

forth more striking actions than one's usual deeds. So, Adolf wondered, then suspected, then knew what his father's second and less generous motive might be.

Before we come to that disclosure, let me add that Alois was usually ready to spoil the best of his good motive. So, now he spoke derogatively of the Linz opera house. "To Linzers," he told Adolf, "this opera house is a splendid building, but if you have spent time in Vienna and know as I do, a true opera house, you will find the performance here not so impressive. Of course, coming from Hafeld and Lambach or even Leonding, I expect that you will feel tonight as if you are hearing high opera. And, indeed, Linz has obtained the right to call itself a city and be proud of its opera house. Nonetheless, what we will hear tonight is in no way equal to Vienna. Adolf, if you prove successful, if you have a career that thrives, then someday, perhaps, you will live in Vienna and will then truly enjoy the heights of musical pleasure."

Alois was pleased with the speech. He had come to the point in his life where he felt that if much else was diminishing, his ability to express himself with the well-rounded phrases of a true Burger-Abender was increasing.

So Adolf was taken to hear his first Wagner in a second-rate opera house. And despite his father's comments, he was, for the most part, engaged at least and more than once, enthralled. If he sneered at the entrance of the great swan who was towing Lohengrin's boat forward from the wings to rescue Elsa (for Adolf could hear the squeak of the boots made by the two men stationed within the swan who were propelling it), he was overcome by Elsa's aria of greeting to Lohengrin. "I see in splendor shining, a knight of glorious mien. . . Heaven has sent him to save me. He shall my champion be."

Tears came to his eyes with love and warmth and adoration for himself, as he thought of being able to mingle among the students who spoke of operatic performances they had attended. So, during intermission, he listened with care to the specific comments of the more impressive looking opera-goers. "How fastidious of Wagner," said one such man to another, "that he uses the violins and woodwinds rather than allowing himself to be trapped by the harp. Wagner knows his celestial sounds. It is as if he is the first to have discovered them. Violins, oboe, and bassoon, yes, and away with the harps."

Yes, thought Adolf, he would repeat this tomorrow at school.

Alois, in turn, was off on his own meditation. Brooding over the skill of the upper classes, he decided that they had a foundation for their good fortune. They were able to obtain proper installations for their sons in the army, the church or the law. So often, they could be justifiably proud of the achievements of their family. Yet, why conclude that he was not as good as any of them? Granted, he had started from a low place, but he was ready to live with their point of view. They understood that the oldest son, whether truly able or not, must still be ready to fulfill the destiny of the family. That was not only true for the army and the church but for government officials. Bureaucrats, after all, could become ministers of state. That had not been for him, starting at the bottom of the ladder, yet he felt entitled to one certainty. If he had known such advantages of birth, he would have made a fine minister. Now, should Adolf actually become a son worthy of his respect, then why would the boy not be in position to rise beyond his father's considerable achievements? That, as Alois measured it, was also in the conceivability of things. Listening now to this music, so true to his elevated mood, so vaulting, so ambitious, so bold, Alois allowed himself to loose, in the dark, a few happy tears upon a well-spent life, and oh, now! so finely mingled were these

sentiments with Lohengrin's final sounds. Applause! His palms were red from the outburst he gave to this second-rate opera house.

Adolf, however, was not ebullient. Given the power of the last chords, he had plummeted from a high and splendid mood into his familiar despondency.

I would say this is one of our basic problems. We have more than our share of clients who can rise high into the intoxications of their private dreams, but then plummet all the way down to the ugliness of their real condition. So we have developed the ability to calm them when they are too ready to soar beyond their present means. Adolf's excitement at the prospect of becoming a great architect for which he was, by his own measure, immaculately destined, would now collapse. Even as he was soaring up to the empyrean with Wagner, the downfall of his confidence was commencing. Wagner was a genius. That, Adolf had decided instantly and distinctly. Every note spoke to him. But could he say this was also true of himself? Or, was he not a genius after all? Not next to Wagner.

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Going back to Leonding on the last trolley car, Alois was also not happy. Now that he had given Adolf the gift of Lohengrin, he must find a way to present the bill. Would the boy feel ready to accompany him on a visit to the Custom's House? For months, he had been contemplating each and every reasonable occupation for Adolf to pursue, and had come to the conclusion that the Custom's House remained the best choice. It would, at least, be analogous to entering an esteemed profession from a good family. He must persuade Adolf. The Finanzwach presented the best and most powerful future.

It was an uneasy meditation. Whenever conversation moved in that direction, Adolf would speak of becoming an artist. Alois would then suggest,

"You can do both. Without question, you can do both. Have I not done more than one thing in my life?"

Well, there was the boy nodding in gloomy resignation, as if it was obligatory to keep paying homage to a father's repetitions. In time, Alois had ceased speaking of the Custom's Service. The small results obtained left him feeling liverish.

Yet, the small improvement in Adolf's marks did remind Alois that a father must not fail to pick up any hint of a positive change in an adolescent son. He must, therefore, make one more effort to give the boy a worthy life. He must get him to come along on a visit to the Customs House. The architecture of the building, so powerful, would have to impress his Adolf.

On a given night, therefore, Alois gave one of his monologues at the family table and felt that the spirit of the Burger-Abends now enabled him to develop a discourse with more clarity than ever. "There is one fellow in our club who keeps saying, and I must agree it is an interesting opinion, that the gap between the wealthy and the poor is being diminished."

"Is that so?" asks Klara, wishing to come into the conversation.

"Absolutely. We've had fine discussions on this matter. It is due to our railway system. You can be rich or you can be poor—no matter! You travel at the same high speed. Oh, I tell you, and you, children, pay attention to this, you, Angela, and you, Adolf. Remember this prediction: The cities are going to expand and there will be money everywhere. I've heard talk in these evenings at the Burger-Abends of peasants, people so poor that—I will use an expression you are now old enough to understand. There are people so poor that"—he had to whisper the next—"they use their hands to wipe themselves."

"Oh, Daddy!" screamed Angela.

Alois could not resist. "And then they scrape their fingers in the dirt to get them clean."

To which Angela could only scream again, "Oh, Daddy! Oh, Daddy!" but she was laughing at how ready he was to be disgusting, and yet knew her so well.

"Oh," says Alois, "that was the way it used to be. But, now, some of these once impoverished people are smart enough to know what is coming next. I even hear of peasants who are sharp enough to sell their holdings to men who are planning to build factories there just so soon as the roads come in.

And the roads will come. Some of these lowly people are truly gross but, dirty or not, they sell their land for a good deal. If there is one thing true of a peasant it is that he knows nothing if he does not know the value of his land. And the smartest know when the value changes. You cannot cheat a peasant, no way, no way at all."

Possessing this much of the gift of speech, he often became the embodiment of what he was ready to say. So, now he spoke as if he were still a peasant and had never arrived in Hafeld, and had never been bothered at all how the neighboring people laughed at his inadequate knowledge of the land. "Yes," he said, "Everything is racing forward and even the peasants are in this race. But you, Adolf, with your intelligence, well, I've come to the conclusion that you are potentially a very intelligent young man, and will yet be cultured. So I would look to warn you. These changes in society are going to alter the nature of the work we do. You are not the sort who should even begin to think of making a living from horses, from hauling or carrying goods over bad roads. You are not the one to ride behind Graubart all day while he lets you know what the oats you've fed him have done to his gas pipes."

"Oh, Daddy!" shrieked Angela.

“But there will soon be no need for that. The railroads will replace such hauling. Clothing factories will push out shoemakers and tailors. Women who sew well may still retain their occupation on a small scale. This could also be true for tailors. But people like that blacksmith you used to like in Lambach, Adolf, he, too, will soon be gone. Education is coming, and it will take over everything. Even fools will be able to read and write. Of course, and we discuss this often at the Burger-Abends, it is important that not everybody become so educated that we lose all distinction of what it should still mean to be called *Herr Doktor*. Adolf, if you study hard at your school, yes, it is only the Realschule not the Gymnasium, nonetheless, you will be able to go on and become an engineer, may it be, and they will call you, once you get your Ph.D., yes, that will be the day for you and for all of us for then you, too, will be called *Herr Doktor*. I can tell you I would have liked to have been addressed in such a way and thereby enjoy even a higher level of respect in the community than I do now.” He held up his hand. “Although I certainly do not complain. Not at all. But if I had been *Herr Doktor*, your mother would have been called *Frau Doktor* even though she has never seen the entrance gates to a university.” At this point Alois laughed and Klara turned red. “Yes,” said

Alois, "It is possible that your interests may turn to business. In my day that was not possible for someone with my origins. But now it is not like it was when I was young. Now, maybe your gift will be for commerce or technology. And yet, I do not really see you as an engineer or a businessman because there is one fault with all such success—you have no time to yourself. A businessman has no peace. He takes his work home with him. So does an engineer. What if his bridge collapses?" Alois paused, took a deep breath, and remarked: "If you should ever decide to work in Customs, your evenings and your weekends will always be there, open to your choice. You will be able to work at your art."

