

TORCHSONG ON THE KÖNIGSPLATZ

By

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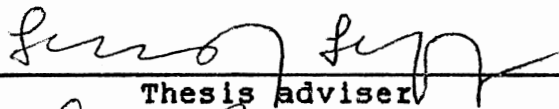
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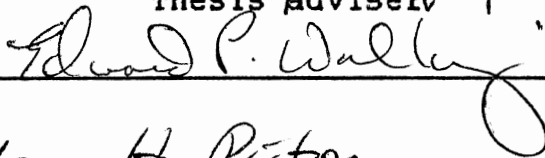
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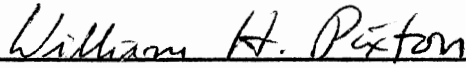
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PREFACE

The defensive preface is a well-established tradition in American literature. In the preface to his Leatherstocking Tales, James Fenimore Cooper seeks to persuade the reader that Deerslayer's possession of "little of civilization but its highest principles" was really no "violent stretch of the imagination." We might easily suppose that Natty Bumppo's ability to retain his "white gifts" in the wilds of the frontier is due to the civilized nature of his childhood associations (557). The fact that Cooper felt it necessary to justify the plausibility of a highly moral white man living amid savages is a response to the belief, widely held in his own day and propagated by such writers as St. Jean de Crevecoeur, that even a farmer living on the edge of the savage wilderness will degenerate into a lawless hunter (214). Likewise, if somewhat less defensively, Henry James in the preface to his critical edition to The American admits that his novel is less a novel and more a romance, and proceeds to critique his own lack of realism in building his early work around the rejection of a wealthy young American by a declining, but aristocratic, French family:

I doubtless at the time, I repeat, believed that I had

taken my precautions; but truly they should have been greater, to impart the air of truth to the attitude . . . They would have jumped then, the Bellegardes, at my rich and easy American. (19)

In a similar manner, I am somewhat defensive and have certain confessions to make about my own work which may or may not ameliorate the overall impression made upon the reader as to the value of this work. My original motive in writing Torchsong on the Königsplatz was to tempt fame and financial success with what I considered to be a formula plot in a well-established genre: Nazi mysteries of intrigue and murder.

As I assessed my potential abilities then, I knew that westerns sold well, but I have never been drawn to the romance of the Old West. I had not the science background for science fiction--another large segment of the pulp market. As I have been for a number of years too cynical to write children's material, I was pretty well left with the spy-murder-mystery category. Recent circumstances also seemed to dictate this last choice; I had just returned from Germany, and I was intrigued with the then-recent Hitler diaries so much in the media. Cover stories for several weeks running in Time and Newsweek magazines clearly indicated the public's interest in the subject. Beyond this, the lure of Nazi romance is a demonstrated phenomenon. As publisher Sidney Mayer says, "Swastikas sell, and they sell

better and better" (Harris, 231). Admittedly, my initial motives for writing my novel were not pure; still, as Wayne Booth has pointed out, a lack of higher motives should not be a criterion of literary merit:

We do not judge the finished work, of course, according to the motives of the author. But the prohibition works both ways: If I cannot condemn a work simply because I know that its author was a snob, neither can I praise it simply because its author refused to be commercial, or condemn another because its author set out to write a best seller (392).

Also, I was well aware of Henry James' critical dictum in his Art of Fiction that the critic must grant the writer of serious fiction his donnée (14). At the same time, James criticized those who would demand moral fiction, saying that the issue of morality is irrelevant to the work. The only needful thing is that the work be "interesting," and its justification for existence is that it truly represents life (8). I was certain that I could make my subject interesting --or rather that this topic would make my efforts interesting. But I did not at first sincerely entertain the idea that I was writing serious fiction--or in James' terms, a true representation of life. I wrote so as to make the plot and characterization as realistic as possible. There is nothing in the work that is clearly impossible. Many

academics have been drawn into sordid love triangles and allowed themselves to be exploited as Milo Marsden is. Certainly, there are also plenty of marginally educated or blind-sided intellectuals around who have been duped into embracing insidious political notions, Heidegger on the right and George Bernard Shaw on the left, for example. I was even careful to show how it might have actually been possible for Adolf Hitler to escape--even after the closing of Templehoff Airfield in Berlin--by a seaplane landing on the Havel River, northwest of Berlin.

