflower? It is our way of saying we have German hearts, not Austrian but German, and these hearts dream of a time when we can cross the border back and forth. So, we keep a secret in school. I'll even tell you what it is if you also agree to keep it a secret.

ALOIS: Well, you never offered anything like that before. All right. I must keep it a secret, unpleasant as that is for me.

ADOLF: Well, when they play the Austrian national anthem in school, we do not sing the words we are supposed to sing. We are in tune with the melody, but we sing "Deutschland uber alles." As you know, or maybe as you do not know even with all your bragging about all you know, these two anthems happen to have the same notes. Which we see as a sign that all along, we Austrians have wanted to become Germans.

Now, the imaginary conversations had become too bloated. So I brought Adolf back to recognizing that if these conversations had been real, Alois would have taken a club to his head.

Adolf, however, continued to do poorly in school. The report card of his first full year which he handed over to his father in June showed a failure in two courses, Mathematics and Natural History. In the year to come, he would have to repeat this first year of class which meant that school would take five years, not four. Poor Alois. He could not muster the energy to give Adolf a beating.

That summer, Adolf was equally depressed, but proceeded to tell himself (with my assistance) that the art of learning was something he comprehended far better than any other student. He had the secret—retain the essentials, ignore the non-essentials. Students were too ready to busy themselves with the endless study of details. Just like the teachers. They could only recite categories. They were bores. They spoke like parrots. They smiled as if they were truly intelligent whenever a teacher approved of what they said. These were the ones who pulled down the good marks.

He was considerably above such concerns. So he told himself. He was interested in the hidden core of each situation. That was the valuable knowledge for which to search. So he would not bend his mind to the methods others used. That could only damage his brain.

It was imperative to cheer him up. His best amusement these days had become his power to tease Angela. Physically, he was, at last, her equal in strength. So whenever she criticized him, he called her a "stupid goose." For Angela, this was a dreadful term. She would even run to Klara to complain. She hated geese. She had seen them landing in the town pond, and to her, they were filthy. Angela had watched these geese as they crowded up on the banks, leaving their droppings behind them. She was, she told herself, more like a swan.

I did allow Adolf one more imaginary conversation. He proceeded to imagine himself a teacher at the Realschule. He dressed in elegant style and was clear-voiced, incisive, and regarded with admiration for his wit.

ADOLF: Here is the essential, young men. Do not try to remember all the facts of every historical event. I would say instead: "Protect yourself. You are swimming in clouded water." Most of these facts you have memorized

are no better than debris which contradict other facts. So, you will be in a state of confusion. I can rescue you from that. The secret is to retain essentials. Select only those facts which clarify the issue.

-8-

It is time to take another look at the Burger-Abends, for Alois has become a regular. Usually, one of the Burgers gives a short talk concerning his latest thoughts on fine food, wine, antiques, gardening or cultural matters. Topics of the day are also considered legitimate. One particular night, which grew most lively, the speaker, a portly man, offered the thesis that railway travel had affected some of the most long-established social relations. "Our sense of the world has been turned inside out by the railroads," he declared. "The king of Saxony, for example, is not in favor of such travel. As he put it recently, 'The laborer can now arrive at his destination on the same train as a king.' This is equal to saying that men who are well-off no longer travel more

rapidly than the lower classes. Social disharmony could be an eventual product of all this.”

In the discussion period, another member stood up to say, “I agree with my distinguished friend that many of these so-called modern improvements are of dubious value. Pocket watches are certainly a prime example. Anyone can now buy a time piece at a reasonable price. Yet, I still recall a time when it used to be a privilege to carry a fine watch. People in one’s employ knew then where to inquire if they needed to learn the time of day. Might I add that in the course of making this inquiry, they would have to take note of the fine quality of your watch and its chain. They would leave your presence respectfully. Now, any roustabout can pull a piece of shoddy out of his pants and declare that his time keeps better than yours. Do you want to hear the worst of it?—sometimes, that is even true.”

Laughter followed this remark. “No, gentlemen,” the speaker went on, “a cheap watch can be more accurate in this matter than our family pieces which, after all, are cherished because they have been with us for so long.”

Another member joined the argument: “Everything you gentlemen said is true, but allow me to demur. I happen to like railway travel. It allows me on

any given morning to go to Vienna for the opera. Last month I happened to hear Leo Slezak. That offered the incomparable pleasure of hearing a great tenor offer a special evening of Leider. Afterward, I was able to enjoy my room at the Sacher hotel. Incomparable tortes are served with the morning coffee. Or, if I so decide, I can reserve a seat on a train through the Swiss Alps. Just five years ago, I visited the French Riviera.”

“Well,” said another, “That must have been an ambitious venture. But I take trains for a more immediate reason. I can keep a better eye on my commercial undertakings in Munich.”

One evening, the lecture was on dueling scars—which left Alois wistful even as he listened with full attention to discussions of the best location for the wound, be it the left or right cheek, the chin, or the corner of the lips. He did, however, chime in toward the end by remarking that when he was a young officer in the Customs Service, many of his superiors bore those scars and “we did respect them.” He sat down flushed. His remark had contributed little. It would not do to sound lame at the Burger-Abends.

On another occasion, his feelings were hurt by a sportsman (with a prominent dueling scar) who entered into a long conversation with him. The

first auto tour from Paris to Vienna had passed recently through Linz, and it was said at the Burger-Abends, that Linz, now the capital of Upper Austria, would soon be recognized throughout Europe as a city of some importance.

The reference to the auto-tour opened, however, a controversial exchange. The man with the dueling scar not only owned a motor car but had been in several races and had indulged himself, as he put it, in a good deal of touring.