Despite all, Alois was having his affect. Such talk left Adolf with a nervous stomach. But that was because he was no longer certain whether his father was absolutely a fool, or might have to be listened to. If the latter, then there could be some most miserable choices ahead and nothing but awful people to live and work among. What if he was not destined to be a great artist or a great architect? What if he was no Wagner? There was one thing that could be said for Customs, and his father had made the point—he could have a separate life after work.

So they did go to the Customs House. Despite all of Alois' locutions, the visit did not succeed. The worst of it was they entered into the main accounting house where all the clerks were working. An unhappy smell came up from the general collection of middle-aged bodies gathered together under gas lamps with eye-shades on their forehead. Adolf hated the odor. It was too much like the air around sweaty feet. Naturally, his father would not mind such aromas. When young, he had made shoes, boots, fancy boots and had to sniff officers' toes during the fitting. No, he, Adolf, would not spend his life in a mausoleum with cubicles full of the old smells of old men sitting on top of each other like monkeys. Of course, they were only middle aged, but to a thirteen-year old, middle-aged men are old.

At the dinner table after the visit, Alois made another attempt. "So many of my colleagues," he said, "grew into such fine friends. I could visit good people all over Upper Austria, men still in Breslau and Passau, yes." Adolf was wondering where they all might be. He had rarely seen anyone come to visit, not even Karl Wesseley, the often-cited best friend. But Alois went on: "There are so many benefits, yes. The pensions, the time that is there for yourself. I can tell you, security plus a good pension enables a man to avoid all

misery in his middle years and even more true in his later years. He does not have to worry about not having enough money. Nothing, I warn you, Adolf, creates more discord in a family than lack of money. That is why our family does not have ugly arguments. There is no need for that."

Since this speech was at the dinner table, Angela, passing behind Alois, could not help herself. She was thinking of the departure of Alois-Junior. No ugly arguments! How could her father speak that way? She stuck out her tongue at his back. Klara saw this, but said nothing. It would be bad enough when Alois came to realize that his fine talk would go for nothing. Indeed, she was correct. As the months went by, Alois gave up the idea of the Customs House. His son was not going to follow decent advice. But it did spoil many a mood.

That summer, worried about his own health, and determined to strengthen his physical condition, his spirits did pick up on hearing of a fine bargain in the neighborhood. A small coal merchant who lived nearby needed to sell a load to pay off some debts, but customers were all too few in summer. Alois made a very good deal.

He chose, however, to ignore Klara's advice. She told him to hire an assistant to help with the job of getting all that coal down to the cellar bins. He also ignored her second suggestion that he use Adolf. He did not wish to share labor with the boy—they would only have a dispute over his attitude, which was bound to be lazy.

Still, Klara's suggestions did bear some weight. Having succeeded in purchasing the coal at half price, he tried to bargain with the seller. "I expect you," he told him, "to bring it down to the bin," at which point the dealer replied, "Oh, you rich fellows. You are always ready to keep us poor. No, sir, I cannot carry your coal down for you. Not at the price you reduced me to." At which Alois decided to do it himself. "I may not be as rich as you think I am," he told the man, "but I am certainly stronger than I look."

So he did it. To pay the man what he wanted for the last part of the job would take some of the luster from his bargain. So he toted a half ton of coal all the way from their yard down to the bin. It took two hours up in the sun and down in the dust of the cellar. Once the job was completed, he keeled over with a hemorrhage.

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For weeks, following Alois' recovery, Adolf would hear the wonder in his mother's voice at how much blood had spurted out of Alois' mouth. That was inflammatory to the boy's spirits. The possibility that his father might die became attached to the excitement he felt about Schoenerer and the Pan-Germans. By now, their ideas were fascinating to him. If natural superiority was a true characteristic of the German heart and the German mind, one could add German blood. The next connection is, at best, metaphorical, but it is true that Alois' prodigious loss of blood did become one of Adolf's intellectual possessions, and a spur to his thoughts. For blood, as Schoenerer claimed, was

the indispensable element in national superiority. Blood was the only true vehicle in historical progress. One blood, therefore—Germany and Austria together! Thinking of how his father's blood had spewed forth, he regretted, even if he could not quite admit it to himself that he had not been there on that occasion. He felt as if he could have verified the thesis then for himself. "All the same," he told himself, "it has to be true. Spirit lives in the blood rather than in the air."

Responding to the Maestro's suggestion, I encouraged him to elaborate on this idea. It posed little difficulty. Adolf was illuminated by the concept. Blood was magic. It could be shared by a people. When he looked at the strongest and most handsome boys in his class, he tingled in those places his groin usually reserved for the forest. When blood charged to his penis, it was blood that he shared with these particular fellow students.

I, of course, was free of attitude on this matter. I was ready to work with German clients who, like Adolf, believed in German blood, but I could be just as effective with Orthodox Jewish clients who believed in the supremacy of Jewish blood. I could also work, and very well indeed, with Jewish clients who were Socialists, or with gentile German Socialists, but there it was a

matter of being comfortable with clients whose emphasis was on the air, the spirit, the intellect—all of those invisible currents and gasses where one hoped to find enlightenment and the security of un-bloody world views. And, of course, I also worked with clients who were Communist and would not have called themselves Reds if they did not, in their fashion, believe in blood. We were always able to work on the beliefs with which our clients had lived. Once established in their prejudices, we could then move to alter their certainties enough to serve our needs. Often we would intensify the hatred such clients felt for all that was opposite to them in other humans.

I could not trace, however, the connections Adolf made between the Pan-Germans and his interest in the death poses of the rats he had succeeded in killing these last two winters. Another metaphor was operative here. Not all of those frozen carcasses were nibbled at by passing dogs and cats, so he could study many by way of their final expression. Often, there had been a good deal of blood issuing forth from so small a creature; sometimes an iced-up puddle lay under their bodies, and such sights were arresting, but he was intrigued by those who looked tortured rather than sardonic or contemptuous, or outraged. So many sentiments, so many curses. He wondered what was to be seen under

the coffin lids of the dead humans in the cemetery. A source of power arose in him at the thought that the grimaces of these dead rats might yet be of value to him. He thought often of how Klara had said that the new century would belong to her Adolf. Much of his dispirit over the breadth of Wagner's genius began to fade as he hunted rats. Yes, he, too, might be a genius. Who else would look at the last twistings in the features of dead rats?

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The beatings trailed off. Occasionally, perhaps once a month when Alois thought the boy was becoming too sure of himself, and too impolite in subtle ways towards his mother, and most directly impolite toward Angela, even a hint cocky toward himself, Alois would threaten a beating, but the event had lost all drama and was done with half a heart and half an arm. Once again, the boy was not doing well in his homework, but then to what effect were these valid excuses for a real whipping? Not even a sound would be emitted by Adolf. In turn, Alois had not been able to hide his shortness of breath.

At the Burger-Abends on the night before New Years Eve of 1903, the members allowed themselves a bit more to drink. And after two years of

showing up as religiously as any other member, and able by now to recognize many a mood in advance, Alois felt considerably more disturbance in the gathering on this occasion. In the last few weeks over at a town called Budweis in Czechoslovakia, the Imperial Royal Police had not been able to protect German houses from a Czech mob. Indeed, it had been necessary to declare a state of siege in Prague. Yet Budweis was still an Austrian town—or, supposedly so. It did have a German majority on the town council. So, a good deal of discussion was roused in the Burger-Abends and Alois had even heard from Adolf that students in his class whose family came from Prague did not like to be called Bohemians. “I’m solely German,” they would say. “I’m just like you.”

In addition, a number of protests were occasioned in Linz because a Cappucine Monk named Jurichek, a Czech, had been invited to preach in St. Martin’s church and would deliver his sermon in the Czech language in order to collect money for a proposed Czech school. Even at the Burger-Abends, some began to complain (most incorrectly as it turned out) that before long there would be a Czech invasion of Linz.