And yet, the total impression of the work seems to me improbable by the standards of realistic fiction. Real life may involve love, but very rarely with resurgent neo-Nazis who seek to recapture power in Europe. It is true that old men and women, when writing diaries, often seek to foist upon the coming generations versions of history that enhance their own reputations. Lillian Hellmann's numerous biographical and autobiographical works are model illustrations of such. But Adolf Hitler, writing his own history?

As William Dean Howells asserts in Criticism and Fiction, realism is about ordinary people with their ordinary everyday concerns. Howells' protagonists were neither too smart, too clever, too bad, nor in any other way really far from the norm. The major characters in my novel do not fit Howells' criteria. What I have written, for all its created probabilities, is not a novel, but a romance. In discussing these two genres, I shall follow the presentation of Richard

Chase, who in his The American Novel and Its Tradition delineates them with unusual clarity.

The novel, which is indigenous to England, is about society and character. A literary genre made popular by the rising middle class, it seeks to show men and women responding to realistic issues such as building good marriages and careers. More specifically, it concerns itself with conformity to social norms, which are often at odds with inbred character traits, and seeks generally to show how individuals are absorbed into their class and community.

The term "romance," however, is more American than English, and was employed by such literary luminaries as Cooper, Hawthorne, and James in defining their works. It is, according to Chase, essentially about adventure and relies not so much on character for its interest as on plot. Both novels and romances pay close attention to characterization, but in the romance, the character is less a function of society than of his or her own idiosyncrasies. He stands apart from his society, and his concerns are not about marriage and getting on as much as they are about resolving the paradoxes of his own character. Besides this distinction, romances tend to feature plots which are improbable, if not fantastic. For instance, Melville's Ahab is an uncommon man, a man whose passions are clearly beyond the norm (in the realistic novel sense of the normative), and his fanatical pursuit of a white whale is absolutely fantastic.

The novel seeks to assert social values and communicate knowable facts about how people think and how society acts. The romance, as Hawthorne was to explain, seeks to reveal the mysterious, the unknowable, the secrets of the heart.

Milo Marsden, the protagonist of my novel, is obviously a figure of romance. His domestic concerns at the onset of the novel may look realistic enough, but he quickly becomes ensnared in post-war Nazi intrigue. Besides the romance plotting, his character is anything but normative. Angela probably describes him best and most painfully when she parrots back to him all of the concerns that he had earlier confessed to her about his own character flaws. He has a penchant for lost causes, whether they be his attempt to revive heroic couplets in his own poetry, voting the Libertarian Party ticket, or organizing campus relief aid for starving Biafrans. In all these projects, Milo has obviously not been concerned with "getting on," possibly the reason for his failure to get tenure at Boston College.

Milo is also ab-normal in his choice to attempt a revival of his marriage with the shallow Angela, even though this costs him his real chance of happiness with Birgit, the foil to Angela. It is perhaps not psychologically realistic that Milo would choose the self-centered, parasitic Angela over the beautiful and young Birgit. In Freudian terms, Milo is positively anti-Oedipal in his failure to covet his father's sexuality even when it involves his father's sleeping with his own wife, Angela. But the truth of the

human heart hinted at here (whether true to life or not) is that some men have forged emotional links with failure which they can neither break (except in their fantasies) nor ignore. Milo, like Hitler who seeks to rehabilitate his place in history with phony diaries, seeks to erase his past failure in marriage by regaining the loyalty of the woman whom he suspects is incapable of appreciating his gesture or giving him real love.

As to the characters of Alf Marsden, the unscrupulous publisher motivated only by profits; or Angela, whose estimation of a man's character is measured by his monetary success; or the sentimental true-believer Klaus Kranz and his friends, the unapologetic Schrams--all of these characters live, I believe, in realistic fiction. Their concerns are the typical concerns of their societies and their past histories. They are, in my estimation, realistically (though satirically) portrayed.