Soon, the members were having a debate over the question of whether it was sensible to purchase a car. Alois, silently counting his pension and savings, knew he did not have such resources. Nonetheless, he was pleased to be at this particular evening because no matter how little he could contribute, the sportsman who owned the car had stimulated the most fiery comment. Considering that this was the Burger-Abends, the heat of the to-and-fro approached rude manners. Those who were opposed to automobiles spoke contemptuously of the dust, the mud, the fumes, and, worst of all, the noise. But the man who was giving the speech replied, "Yes, I know—the fumes of these infernal machines. They are awful to you, but gentlemen, I happen to like the odor. For me, these fumes are an aphrodisiac."

The remark was shocking. He was greeted with hoots and howls. Yet, he laughed. "Say what you will, these fumes offer a hint of debauch." At which he dared to sniff his fingers to the groans and laughter of the company. "You all seem to be happy with your carriages, your livery, your stables. Whereas, I look for the unique vivacity of traveling at high speeds."

"Oh, come off it!" someone called out.

"Not at all," the speaker replied. "The sense of danger is welcome to me. I even confess that the attention of those many pedestrians who used to admire a fine horse and carriage are now transfixed by the virtues of my iron monster. You would be amazed at how extravagantly I am admired while driving through our streets."

Alois was certainly impressed by this rich sport, especially when he capped his argument by saying, "Yes, to drive an auto does offer risk. But so is it dangerous to rein in a horse who has broken loose. I would rather risk my neck in a motor car than shatter my bones in an over-turned fiacre. Or, sit on my carriage seat behind some old asthmatic nag of a beast who secretly loathes my guts."

How they roared at that! Nothing worse than such a horse.

Later, once the debate was over—they had all been drinking happily and were more tipsy than usual—the speaker chose to engage Alois in a conversation whose concealed agenda was soon evident. He began to ask more than a few questions about Custom's House procedures. Alois was offended that this man who was spending time with him after being so brilliantly full of himself at the podium, had now become too obvious in his motive. "You sound as if you are preparing to cross a few borders," Alois remarked.

"Indeed I am," said the Sport. "I am about to. But they do say the English can be the worst." He made a point of speaking in profile so that Alois might be properly impressed with his dueling scar on the left cheek.

It was a good jagged cicatrix, perfect for a man as handsome and well-possessed of himself as this fellow, but Customs work had offered its own sagacities, and so Alois could distinguish between a genuine scar occasioned by the saber of the dueling partner hacking through the padding on your face and thereby leaving a bona-fide laceration, as opposed to a self-created dueling scar worked up by some ambitious toad looking to charm the ladies. A fellow like that would use a razor to open a wound on his face and then embed

a horse-hair in the gap. That could build the scar up into a welt high enough to dignify the rest of his career.

When well done, such a scar might appear to be authentic, but Alois had already decided that this fellow had almost certainly used a horse-hair. The scar did sit too perfectly on his face.

So, Alois said no more in return than, "We used to be as good as the English when it came to catching any fool who was looking to bring precious objects into Austria without paying duty. Celer et vigilans," added Alois. "That used to be my motto." It was a happy prevarication—he had only memorized the saying before the meeting. Yes, "Quick and watchful." That ought to give the fellow some pause.

"Numquam non paratus," answered the Sport, to which Alois could only smile.

His first act on returning home was to look up the meaning. "Never unprepared." An old Customs wrath came back to him for a moment. How he would like to get his hands on that fellow in the Customs shed.

All the same, Alois was feeling expansive at dinner. The excitement of the discussion was still with him, and as he recounted his final observation on

the dueling scars, Adolf did listen avidly. Some day he would have his own motor car. Perhaps, even, his own dueling scar. Next morning, Adolf was ready to pay attention to the middle class people he passed on his way to school. Only a few had such marks on their faces. The rest were void of interest for him. Even the government offices of Linz had more to offer for the eye. Yet if he had been the architect, he would have designed these buildings to be more noble. "Yes, someday I will be a great architect," he told himself.

If his need to believe that no one would come near to matching his future ability as an artist and an architect was essential, his vanity would soon suffer from a visit to the opera.

-9-

To Adolf's surprise, there came a night when Alois did take him. The event—they were to hear Lohengrin—had come about by way of an improvement in his report card for February of 1902. During the first half of his second year which, due to his previous failure, was a repeat of the first half of the first year, he did receive a passing grade in every course. There were even favorable remarks on his diligence and conduct. This occasioned Alois to declare, "A very good sign. Once you allow conduct to be your first concern, the rest has been known to follow."

Alois was easing up on his demands. He had been ill. Two months earlier, in December of the previous year, 1901, he had had influenza, which frightened him. Once again, he felt an overbearing need to be able to improve this recalcitrant son and knew he did not know how.

So, in early February, soon after the second anniversary of Edmund's death, Alois decided to try once again to come a little closer. Having noticed that Adolf listened with intense interest whenever the conversations at the Burger-Abends were described, he was also pleased to see that Adolf would read all the newspapers that had been brought home. Indeed, by virtue of a few remarks Adolf offered at the family table, Alois knew that some of his son's fellow students (obviously from the more well-to-do families) did talk in recess about operas they had attended. Alois decided it was time to take the boy.

I will suggest to the reader that the special attention offered to Adolf from the very instant he was conceived (I am referring to our presence in the act), had developed in this boy, soon be thirteen, an understanding of a few human complexities that not even older adolescents were ready to grasp. Adolf could sense that when a person's best and worst motives were in accord—for separate reasons, needless to say, but nonetheless in accord—one could bring