Alois was left most uneasy. "If there is a bona-fide Czech uprising," he said, "it could mean the end of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and yet," as he would murmur to the others, "my best friend is a Czech."

He almost recounted a discussion he had with Karl Wesseley, who passed by on a business trip from Prague to Salzburg, "We Czechs are no problem," Wesseley had told him, and added, "Czechs offer more loyalty to the Emperor than all of you Austrian-Germans who would dissolve the Empire in a moment if you could just link up with the Prussians." Then Wesseley went away—his oldest friend—but they now lived at opposite ends of Austria.

Wesseley's brief visit left Alois, however, in a state of confusion. Contradictory remarks were being voiced by him in recent weeks at the Burger-Abends. First, he would be on one side of the argument, then the other, and he was talking more and more to less cogent effect. Finally, he was attacked by one of the oldest gentlemen in the club.

Unfortunately, this fine elder statesman was also somewhat unbalanced on this occasion. "Herr Alois," he said, "you have been so totally opposed to our poor little local priest who wants to invite poor Czechoslovakian workers to free food kitchens when they are hungry. That does make you sound like a

pro-German. 'Get rid of these dirty Czechs,' it seems you are saying. But, I cannot follow you. Your best friend, you tell us, is a Czech. You also say you do not like the Prussians. Yet you make remarks that can only be taken as pro-German. At the same time, you speak of your esteem for Franz Josef. You do not seem to object to the presence of Gypsies and Hungarians and all sorts of more or less mongrel and pampered people in our Empire. Or, do you? Dear Herr Hitler, I hesitate to say this, but I must attribute your confusions to the one affliction we are all in danger of approaching these days, and that is premature old age. You are not an old man yet, not as old as I am, but, my esteemed fellow Burger-Abender, I must say that your confusions if not cleared up will swallow you." And abruptly he sat down as if to apologize for having gone too far.

Unhappily for Alois, the old man had not been inaccurate. Since the lung hemorrhage, Alois had lost some clarity of mind, exactly that clarity of which he had been so proud. Now, many of his thoughts seemed to come into his head for no better purpose than to say the opposite of his previous thoughts. (This was perhaps a reaction to all his years in the Customs Office when his beliefs had to sit in one tightly capped container.) Indeed Alois confessed as

much to Wesseley on the last visit, after which he sighed and said, "I like talking to you. In my opinion, you are as deep as the sea."

"Alois, tell the truth. Have you ever seen a large body of water?" asked Wesseley.

"Beautiful lakes I have seen, and plenty. That is enough." He paused. "Whereas now I feel as if I am living in the desert."

A couple of nights after the old member's tirade was visited upon him, Alois could remember that some of the Burger-Abenders had kept nodding their heads in agreement. And Alois did keep hearing the old man's voice: "Your opinions are so much at odds with each other. You say that we give too much to the Czechs and have too little concern for the interests of the local German people, but then I hear you tell us that to be against the Jews and the Hungarians, or the Czechs is antagonistic to good culture. Do you know that you are too much for me?"

Alois felt so weak after this upbraiding that he had not enough vigor to get up and leave the room. But then he found such strength. Not often did members walk out of the Burger-Abends in such a manner, but on this occasion it became an imperative, and he damned to how weak he felt.

He was furious. It seemed undeniably clear to him that he had merely been tolerated at the Burger-Abends. Did they laugh among themselves afterwards at remarks he made? Was it like that? Had he been their resident fool?

It gave him a frightful headache. Five days later, on January 3, he was dead before noon.

BOOK XIV

ADOLF AND KLARA

On the morning of January 3, 1904, Adolf was not feeling very well, and as he abandoned his daily work through L. Arnold and stopped at the Gas Station for a glass of water. To cheer himself up he looked in his hand mirror back to an agreeable reflection.

When, in L. Arnold, about a few years ago, he had some money in a box of silver which had been carefully removed, then it passed. He carried it around with him in a thin wall of silver around the edge of the stamp. When the box was opened he found a diamond under the silver. He was then surprised to find it. The diamond was a well-known diamond, and he could have the diamond if he didn't bring him in the gold. Adolf, however,

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On the morning of January 3, 1903, Alois was not feeling too well, and so he shortened his daily walk through Leonding and stopped at the Gasthaus Steifer for a glass of wine. To cheer himself up he looked to turn his memory back to an agreeable occasion.

Once, in Customs, quite a few years ago, he had come across a box of cigars whose seal had been carefully removed, then re-pasted. He could discern as much by a thin welt of cement around the edge of the stamp. When the box was opened, he found a diamond under the cigars. He was even tempted to pocket it. The smuggler—a well-dressed traveler—indicated that he could have the bauble if he didn't bring him in for trial. Alois, however,

was afraid of a trap. He was also proud of his honesty. He had never indulged in such chicanery. On this occasion, he was tempted because the gem looked to be a valuable stone but, indeed, he did turn it over to the authorities and thereby gained an Honorable Citation. That certainly helped to advance his promotions.

He had used this recollection more than once as a tonic to his ego, but now, at the Gasthaus Steifer, he did not capture the pleasure he expected to feel along with his first sip of the wine. Instead, to the consternation of the few Saturday morning drinkers present, he collapsed. There was no warning. His last thought was in Latin: Acta est fabula. He said it aloud and passed out. Those had been Caesar's last words. "The play is over!"

Now, the innkeeper and his assistant carried him to an empty side room. The waiter suggested that he run to get a priest, but the tavern owner said, "I don't think Herr Alois would want one!"

The waiter said, "Sir, can one be certain in matters like this?"

The innkeeper shook his head. "All right, get him."

But it developed that their patron was dead before the priest arrived, dead from a pleural hemorrhage, which the doctor declared as soon as he came in.

Klara arrived with the children a few minutes later, and Angela began to sob. She was the first to see her father's body laid out on a table. Then Adolf burst into tears. He was terrified. He had dreamed of his father's death for so long a period that when the waiter came rushing to their house, Adolf did not believe the news. He was certain his father was merely pretending to be dead. That would be his way to rouse a little sympathy from the family. Indeed, even as they hurried through the streets to the Gasthaus, Adolf remained convinced. Only when he saw the body, was he overcome. He wept loudly and without cease. His immediate necessity was to conceal every last wish he had for the downfall of his father. It was as if the more he wept, the more might God believe that he did indeed mourn the loss. (That he was certain of God's interest in him had become the keystone of his adolescent vanity—one of my major contributions to his development.)

On January 5, the day of the funeral, he wept in church. By now, however, it had become a labor to force his tears sufficiently to impress the

men and women who might be staring at him. I, in my turn, had to convince him that God would not be angry. In consequence, I was posing once again as his guardian angel. While we can, on occasion, alleviate fear of God by increasing our client's sense that God does loves one, it is a tricky task, since the better we are at it, the greater grows the risk that the client will become so pious overnight as to attract the attention of the Cudgels and they in turn will be particularly vindictive toward us because we dared to imitate them.

Indeed, the last time I played at being a Guardian Angel for another client, one of the Cudgels threw me down a flight of stone stairs. It may hard to conceive but spirits can also take a serious fall. Since I was not corporeal at the time, there was no flesh to bruise but, oh, what a pummeling to my inner presence! Steel and stone are the harshest materials to come in contact with most manifestations of the Spirit. That is why prisons are built of them.

Let me not digress, however, so far away from the funeral the immediate demand was to help Adolf express some facsimile of grief. We were certainly facing a demand altogether different from that first burst when he saw his father dead. Now, in order to locate a few sobs, he had to recover the bits and

pieces of the few good conversations he had had with Alois. It helped that he was able to admire the way his father could speak. But that was hardly enough to prime the dry well of so miserly a sorrow. At last, he had to think of the day when they went to Der Alte's house for the first time. He was able to shed tears at this recollection, but wondered if it was all for Der Alte's death.

So the weeping, while in full view of everyone in church, did take on its constrictions. He was close to hiccups and his sobbing pinched off each time he saw Alois' body before him again at the Gasthaus Steifer. He was able to cry in earnest only when he told himself to think of Der Alte, one poor old man who had died alone. So awful to be found so late!

Yes, Der Alte might have been the kindest man he had known, and so before the funeral was over, Adolf was even able to weep for Der Alte's little companion, the bee with the amputated wings.