Hitler's children, Erika von Sigmund and Carlyle Harris, are two minor characters who again take the novel back into the realm of romance. Erika is ruthless, as only an extreme feminist version of Adolf Hitler could be. Carlyle (or Rudi as he is later known) is obviously the emotionally disturbed son of the greatest acknowledged criminal of recorded history. Even Birgit, the Jungfrau, as she is called by Erika, goes beyond normative behavior in her loyalties and promiscuities. Birgit is not only a type of Eva Braun; she is a woman of divided affections. Erika is her lover, her

patron, and the provider for her father's maintenance. Even so, she seeks to return to Milo, though she sees how hopeless his philosophy for getting through life is.

But as comforting as it was to know that my fiction was firmly within the American tradition of romance and could be excused for failing to be in Jamesian terms a "realistic portrayal of life, I was still somewhat troubled by my choice of topic and of my feeling--which I do not share with James--that authors should not be concerned as to the morality of their fiction.

In choosing to write a lurid Nazi mystery, am I pandering to tastes that are essentially pornographic? To be more exact, have I erred in making my Nazis personally and intellectually attractive? And worse still, while Milo may be taken in by their disinformation, should he actually go to bed with the daughter of Adolf Hitler, a woman who is every bit Hitler's equal in ruthlessness and ambition?

Wayne Booth in his Rhetoric of Fiction warns us that moral considerations are not irrelevant and that a too sympathetic treatment of evil, via the use of a "vicious center of consciousness," not only seduces the reader to evil but may actually, as in the case of one psychotic reading about a murder committed by another psychotic, inspire other murders (384). My novel is essentially told by a narrator whose consciousness is closely aligned with but not identical to Milo's. The narrator knows what Milo is thinking, but is unable to vouch for the interior motives or thoughts of the

other characters in the novel. Had I chosen to tell the story via Hitler's, Erika's, or even Carlyle's point of view, I might be more properly accused of allowing more sympathy between the reader and evildoer than is morally permissible by Booth's standards. Still, the seduction of Milo is not entirely against his will, and the reader participates in this fall from conscientious, but ineffectual, moralist to dupe of love and pawn of fate in Nazi intrigue.

One of my very minor characters, Hedda Goldman, questions Milo's motives on television when she asks why he isn't interested in the diaries of the young men and women, some with babies at their breasts, who died in the gas chambers. Why this interest in the diaries of some Nazi big shots? What is this fascination with evil? Milo defends the diaries' publication on historical grounds, though we also suspect that he is fascinated with the Third Reich for other reasons as well, not the least of which being his fascination with lost causes. We might also note his fascination with Eva Braun, as a paragon of loyalty, and with Hitler, as a man of action and influence.

But what about the reader's engagement with this novel? Does the novel pander to his desire to participate in the historical criminality of Nazism by association with prominent Nazis? If my novel has moved qualitatively beyond being simply an exploitive genre piece, it has done so through my attempt to explore and explain this fascination with Nazism. Speculatively, I have wondered if it is not

possible to see Hitler and Nazism in the same sort of dimensions as exist in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus or Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung. Admittedly, Hitler is not a suitable subject for tragic portrayal in the Aristotlean sense. Aristotle dictated that the tragic figure should be essentially a good man who falls because of some tragic flaw in his character. Still, many of our best tragedies violate this rule: Shakespeare's Richard III or Marlowe's Tamburlaine. Is it merely our chronological closeness to Hitler that makes him an unacceptable Tamburlaine or Dr. Faustus? Cannot the story of a man who is corrupted by power (like Macbeth), a man who virtually controls the greatest empire since Napoleon or Julius Caesar, be an acceptable subject for tragic portrayal even if his name is Adolf Hitler?

Perhaps this topic seems tasteless or immoral to some because the wounds of Hitler's deeds have still not healed. Maybe any treatment of Nazis at all which is not completely damning is seen as giving support or stature to Nazis in the world today. Perhaps if I had parents who were victims, it could be argued, I would not be as interested in this topic. And yet, Robert Harris, author of The Selling of Hitler, counts many Jews among collectors of Nazi memorabilia.