Klara felt close to Adolf on this occasion, and proud of his ability to mourn openly. Then, given her maternal sensitivities, not at all removed from some penumbra of telepathy, she was soon thinking of bees. She remembered how she would talk to the Langstroth boxes in Hafeld on evenings when Alois was at the tavern in Fischlham. Now, she wondered whether she might even

leave a wreath on the empty beehive which still remained at the back of the house in Leonding. This little hive had only given them a most modest amount of honey, but back in Hafeld, following the old customs of Spital and Strones, she had made a point of talking to the beehives and would relate to them what was going on in the family. In childhood she had been told that it was bad luck not to speak to your bees. You were supposed to. And if you ever were so unlucky as to see a swarm alight on a dead plant, why, then, a member of the family was bound to die.

When Alois had started the new hive in Leonding, she had told him about this practice, and asked if he would like her to do it again. He laughed. He told her not to bother. "I can see the point if it's a real bee-house of the sort Der Alte had. When there's a large investment," said Alois, "one would not wish to endanger it in any manner. So, of course, a few superstitions cannot hurt and how can one say it will not help? By all means, then, tell the few bees we now have everything there is to know about us. They will look to pass such gossip on to the newspapers if they have by now found the means to do so," and he had laughed heartily at his own joke, enough for her to regret telling him.

She remembered how just six months ago, Alois had cursed bitterly when his bees had swarmed away. That indeed had been the end of the hive in Leonding. The ugly dreams he had had in Hafeld that his bees would desert him had taken place instead, six years later, in the summer of 1902.

Now, at this moment at the funeral, a half year later, she was convinced. The bees had helped to produce his lung hemorrhage. That was because he had been afraid to climb the tree onto which they had swarmed. She was certain he knew to which tree they had gone but pretended not to know because he did not feel able any longer to climb a tree. So, instead he had been ready to carry the coal down to the cellar. So foolish an act! His disappointment with Adolf, his heartbreak about Paula—no, she must not dwell on any of this, not for a moment now could she dare to think of Edmund, and she blinked back bottomless grief. One must weep properly at a funeral. One could not cry out, and she wanted to scream.

The priest's memoriam proved acceptable. She had chosen not to tell him how irreligious was her husband, even as she knew he must have heard many a rumor of her husband's attitude. All the same, this priest now offered a

dignified eulogy describing Alois' service to the Empire. That, said the priest, could also be God's desire.

Later, after the funeral, as people came to visit at the Garden House, Klara looked to convince herself that Adolf's grief was real. Once again, she decided that he had loved his father. It was just that both of them had lived too much in their pride, and such pride was bound to turn into cloud-banks of animosity. They were men. Anger was natural to them. But beneath, was love. Since such love could not be expressed directly, so she knew that in years to come, wisps of grief would wander through Adolf's soul, grief possessing all the tenderness of a mist.

The funeral took place on an icy day. The roads were glass. All the trees were bare, the skies were dark. Yet, virtually everyone they knew in Leonding seemed to be there as well as his colleagues from the Customs' office. His closest friend, Karl Wesseley, had come all the way from Prague. He spoke to Klara for a little while and said, "Oh, we used to tease each other unmercifully, Frau Hitler, and how we laughed. Alois, as you know, loved his beer, and I had my preference for wine. 'Ach! You are nothing but an Austrian,' I would tell him, 'so you drink beer like a German, but we Czechs

are elevated enough to enjoy wine.' How we joked back and forth. 'Ach! You Czechs,' he would then say to me. 'You are cruel to grapes. You torture them. You stamp all over them with your dirty feet and then, when the poor grapes are feeling very sour and altogether bitter from such mishandling, you add sugar and pretend to be connoisseurs. You sip sour juice and sugar and try not to make a face. Beer, at least, comes from grain. Its feelings are not so tender.'" He laughed as he told her. "Your husband knew how to talk. We had fine times together."

Mayrhofer spoke to her of the frightful day when he had told Alois about Junior's incarceration. "Dear Frau Hitler," he said, "I wake up at night and upbraid myself for having been such a messenger."

The Linz Tages Post also carried an ad in strong type:

**Bowed in deepest grief, we, on our own behalf,
and on behalf of all the relatives, announce the passing
of our dear and unforgettable husband, father, brother-
in-law, uncle, Alois Hitler, High Official of the Royal
Imperial Customs, retired, died Saturday, January 3,
1903, at 10 o'clock in the morning in his 65th year,
suddenly fell peacefully asleep in the Lord.**

In the cemetery, Alois' stone carried his photo protected by a glassed frame, and beneath was the following inscription:

Here rests in God

Alois Hitler

Higher Customs Officer and Householder.

Died 3rd January, 1903 in his 65th year

Adolf seethed. His mother was a criminal hypocrite, he decided. She would honor her husband's memory, yes, indeed! "Rests in God," indeed! All that was left of Alois now was his picture resting in a frame set on the headstone in the cemetery, the frame ready to protect the photograph with waterproof glass from all the wrath of the weather, his hair close-cropped, his father's small eyes standing out, as beady as a bird's, there above his Franz Josef sideburns, and his mustache sprouting like a dumb goat's horns. Yes, here was a man who had served his Emperor, but how could anyone say he was resting in God? His mother was such a damned hypocrite.

Klara, however, was warmed by a notice the Linz Tages Post gave to the funeral:

**We have buried a good man—this might we say of
Alois Hitler, Higher Collector, Retired, from the
Imperial Customs Service, who was borne here to his
final resting place today.**

She was so proud of the notice. It was not an advertisement. The paper had done it on its own, and the paper had the largest circulation in Upper Austria. She read the item over and over. The lines brought back each moment of the funeral. She could picture Adolf weeping once again, and felt considerable comfort. To herself she said, "He did love his father, after all."

consisted of 3700 Kronen. The plan together with his pension would be enough to keep them comfortable.

Alois could imagine his family's future about twenty years hence. He was glad to recognize that it did not look too bad of course. He certainly would not have liked to go to work at this point.

There were other things to think about. Attending the Regiments for the second half of his third year from February 1902 on he, Alois, felt that some of the expenses were too high. Was this due to the death of his father? The wife was now comfortable with her children now that he was free of Alois' spending of money on things which had never brought more than one week of pleasure to anyone. He was sure that something unpleasant had occurred that day in March. Alois had been ready to tell him that he was a very happy man in his particular who was there to attend his children's education for the rest of his life.

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Each year, Klara would receive a pension from the government that came to half of Alois' annual salary. In addition, other monies would be paid to the children so soon as they turned 18. Since the mortgage on the Garden House had not been retired, Klara's capital after these borrowings now

consisted of 3700 Kronen. The total together with her pension would be enough to keep them comfortable.

Adolf could remember Alois's remarks about security in a family. He now had to recognize that it did make some kind of sense. He certainly would not have liked to go to work at this point.

There were other compensations. Attending the Realschule for the second half of his third year from February 1903 to June, Adolf felt that some of the students were less hostile. Was this due to the death of his father? He also felt more comfortable with his studies now that he was free of Alois' untiring if unspoken wrath which had never needed more than one look at him to detect that something unpleasant had occurred that day in class. Now, Adolf felt more ready to talk back to his teachers, one unhappy fellow in particular, who was there to conduct religious instruction for several hours each week.

Adolf decided this instructor must be the poor relative of somebody who had enough influence at the school to get him the job. Herr Schwamm was a sad, dank, old man, but there he was, teaching religion.

During recess one morning, Adolf heard one of the students telling others about a medieval churchman, the Bishop of Cluny. "I have a brother who studies Latin," the boy said, "and he gave me my first lesson. 'Inter faeces et urinam nascimur.'" So soon as this was translated, Adolf was shocked, then thrilled. What forceful language! He was aroused enough to dare to go to the Anatomy Museum in Linz once school was out. He managed to get in by lying about his age and so was able to see a penis and an open vagina, both modeled in wax, as well as a few full-sized naked men and women, also in wax. The Latin kept rushing through his mind. To be born between piss and shit! That was what he had always supposed. Sex was filthy.

On the other hand, his description of the visit made him more popular with a few students. Some asked him for the details again and again. This encouraged him to bait the teacher. A few days later, Adolf even dared to mention in class the phrase uttered by the Bishop of Cluny. Herr Schwamm pretended not to understand. Already a few of the boys were tittering.

"Latin must be pronounced with precision," stated Herr Schwamm.

"The manner by which you utter these words lacks all accentuation."

Adolf replied, "Then I will speak in German." He frowned, he swallowed, he managed to enunciate, "Zwischer der Urin und das Kot wer sind geboren."

Herr Schwamm had to wipe his eyes. All at once, they had filled with tears. "I have never listened to such filth before," he managed to say, and walked out of the classroom. For Adolf, came fifteen seconds of bliss. Boys who had ignored him all year were now clapping him on the back. "You're a real guy," he was told.

For the first time in his life, he received a standing ovation from the class. One by one they all got up. But then two monitors came in to escort Adolf to the principal, Herr Doktor Trieb.

Adolf was then told: "If it were not so close to the end of the year, and if our school had not worked so hard to improve your consistently poor grades, I would be ready to expel you. Under the circumstances, I will choose instead to assume that the much-mourned death of your father may have been a factor in your unspeakable behavior, and so I will accept your presence in school for another semester provided there will be no continuation of this behavior. You will, of course, apologize to Herr Schwamm."

That proved a curious meeting. Herr Schwamm taught Adolf an unforgettable lesson. It is that one knows nothing about a person until a weak man's strength can be observed.

Herr Schwamm was wearing his best suit on this occasion, and he spoke to the point. He did not try to look into Adolf's eyes, yet was able to say in a tone more severe than he ever could muster in class, "We will not discuss the reason you are here. Instead, I will insist that you read aloud the following prayer." Whereupon, he presented a text to Adolf. In full capitals, the words had been written out on a page of good linen paper.

FULL GLORIOUS MAJESTY, WE SUPPLICATE
THEE TO DELIVER US FROM THE TYRANNY OF
THE INFERNAL SPIRITS, FROM THEIR SNARES,
THEIR LIES, AND THEIR FURIOUS WICKEDNESS—
OH, PRINCE OF THE HEAVENLY HOST, CAST INTO
HELL SATAN AND ALL EVIL SPIRITS WHO
WANDER THROUGH THE WORLD SEEKING THE
RUIN OF SOULS. AMEN.

"Do you know to whom this prayer is addressed?" asked Herr Schwamm.

"Is it not addressed, sir, to St. Michael the Archangel?"

Of course! That was one prayer he knew well enough. At the monastery in Lambach, he had repeated it every morning after Mass. Moreover, he still retained an image of himself teetering on a stool, Angela's dress draped over his shoulders. "Yes, sir," he replied, "the prayer is to St. Michael the Archangel," and he even felt an echo of his first erection. Schwamm was a Lutheran and so he did not know that this prayer had once possessed extraordinary force for Adolf, but was by now so inscribed in his memory by repetition that he felt no more that respect for the fear and excitement it had once offered. So, he was absolutely calm as he read it aloud.

The short speech Herr Schwamm had prepared on the fires and perils of hell now seemed nugatory. Indeed, he felt the most unhappy inadequacy once more before this sullen and most unpredictable young student. He could characterize this moment as a signature to all his previous experience. Very little turns out as one expects.

He offered a few phrases to the effect that he was pleased to recognize "a sober side in you, young Hitler," and stopped before he began to stammer. "I apologize most abjectly for my actions yesterday, Herr Schwamm," young Hitler now said and was obviously not in the least abject. There was something not quite definable but certainly unrelenting about this student.

That proved to be the end of all that took place between them. Herr Schwamm felt himself close to tears again but this time it was for reasons he could not name. Was it his frustration at the loss of all the words of fire he had prepared, or was it his own tender sentiments that a student as wild and sacrilegious as the young fellow before him could show, nonetheless, enough depth of religious investment to know the name of the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel. (Those who are Pious will seek for evidence of Piety in others.)

Herr Schwamm could then maintain his composure only by making a modest gesture of dismissal.

Once on the other side of the door, Adolf was in a fury. They were all such frauds. These hypocrites would not face, could not face, the simple truths of the body. They should be hog-tied and dragged to see the wax vagina at the Anatomical Museum.

Indeed, he was preparing the speech he would give to his fellow students when they surrounded him at recess to find out what transpired.

"Well," he would say, "I certainly held my own with poor old Schwamm," playing on the unhappy connotations of the name: Schwamm—poor old Fungus, poor old Mushroom—this curious nonentity of a man with Schwamm for a name.

I was not pleased with the occasion. Schwamm's choice of the prayer to St. Michael presented a most peculiar and unpleasant coincidence. The Maestro never let us forget that coincidences were not to be ignored—they could serve as aspects of communication between the Cudgels and ourselves. If that were true, it would appear that the Cudgels might be most alert to our interventions with Adolf.

No, I was not pleased. Questions about our clients that we cannot answer are most unpleasant. I think we devils suffer even more over such uncertainties than the men and women we represent.

It was a late afternoon in March when he came out of school, but he initiated a snowball fight with a few students and they kept at it until twilight. He couldn't stop repeating a phrase, "Optimism, fire, blood, and steel," and

was immensely pleased that the three students on his side in this impromptu and ice-cold test of battle repeated the phrase—his phrase! It had not come from a book. It had sprung out of his own throat: "Optimism, fire, blood, and steel!" (Were they my words? I will not try to remember in detail every last inspiration I have offered to each client.)

Leave it that Adolf did pick up his volume of Treitschke when he reached home and proceeded to memorize the following words:

A sense of mission has been opened to us as Germans to recognize that the pure German is the universal man, the man who has been racially equipped to bring all other men in the world to our Germanic point of view. God has given all Germans the earth for a potential home, and this assumes that there will come a time when there will be a leader of all the world, a leader to serve as the embodiment, the incarnation, the essence of a most mysterious power which will tie the people to the invisible majesty of the nation."

In late spring of 1903, his war games in the forest took on more complexities each Saturday afternoon. Sometimes there were as many as fifty

boys to a side, and Adolf was engaged soon enough with logistics. Each army now had to deal with own wounded, and their prisoners. Both categories had to wait in the glen behind the lines of each side. When enough collected at the field hospital, other soldiers had to be detached to serve as nurses. Different groves became therefore new assembly areas. But, they still had to have enough troops to keep the battle flowing. Soldiers put out of play earlier were now allowed to return to combat fully recovered from their initial wounds.

Even as Adolf has been seen (until recently) as a minor presence in his school, so is he now, by full contrast, a generalissimo in the forest. He is the only one who can keep track of each option. Indeed, he is forever pronouncing new battle codes, then changing his own rules. On a given Saturday he will decide that once a man is captured, the only choice is to put him in prison and kill him later in the day.

Then he decides that this will end many battles too quickly. So now, when they capture a fellow, they can choose not to kill. Serious discussions soon arise about the length of time required for incarceration. Should it be for 30 minutes, or an hour? And who will keep time—can it be a soldier involved in other actions, or a separate time-keeper, one loyal to neither side. (One of

the boys does have a watch.) The prisoner can gain his freedom more quickly, however, by becoming a spy. Or, he can refuse all offers and stay in prison, but that choice is not often taken. Adolf is aware that captured men soon get bored.

-3-

In 1903, school ended in June. The previous summer vacation had been spent at the Garden House, a summer to end with Alois' hemorrhage, but now the family went to the country. Everything they needed was placed into two huge trunks and Klara, Angela, Adolf and Paula traveled to Spital where Klara's sister Theresa lived with the rest of the Schmidt family. There, they spent the summer. When Alois was alive there had been no question of returning. He could never bear to go back. It reminded him of the cattle trough in which his mother used to sleep. By now, however, the farmer, Schmidt, married to Klara's sister, Theresa, had a holding large enough to hold all who were in the Heidler-Poelzl clan. Johanna Poelzl, Klara's mother, was also

staying there, together with Klara's sister, Johanna, the hunchback. The farm came to no more than the land, the house, the sheds, the outbuildings, and the animals, but Schmidt was a hard worker, and he had managed, at least by the measure of Spital, to make it profitable. With several fields to work, and woodlands to harvest for nuts, he was ready to use all the labor Klara could offer. "It'll be good for her sorrow that she's here to work it off," he said.

Johanna, Klara's mother, was the one to mourn Alois most—which encourages a comment. Most of Klara's grief was now rooted in the extirpation of old habits, all so many old married habits, good and bad, that she had put together over the years. "What I miss," she confessed to her mother, "might be the habit more than the man."

Johanna could not believe that her daughter could speak such words. "How can you say that? Your husband was the most exceptional person in our family!" It was one of the few times that Klara had seen her mother glare at her. Johanna's fury was a storm. (It was also a squall of obfuscation.) She was in a near hysterical rush to avoid the complexities attached to the marriage of Klara and her Uncle Alois. That must not be there to speak about.