We must give the devil his due: he is a very interesting fellow--certainly more interesting, generally speaking, in literary portrayal than his antagonists. Samuel Johnson admirably criticized Milton for making Satan a bit too

well-spoken and sympathetic (2424). Very probably, he would make a similar criticism of my portrayal of Nazis and Hitler.

Part of the interest with Nazism is legitimately historical. The much cartooned Nazi movement did as much to change the course of history as any political movement in history. Our own world is still reacting to the trauma of the Nazi era, and the survivors are still arguing over which side is today's moral equivalent of Hitler's Nazi Germany (National Socialism, despite its employment of the word "socialism," was a political movement of the extreme right according to all Marxist and many Western historians).

A second interest in Nazism has, I think, to do with the fascination that many people have with evil. Not just criminal evil--though certainly that is indicated in Nazi history as well--but with evil which springs from people of high culture, a cultivated and even decadent, evil as it were.

Nazism, on the one hand, reveals a cultivated evil not unlike the philosophy of the Marquis de Sade--a movement founded on the belief that if nothing is inherently immoral and anything is possible, then any action that advances the quest for experience is justified. It is, after all, only man's notion of his limitations that makes him a moral being. Remove these limitations, as Goethe did with his Faust, and anything is perhaps justified in the pursuit of experience and its corollary in forbidden knowledge.

Nazism is also the fruition and perversion of nineteenth-

century romanticism. And many of these aspects of romanticism need not be despised. While actual Nazi Germany stressed conformity and the moral discipline of Kant (the official philosophy of Nazi Germany), Nazi aspirations were seen as Nietzschean and all of Germany was seen as the Nietzschean Übermensch raising himself above the "herd." This is the aspect of Nazism that has affinities with Marlowe's Tamburlaine and Faustus, the aspect of the romantic "overreacher," whose quest or appetite ultimately brings destruction down on himself. The epic of a rebellious race of giants fighting an overwhelming race of pygmies is a theme fit for Wagner.

These last two aspects of Nazism I have tried to elucidate in my novel. The circuit Milo makes through historiography is an exercise in sophistry and irrelevance. Milo's appreciation of the fact that heinous crimes were committed by both Allied and Axis Powers confuses, for Milo, the extent of the Nazi crimes. Milo wonders, as the reader must, that if Western history is oblivious to the sins of the Allies, could it not be overemphasizing and distorting the crimes of the Nazis? Was Hitler a scapegoat? His interviews with the common men and women who knew the Fuehrer have the effect of humanizing Hitler's memory to the detriment of an objective understanding of the extent and nature of his crimes. Perhaps all history is merely art; perhaps there is no objective reality? In this atmosphere, Milo is presented with documents which exonerate Hitler of his greatest crimes.

In such a light, Hitler can again be aligned in the German romantic imagination with the artist or philosopher in quest of absolutes, and the formerly passive Milo is stirred to chivalric action in the defense of the maligned Hitler and his followers.

As to the second issue, I have consciously placed Milo in Southern Germany and exposed him to the charming and seductive effects of German romanticism as illustrated by the cultural myths of the nineteenth century. There is scarcely an English romantic who was not captivated by Alpine imagery, and this holds true for German Romantics. Nietzsche's prophet Zarathustra is never as insane as when he speaks from the mountain. Milo is a victim of "Alpine thinking," and in an archetypal sense, the whole of Milo's experience is one of ascent into myth and descent into disillusionment and sanity. This ascent into delusion and descent into reality actually reverses the archetypal ascent and descent motifs as illustrated in Frye's Secular Scripture. In such a context, Milo's romantic stay in Garmisch and his visit to the pure Alpine lake at Königsee is paralleled and contrasted with his descents into the sinister SS Bierhalle, the tomb-like memorial to the defenders of Munich, and his last visit to Birgit's apartment where he finds her dead in her bath. More specifically, the episode in King Ludwig's Venusberg at Linderhoff was intended to contrast the more insane German romantic aspirations with its failures in acoustic architecture, and Birgit's pushing Milo into the picturesque

but stale murky waters represents a baptism into the romantic German culture.

It should also be clear that just as Kranz's aesthetic is outmoded and of late nineteenth century vintage, his participation in modern German history is equally artificial and dishonest. He has long ago disposed of any notion of objective history and is only interested in furthering an artistically satisfying myth.