-4-

That summer, unlike other members of the family, Adolf did not work. At Schmidt's farm, he played with the younger farm children once their afternoon chores were done, and he tried to teach a few war games. His recruits were ready to fall asleep at their stations, which was enough to put Adolf into a rage worthy of his father.

For most of the day, protected by Klara, he spent his morning and early afternoon reading or drawing, after which he would wander into the woods to search for new military positions. Given his recollections of the Anatomy Museum, he would masturbate while listening to the rustling of the

leaves. Once, he was even asked to join in the field work, but Klara declared that he must do no labor at all considering the ongoing trouble with his lungs. She even told her sister Theresa that since she did not wish him to do any labor, she would pay for his food.

After the summer, Angela was going to marry a man named Leo Raubel who worked as a notary in a bank. Adolf couldn't stand him. Raubel was always telling him how to live. "Your lungs are not as bad as you claim, isn't that the truth?" he would say, and thereby leave Adolf in a cold fury. Where could Raubel have picked up such an idea if not from Angela?

The positive element that Adolf could see in this marriage, however, was that his own financial condition would improve. There would be a larger share of the pension money for him once his big sister was gone from the household. Of course, Angela was hardly bewitched by her situation. She was entering into marriage with a man she didn't adore, but a man, nonetheless, who was available. So, Klara's grand plans for Angela's future had come to little. If Angela was ready to accept such a marriage, Klara was not only disappointed but surprised. She was also furious with herself. She could not forgive herself. She had created no social life for Angela. The family lived in the Garden

house, a fine place for a young girl to receive company, but Klara had not known how to make friends easily and when it came to meeting strangers and impressing them with your charm, and the possible size of the dowry, well, she and Angela had both been much too shy, and Alois had been no help at all. Raubel turned out to be all there was available. He was a clerk at the bank, one of the very few young men Angela could greet by name.

As far as Klara was concerned, this man was lucky at being able to steal her step-daughter. It was virtually a crime. Angela was entitled to so much more. Klara could not forgive herself for not knowing how to look for a young man with more stature than this Raubel. He wasn't even terribly healthy in his appearance.

What Klara did not know was that Angela had been living too long with a guilty secret. She had never stopped pining for Alois-Junior. Back in 1896, after his fight with Senior, she knew that Junior would never come back, but in the course of these seven years of absence, she had transmuted him into a perfect young man. She remembered how handsome he had been on Ulan. And for all these years, she had been playing at the illicit edge of an idyllic dream. She was certain, of course, that she and Alois-Junior would never take

one improper step even if still together, yet, in her mind, she might now allow her brother to dismount from his horse and kiss her. Even in 1898 after the family moved to the Garden House and Angela now had a room to herself, she still kept, carefully hidden, a photograph taken by an itinerant photographer of Alois-Junior in the course of posing all the family members on a fine warm day in Hafeld, and her brother had been most pleased with this picture of himself standing by his horse. Indeed, he had taken Ulan out of the stable and led him up to the view camera.

Angela had stolen that picture as her way of paying Alois back for the times he had teased her in those weeks, all of seven years ago, when she refused to mount Ulan. All the same, once the photo had disappeared, she had to swear to Alois-Junior that she had no idea where it might be. "I say this on a stack of Bibles," she had said.

"Where are these Bibles?" Alois-Junior asked.

"In my mind. They are there. You can trust me."

She did not mind that he was suffering just as much as if he had lost a gold watch. He deserved to suffer for the way he had teased her; so cruel!

Angela still kept this photo hidden, but, as the date of her marriage neared, she became more concerned about the carnal redolence that remained in her heart, this innocent—yet maybe not so innocent—attachment to a fading sepia portrait of Alois-Junior. Finally, she came to the cruel recognition that the picture had to be destroyed. (Otherwise, Leo Raubel would find it sooner or later.) So, in a small but most private ceremony, she tore this connection from the past into many pieces on a night when she was unable to sleep. And by the side of her bed, long after midnight, she put the scraps in a small bowl and set a kitchen match to them, weeping silently as bits of the photograph turned to black.

After the wedding, Adolf was bothered by thoughts of how ugly Angela and Leo must be while performing in bed. The Bishop of Cluny had come back in full regalia. Adolf had seen the groom's phallus once when he urinated in a field, and thought it was particularly ugly. Now, Leo was rubbing it in and out of this supposedly sacred passage between Angela's two unmentionable holes—how disgusting! His thoughts came to a halt when he recognized that his father and mother were no different from the newlyweds. How awful was this secret that men and women had to keep silent about.

-5-

By May of that next year, 1904, in addition to another mediocre set of marks, Adolf failed French. A make-up exam would await him in the fall. He did receive a passing mark, but the principal was hardly less unforgiving about the episode with Herr Schwamm. If Adolf Hitler wanted to enter his last year in a Realschule, it would not be in Linz. As an act of retaliation, Adolf said to himself, "I will never allow this school to insult my intelligence again."

I can say with some pride that I had succeeded in creating a prodigiously spoiled mother's darling. That is not at all routine. One must intensify their sense of self-importance against all evidence they encounter to

the contrary. The Maestro had instructed me to keep intact Adolf's belief that he was entirely apart from any and all humans out there and, indeed, now that his father was dead and Angela would be out of the house, an opportunity was now open that had not existed before, and our project was aided by his attendance at a different school.

Klara had sent Adolf to a town called Steyr, fifteen miles from Leonding. It was there that he could finish his Realschule. Since her expenses were now less, Klara could afford to rent a room for Adolf rather than be obliged to pay for his travel back and forth every day by train. So from Sunday night to Friday afternoon, Adolf stayed with a woman named Frau Sekira who was also boarding six other students. It was her duty to see to it that they were reasonably well fed and did their homework and, indeed, she was motherly. Adolf always addressed her in a formal manner and then was off to his room, where he would spend his time reading and drawing. His marks in the Steyr Realschule were no better, however, than in Linz, and by the end he even failed French once more. In the fall of 1905 he would have to face a make-up exam in order to graduate.

Over the next summer, Klara took Paula and Adolf back to Spital but in September, he went to Steyr again for his French test. This time he passed and received his graduation certificate. In celebration, he and some of the new roomers at Frau Sekira's house decided to have a party. One of the boys had brought four bottles of wine from home and was generous enough to share them. "My father said that it is good to make a pig of yourself once a year. That is just what my father said. Do it once, not twice." They all applauded the absent father.

The students stayed up late that night and by the end, Adolf declared, "I am as drunk as my father ever was," and fell asleep on the floor. In the morning, he could not find his certificate of graduation. It had been in his pocket but now it was gone. Since he would be going home later in the day, he had to have something to show to his mother. She would never believe that he earned his degree if he could not present the certificate. Trying to put together an explanation, he wondered whether he could tell her that that on the train, he had unfolded that precious piece of paper in order to enjoy looking at it, but since it was a warm day, he had also opened the train window. With no warning, a gust of wind carried it off! Yet, so soon as he now stepped outside

to clear his mind, he recognized that such a story would hardly suffice. It happened to be a cold day.

Preparing to say farewell to Frau Sekira, he did mention his troubles. Frau Sakira suggested that he not attempt to deceive his mother. "That is so inadvisable," she said. "If your story is accepted by her, you will then feel so guilty. And if your mother does find out, it will be worse."

Over the previous school year, she had been no more than the woman who served him food every day and changed the sheets. Now, she had become a rare and thoughtful human being. In misery, he asked, "What should I do?" "Oh," she said, "tell them the truth at the school. They may be unhappy but they will certainly give you a copy."

So, Adolf went back to a school he thought he would never see again, and the Rector kept him waiting. It was, after all, a day of registration. Yet, when the Rector did let him in, it was to open a locked closet and take out a heavy paper bag. After which he said, "Your certificate is here. It has been torn into four pieces. You will soon see its condition." Now, the Rector stared at him. "It is one thing for a student to celebrate his graduation when he is pleased that he passed a make-up examination. At last, he can allow himself to

think that perhaps he has taken an adult step toward his future. It is, however, another matter, Herr Hitler, to enter into a bout of intoxication that ends in despicable acts." He shook his head. "I can see by the absence of recognition in your face that you do not even recall the bestialities you indulged."

This was becoming equal to passing before the long-nosed priest again.