Birgit, less a character than a type, is identified with the Rhinemaidens on several occasions. Surely her loyalty is similar to the Wagnerian maidens' loyalty to the Rhinegold. Milo associates her with the golden statue of a Rhinemaiden at the bottom of the Königsee. Later she is found--only an apparent suicide--in a bathtub full of blood-tinted water.

These archetypes and mythic motifs lend a romantic aura to the work. By linking myth, history, and intrigue into an aesthetically interesting combination, have I made the moral issues at stake less real and hence less of a consideration for moral condemnation? Some would argue that in linking Nazis and their aspirations in this work with romantic Germanic myth, I am seducing the reader into embracing a Nazi mentality. Perhaps, but I am also making an appropriate liaison between Nazi mentality and its creative springs in the traditional Germanic myths so much exploited by Wagner and later by the Nazis. As Northrop Frye observes, even cultural myths that have been shown to be inaccurate or discredited by history still have power over man to the

degree that they shape a perception of reality that is intelligible (182).

On the other hand, one could also take the position that in showing Nazism in a romantic light, I do the reader the service of showing him that the most insidious forms of evil are not recognizably ugly--indeed, they may be very flattering and seductive. This certainly is a truth the world needs to learn.

I would argue that far from advancing the Nazi-Germanic myth, my work de-mythologizes it and shows its ludicrousness and ineptitude. By the end of my novel, Hitler's entourage is shown to be trite and sycophantic, especially through the characters of Hitler's quack doctor and the formerly impressive Eugen Dolfuss. And the noblest moment of Hitler's recorded life, his and Eva's suicide, is shown to be a cruel and heartless fraud perpetrated on the Fuehrer's most loyal admirer, Eva Braun. Certainly Milo by this time no longer has any illusions, and at the end of the book can only be deséngagé because of his own failed enterprises, his discovery of Erika's unrealistic plans for a new reunited Germany, and his own death.

That Milo has an affair with Hitler's daughter is a morally indefensible act on Milo's part. He does not agree with her goals or methods, that is clear. But the hero or knight-errant of romance is not always successful. In this respect Milo is certainly more Gawain than Parsifal. Milo's ascent into romantic action is well demonstrated not only in

his intellectual defense of the Hitler diaries, but in his heroic physical defense of the Hess supporters in the Königsplatz. The irony of my work is that Milo is motivated into chivalric deeds in the defense of the indefensible.

I could simply maintain that Milo's attraction to Erika illustrates the paradoxical nature of love and is similar to W. B. Yeats' painful affection for the radical and violent Maud Gonne. Milo's attraction and repulsion for Erika also has an analogy in Yeats' love/hate relationship with the imperfect remedies of Irish terrorism. The irony of action in our age is well expressed in two lines by W. B. Yeats': "The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity."

But Milo's acquiescence to Erika's seduction is due to a number of causes which are typically romantic. Milo's first sexual encounter with Erika occurs on the heels of what he believes to be Birgit's suicide, and--just as important--his receiving of Hitler's last diary. In an emotional state confused not only by drugs but the newly found sympathy and shared grief of Erika, Milo reads Hitler's last entries in which he confesses his failure and his appreciation of Eva's admonitions to make an end and join her in the intimacy of their tragic nuptials. Milo, in carrying the sleeping Erika into her bedroom, transfers his emotions for Birgit and sympathy for Hitler to the porcelain and elegant Erika. That evening's sex cannot be condemned any more than we can condemn the Red Cross Knight's infatuation with Duessa in

Spenser's Fairy Queen. After all, both Milo and the Red Cross Knight have been deceived by illusions.