Finally, he managed to speak. "Sir, what have I done? Be so good as to tell me."

"My dear Herr Hitler, I will tell you. You took this document, this parchment so precious to you, and chose to leave your filth on it!" His hands shaking with disgust, he passed the bag over to Adolf and said, "I cannot bring myself to believe that any student in our school could have brought himself to commit such a low act. You would do well to fear that you will go through life never learning to govern your most perverse impulses. Shall I write to your mother? No, I will not. She is probably a good woman who does not deserve such a stinking embarrassment. Instead, you are to swear to me that from the moment you leave this office, I will never have to see your face again. Just be certain that you do not open the bag while you remain within the walls of this school."

Adolf nodded. By now, he could remember. Yes, he had wiped his ass with the certificate. The moment came back. He had been feeling so rich in his sense of self love. True inner grandeur! How his drinking mates had applauded. His ass was superior to all the scholarly nonsense.

What made it worse was that now, on the walk back to Frau Sekira's house, he had to wonder how the Rector had found out. There was only one explanation. One of the four students with whom he had been drinking must have given it to him. But who would that be? He did not want to find out. Such a confrontation could add to his shame. What if the perpetrator was one of the two fellows bigger than himself?

He spent a long time at the washbasin cleaning the certificate, then drying it. At last, pasting it onto another piece of paper, it would be, at least, evidence that he had passed his exam. For Klara, he would come up with some explanation of how he happened to tear it.

"Oh, Mother, the more I looked at it, the more did I realize how much you sacrificed for me, and how little I had understood. I tore it up to keep from crying like a baby." Yes, thought Adolf, that will take care of that.

He had to keep wondering, however, which of the students had been the traitor. It could have been all four! He decided that he would never drink again in company. "Liquor is for traitors," he told himself. He kept sniffing the document to make certain that it now smelled of talcum powder.

I have to remark that no event in the twenty-one months since Alois' death had been so able to breach Adolf's sense of his personal importance. I had built, however, such an enclosure around his vision of himself that even this episode did not become a disaster. I knew that I could and would even be able to use the recollection as a restraint upon the full extent of Adolf's love of himself in those particular occasions yet to come when a reduction might be in order for tactical reasons.

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Klara wept with love when she received the finely fashioned tale of how the certificate had come back to her in four pieces.

"It is even more valuable to me this way," she said. "I will be proud to put it into a frame."

That was the hour when he decided that the ability to lie with art was one of the finer skills, and indeed, they had a lovely evening, mother and son, so soon as Paula was put to sleep. They sat side by side on the sofa and reminisced over old times when he had been two and three.

That was a special occasion. Over the previous year, coming back from Steyr each weekend, he had certainly grown weary of listening to Klara speak of Alois. The old man had been polished up in her mind. He was now to be remembered as a pillar of the empire, a profoundly dedicated Civil Servant, a prestigious father. His pipes, particularly the long-stemmed ones, were set up by Klara on the mantelpiece, each installed in a special holder. The family gospel was now being composed. Alois had climbed the equal of a mountain in his lifetime. He had given his blessing to Adolf. It was a second blessing to have so powerful a father.

I was ready to tell him as much myself. These days, I looked to implant one notion into his thoughts. It was that Alois, by climbing to his particular ledge of society had given Adolf the opportunity to start from a higher place, and so become a much more prestigious father, a wholly unique father, a great man who could be father to the German people, Germans and Austrians both. I must say, whether through Klara's latter-day adoration, or by way of both of us, these thoughts became so embedded in Adolf's brain, that by the time he wrote Mein Kampf nineteen years later in 1924, he would speak of Alois in eulogy:

Not yet thirteen years old, the little boy he then was, buttoned up his things and ran away from his homeland, Waldviertel. A bitter resolve it must have been to take to the road into the unknown with only three Guilders for traveling money. By the time the thirteen year old was seventeen he had a long time of hardship. Endless poverty and misery strengthened his resolve with all the tenacity of one who'd grown "old" through wanton sorrow. While still half a child, this seventeen year old youth clung to his decision and became a Civil Servant. Now there has been realized the promise of the vow to which the poor boy once had sworn, not to return to his native village until he'd become something.

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Klara sold the house in Leonding, and the family moved to an apartment in Urfahr just across the river from Linz. During the day, Adolf rarely left these new premises. Given his school record, he did not see any profitable way to enter the ranks of the employed. For that matter, he had little desire to work for others. Besides, he did feel a touch consumptive—enough to keep Klara in a whole state of in-held terror. Would he, like Alois, die of a lung hemorrhage? It was not difficult to persuade her that he should not look for a career, not at this point. As it was presented to her, he would be seen one day as a great painter, a great architect, and quite possibly both. While staying home at present, he told her, he would amplify his education: He would read

and he would draw. He did not need to say more. His mother's fear that he might die gave him an open passport. After five years of the rigors of the Realschule, he was certainly able to enjoy this new life on Humboldtstrasse in Urfahr. His mother paid the bills and Paula cleaned the bathroom. He grew a mustache. He rarely stepped out into the sun. Only in the evening did he take a stroll across the Danube from Urfahr to Linz in order to walk by the opera house. Klara had bought him new clothes and he ventured out in a good dark suit, wearing a dark overcoat, black fedora, while carrying a silver-handled cane, his most treasured possession. He would be seen, he believed, as one of the young gentry of Linz. Every glimpse he caught of his reflection in store windows confirmed this effect.

His need to stay in the house during the day was matched only by his love of the dark. In truth, we were usually ready to encourage that tropism, but then, some of the clichés concerning the devil are not altogether false. Most humans do not begin to appreciate the depth of the general assumption that what is commonly condemned as Evil does indeed seek the dark. This is for good cause. The night is more open to evocation.

Klara was, of course, taking great pride in his appearance. Her hope was that once he was feeling better, opportunities would open for him. He was not only a most unusual boy, but probably needed this kind of leisure now. In time, she was certain, he would look to enlarge his social horizons.

In due course, Adolf's style of masturbation also altered. His practice in the forest had been to spew all over the leaves. (He loved leaves and he loved befouling them.) Now, locked behind the door to his room, he kept a handkerchief at the ready. Yet, before he would allow his thoughts to lift up above all control, he would practice holding his arm in the air at a forty-five degree angle for just so long as he could bear it. He would think of the times in the Realschule bathroom when he had demonstrated this prowess to other students. Of course, those had been occasions when the general interest was in another direction. The boys had collected around the urinals in order to compare the size of their genitals. It had been a curious occasion. They were always afraid a teacher might barge in. Erections were lost, therefore, with great speed. Adi's ability to hold his arm erect was no more than another distraction. But now, in his room, he found that he could maintain his erection even when his arm was raised. Thoughts of the great variety of personal

equipment he had seen among the students was enough to keep him full of hearty remembrance.

One flaw remained, however, in his present life. That was Angela's husband, Leo Raubel. He could not speak to Adolf without droning into his ear. "Fellow, you have to start earning your living. You will keep feeling unwell until you do. I think that is because you are depressed by the thought that all your relatives in Spital think you are a good-for-nothing. We know that is not true, but you have to give up your present occupation which consists of doing nothing."

Adolf would walk out of the room. Angela would be full of dismay. How rude he was to her husband! Klara, hearing it all, would be silent, but that was only in respect for Angela. This oaf, Leo Raubel, was, after all, her dear step-daughter's husband. Therefore, she would not cause trouble. She would not be a mother-in-law creating serious division in a young married couple. That was even worse than having to listen as your son was scolded by this new son-in-law who had much too exaggerated an opinion of the worth of his advice. To herself, Klara declared, "Adolf is not a loafer. He does sit at home, but he works so hard when he draws. Besides, he has no need to drink,

and he doesn't smoke. That is not a loafer. He does not waste his time. There are no bad girls he likes to see. No girls I must worry about. Maybe he will yet become a great artist. Who is to know? Who is to say? He is so serious. When he is alone and working, he is so strong and so proud of himself. He is full of the knowledge that he, too, will amount to something. To that degree, he is just like Alois. Or, maybe more so. Alois wanted too many things at once." And again, she repeated, "Adolf does not waste time with girls. There are no bad girls in his life."

Nor would there be. Not for a long time. She would have done better to worry about love affairs yet to come with men and boys, some of them even with bad men and bad boys.

Since Klara saw Adolf by now with all the love of her heart, she was hardly the sort to ponder what might be in his head when he masturbated. Indeed, how could she guess? There was no evidence. He was careful to rinse out his handkerchiefs. No, she did not know that while stroking himself, coming closer and closer to being shot out of his own cannon, he would wonder whether there was any connection between his refusal to work at Customs and his father's last hemorrhage. If so, that would make two people

he had scalped in real life: Edmund and Alois. And this thought, in concert with thoughts of the Realschule students at the urinals so excited the pits of his fast-increasing compressions that he could hold them no longer and presto! it was over. It was over, and he was happy, and he was exhausted by how much had been churning within—such an exceptional spew.

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Years later, a girl who went to the same school often saw Klara walking with Paula. This girl had lived on a farm until recently, but now almost every school day she saw Klara go with Paula for a good part of the way before saying goodbye with a kiss. Nothing like that ever happened to the farm girl. Her mother had always been busy and usually was angry. But the girl did like watching Klara. Paula was backward in class, and had been left behind, but the farm girl envied her all the same. A mother's love—that, she decided—must be as sweet as honey.

Indeed, we are there to enjoy it as well.

The Castle in the Forest:

An Epilogue

In the beginning, I said: Call me Dieter, and that was not wholly inaccurate. Dieter was my name while I was occupying the body and person of an SS man, and I did keep to this installation until the end of the Second World War. (At which time Dieter did have to get out of Berlin in a hurry.) That, in brief, is how I came to be at the edge of an uproar on a field where a celebration was continuing through the night. A concentration camp had just been liberated by American soldiers on the very last day of April, 1945.

Installed in a small cubicle, I was being interrogated by a psychiatrist, captain in rank, assigned to the U.S. division that had captured the camp. Given the tumult of the last few days, he had been issued a .45 and it now lay on the table near his hand. I could see that he was not comfortable with it, but then he was a doctor and not practiced in side-arms.

The name-tag on his lapel was Jewish, and needless to say, was most unhappy with what he saw.

This Jewish officer, a pacifist by temperament, had done his best to withdraw from the worst of these surroundings which is equal to saying the most offensive human odors. They were much in the air. Rank effluvia accompanied the former prisoners' cries of joy. Indeed, it was sufficiently pestilential for the American to order me, his only available opposite number, to remain with him inside this office. There, after midnight, I gave answers to his inquiries.

As alone with each other as two souls on a rock in the ocean not large enough for three, I confess that I played with his sentiments. It was a time of defeat for me. I was nearly out of games. The Maestro had just relieved me of service. "For now, fend for yourself," he said. "I will be moving our operations to America, and will call on you again once I have come to a few determinations as to what we are ready to do over there."

I did not even know if I could believe him. Rumors were rampant among us. One devil had even dared to suggest that the Maestro had been demoted.

This possibility—if it were true—suggested that there were elevations and depths to the cosmos beyond my comprehension. So, I acted as humans might—I chose not to think about it. I thrust myself into another game altogether. I decided to play with this Jewish psychiatrist by pretending to explain the worldview of those among whom I had served. I expanded on the psychological ventures we Nazis had taken into uncharted regions by way of Heinrich Himmler and his theories.

I was not without effect. Dieter had been a charming SS man, tall, quick, blond, blue-eyed, witty. To give a further turn to the screw, I even suggested that he was a troubled Nazi. I spoke with a fine counterfeit of genuine feeling concerning the damnable excesses that were to be found in the Fuehrer's achievements. Outside the room, former inmates were rampaging up and down the parade field. Those who still had the strength to give voice were screaming like loons. As the night went on, this Jewish Captain could not endure his situation. Sequestered in the depths of the average pacifist—as one will invariably discover—resides a killer. That is why the person has become a pacifist in the first place. Now, given my subtle assault upon what he

believed were his human values, the American picked up his .45, knew enough to release the safety and shot me.

I can say that I have had to vacate a body more than once. So, I did move on. I traveled to America. I spoke to the Maestro. He made no reference to the rumors I had heard, but did remark, "Yes, that Jewish Captain showed the way. We will invest in Arabs and Israelis both! Long after Communism is gone, I expect the final war is going to take place between Christianity and Islam. We will do well with that one."

Upon which he wished me good luck and I was left to fend for myself in America. That is another story but less interesting, I fear. The figures, including myself, are smaller. I am no longer part of history.

All that remains to discuss is why I have chosen this title, "The Castle in the Forest." If the reader, having come with me through Adolf Hitler's birth, childhood, and a good part of his adolescence, would now ask, "Dieter, where is the link to your text?" I would reply that The Castle in the Forest translates into Das Schloss im Wald.

This happens to be the name given by the prisoners some years ago to the camp just liberated. Schlossimwald sits on the empty plain of what was

once a potato field. Not many trees are in sight, nor any hint of a castle, nothing of interest is on the horizon. Schlossimwald became, therefore, the appellation given by the brightest of the inmates to their compound. One pride maintained to the end (at least among the best of the German prisoners.) was that they must not surrender their sense of irony since that had become their fortitude. Needless to say, the prisoners who came up with this piece of nomenclature were from Berlin.

If you are German and possessed of lively intelligence, irony is, of course, vital to pride. German came to us originally as the language of simple folk, good pagan brutes and husbandmen, tribal people, ready for the hunt and the field. So, it is a language full of the growls of the stomach, and the wind in the bowels of hearty existence, the bellows of the lungs, the hiss of the windpipe, the cries of command that one issues to domesticated animals, even the roar that stirs in the throat at the sight of blood. Given, however, the imposition laid on this folk through the centuries—that they be ready to enter the amenities of Western civilization before it grew away from them altogether—I do not find it surprising that many of the German bourgeoisie who had migrated into city life from muddy barnyards, did their best to speak

in voices as soft as the silk of a sleeve. Particularly, the ladies. I do not refer to long German words which were often a precursor to our technological spirit today, just the syrupy, more sentimental palatals, lachrymose sounds for a low-grade brain. To every sharp German fellow, particularly the Berliners, irony became the essential corrective.

Now, I recognize that this disquisition leads us away from the narrative we have just traversed, but then, this is what I wish to do. It enables me to return to our beginning when Dieter was a member of Special Section IV-2a. Needless to remark, it is my hope that we have come a long way since. If the act of betraying the Maestro does not succeed in obliterating me, perhaps I will be able to go back some day to this account of my share of the early years of Adolf Hitler, up to the late 1920's and the beginning of the Thirties, because in that period, Adolf had the love affair of his life, and it was with Geli Raubel, who was Angela's daughter. She was full-bodied, good-featured, and blonde. He adored her. They had the most perverse relations. As one of Hitler's high subordinates, a socialite and most accomplished piano player named Putzi Haenfstengel was to put it, "Adolf only likes playing on the black keys."

In 1930, Geli Raubel was found dead on the bedroom floor of the chamber she occupied along one wing of Hitler's apartment on Prinz-Regenstrasse in Munich. She had been shot. Either that, or she had killed herself. This answer was never established. The immediate business was, of course, totally covered up.

Nor can I satisfy myself concerning this question. Shortly before the event, I was relieved of my continuing assignment to Adolf Hitler. The Maestro had decided that the Fuehrer-to-be was now of sufficient importance to be overseen by a presence higher than myself. Indeed, I suspect it was the Maestro who replaced me. In any event, I never learned more about Geli's death. An absolute silence was the only emanation from that event. Two years later, Hitler and his Nazis were in power and I was then assigned to enter the body of that good SS man Dieter. I confess that I could not forgive the Maestro for my demotion which is perhaps the best single explanation of what led me to write this book.

There could, however, be another motivation. One theme does return. Can it be that the Maestro whom I served in a hundred roles while holding to the pride that I was a field officer to the mighty eminence of Satan, had

deluded me. Was it possible that the Maestro was not Satan, but only one more minion to Satan—if at a very high level.

There was, of course, no answer to be received, but the question remained and with it the seed of my rebellion could have taken root.

If this leaves the reader with new discomfort—not even to know now whether it was Satan's words that were reported, or the sardonic insights of an intermediary, I will confess that I remain enough of a devil to feel no great sympathy. What enables devils to survive, is that we are wise enough to understand that there are no answers—there are only questions.

Yet is it not also true that one cannot find a devil who will not work both sides of the street? So, I must admit to a surprising degree of affection for those of my readers who have traveled all this way with me. I have come so far myself in offering this narration that I can no longer be certain whether I still look for promising clients or search for a loyal friend. There may be no answers but good questions can vibrate with honor within.

End