It is the second sexual encounter which takes place on Hitler's yacht that shows Milo to be a truly fallen being. He now knows that his allegiance has been misguided. He might even suspect that far from opposing evil, he is serving Erika's ends to further the race of Hitler. That Milo does not find Erika morally and personally repugnant can also be explained by comparison to Spenser's romance. The Red Cross Knight is only seducible by Duessa because he has lost his faith in Una: the truth church, religion, God. This loss of faith enables Duessa to separate the Red Cross Knight from his armor and leads to his capture by the giant Orgoglio. But unlike the Red Cross Knight, Milo's loss of faith in heroic action cannot be redeemed. Milo, as a modern hero, is unable to find a House of Holiness. Disabused of his romantic notions, he has no creeds or beliefs to turn to. Milo returns essentially to the state of paralysis that he experienced before his trip to the German Alps. The circle of action is complete, and, far from returning from his ascent (like Moses) or descent (like Gilgamesh) with a boon for mankind, Milo has only the improbable truth to tell, a truth which will only discredit him among the sensibly minded and can find publication in only the cheapest of German tabloids.

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CHAPTER I

Not even God can change the past

--Aristotle quoting Agathon

Armed Forces Radio in Nuremburg had reported an approaching storm, and even now leaden clouds advanced over Munich, skimming the steeples and domes of the Altstadt and rumbled vaguely on. Still, in defiance of science and conventional prediction, as though by an act of Providence itself, the vast storm front merely rolled like a surf over the capital of dry stone and tile.

Twice the cab driver had offered to try one of the other access streets to the Königsplatz before Milo Marsden had the presence of mind to thank the driver and tell him to pull over. "You can read all about it in the Munchener Abend Zeitung."

The Turkish cab driver smirked condescendingly as he made change and continued, "These Germans pride themselves on being the most rational people in Europe, but too much rationality always ends in a little fever, a little madness.

"Parents of students practicing for a soccer match on the Zepplinfields in Nurnberg claimed to have spotted Adolf Hitler watching from the stands. And the other night here in

Munich, a man nearly choked to death in the Platzl. Later when he was revived, he claimed to have seen Martin Bormann sitting at the next table. Ah, you Americans are no better. Isn't JFK lying in a coma in a hospital in Dallas?"

Looking past the city vehicles blocking the entrance to Briennerstrasse, Milo could see distinctly the flashing blue and red lights of the police vans at what he surmised to be the approximate entrance to the former architectural showcase of Nazi Kultur and power.

Milo recognized the distant platz vaguely from his previous rendezvous with Birgit, but the square had been a motionless, empty sector of the city then, a boulevard in mothballs where one heard city sounds, but rarely saw any traffic. He raised his collar in anticipation, and tried to rout the anxiety from his mind, a malingering intuition of disaster.

Since the discovery of the diaries he had felt himself swept along by the rising flood, powerless, and yet crucially at the vortex of events that seemed ever more and more unreal, quite impossible in anything other than a play by Harold Pinter. The experts in England had said it was a mere formality--"in the bag," his father had added. But the German National Archives had not released their report on authenticity of the Hitler documents as scheduled. What was holding up the rubber stamp?

And now all this hysteria about a resurrected Hitler and Nazism--it seemed to Milo symptomatic of something he himself

had been pursuing; though he did not consider himself mad in the least. He prided himself too much on his own reasonableness.

Threatening clouds aside, it was a positively fresh wind snapping the edges of his clothes as he joined the long slow line of perhaps a thousand pedestrians. Almost all were over fifty--some were clearly closer to seventy, though it was somewhat hard to tell as most wore hats pulled down over much of their heads or scarves knotted under their chins. But they wore the trappings of the old folk, the oversized coats, stockings with seams, the heavy Byzantine jewelry and scuffed round-toed shoes.

He leaned into the wind and shuffled up the once fashionable boulevard, wondering just what sort of demonstration Professor Kranz had invited him to. He had seen other demonstrations in Munich, but these had been youthful events, festive, gay, and rowdy, with bare-breasted girls and colorful banners--something on the order of Fasching or Mardi Gras. But this was a solemn procession, a march in sober earnest. And in spite of their numbers, they were quiet, self-conscious, almost secretive.

Finally, he reached the police barricade at the eastern entrance. For a moment, there was a cheerful note as the brassy sunset broke through under the low lying clouds and gave an amber glow to the otherwise colorless plaza of windowless stone temples linked by granite flooring which reached to the very walls of the buildings. As he entered,

it was evident why the barriers had been thrown up. Off to the left, at about thirty yards from the policed entrances, were approximately two dozen high school and college students. They rolled and lit cigarettes and mulled about dressed as is so much the fashion in the cities of Northern Europe: pegged levis, bike jackets, studded belts draped loosely above one hip and below the other. Clearly, he thought, there was something sinister in their attitude, the way they whispered and then laughed vulgarly. Passing in through the striped barricade, one of them yelled something to Milo. Then the surly youth and another beside him snapped to and gave Milo a straight-armed Nazi salute.

"Weggehen, weggehen!" several motorcycle police shouted in response, and the enclave moved off, resentfully, another ten or fifteen yards and huddled again. The police seemed obviously annoyed and unduly concerned, Milo thought, about the possibility of a riot. That particular evening all other gatherings, whether on the Ludwigstrasse or at the Odeonsplatz, were ordered to disperse. If they did not, the police drove them off in impeccably clean and shiny police vans.

But inside the Königsplatz, he noted an entirely different feeling developing. The antique generation from the street were coming into their own, embracing comrades, shouting genial insults from the old days, and cheerful volunteers busily circulated petitions or handed out small orange hand torches. "Not now, we will tell you when," a

service volunteer sporting a military decoration on his lapel told Milo. He took the torch from the old trooper's hand hesitantly with a circumspect smile which signaled Milo's confusion. He reached in his pocket for some spare change, but the old man gestured broadly with his hand for him to keep his money. "For later--you will see," he said and moved on.

Within the square the German tricolors--gold, red and black--had been draped between the pillars of the twin museums that faced each other across the platz. At the west end a huge banner was in the process of being strung between the twin towers of the west gate. As silhouettes in each tower pulled the ends of the flapping banner taut, spectators clapped below. The banner was eventually as steady as a sail, and Milo read its message: "FREIHEIT FÜR HESS."

"Freedom for Hess." Early in 1941, shortly after the defeat of France and the rout of the British Expeditionary Force, Hess piloted a Messerschmitt to Scotland. There Hitler's Deputy was arrested like any other criminal and taken directly to the Tower of London. Had he defected or was he merely "mad as a hatter" as Churchill had announced? In Germany there had been neither confirmation nor denial of this for weeks. Finally Radio Berlin broke what was already an old story. Rudolf Hess, the man in immediate succession to the Fuehrer, was suffering a nervous breakdown. There was no other explanation given--then or since.

Milo remembered now that Hitler had implied something in

his diaries about Hess taking the brunt of the "English duplicity." Of all of Hitler's henchmen, Hess had been the only one who had sincerely enjoyed the affection of the Fuehrer. According to many, Hitler may have tolerated Himmler, felt a certain obligation to Goebbels and loyalty to Goering, but the Fuehrer had genuinely loved Hess. That Hitler never replaced Hess in his position as Party Deputy would tend to corroborate this. Milo had assumed this extraordinary affection had been the basis for Hitler's later promise to restore his former deputy and compensate him for this indignity when England capitulated. But the exact passage, he remembered, had been one of the more problematic of his translation of the Hitler diaries. This was due partially to the blurred nature of this entry--Hitler had obviously brushed the wet ink of the entry with his palm as he had written it, and it was never clear to him that Hitler's entry could not have been actually referring to a medical restoration--not a political one--of Hess's powers.

What had not occurred to him until this moment, naively enough for the man who was now considered an expert on the real Adolf Hitler, was that Rudolf Hess was still alive and serving time, the only prisoner in Spandau prison in Berlin, just as he had been the only prisoner in the Tower of London.

Already many of the Alte Kampfer, the old guard, were fatigued and taking up seats on the steps of the twin museums on the square, the Glyptothek and the Antikesammlungen. He walked around a bit, trying to smile benignly, to disarm any

suspicion that he was really much too young to be at this gathering of old former storm troopers and Hitler 'Mädchen's, when he heard someone call his name. Scanning the crowd, his eyes quickly lit upon Birgit's smiling face which popped up here and there over the crowd. Finally she wriggled through and skipped sprightly towards him, in faded jeans and his Boston College sweatshirt. He had forgotten, until this moment, how much of a spectacle she was, how with all the arrogance of youth and good looks, she moved, and with virtually every muscle in her body.

"Birgit! What are you doing here?" he asked and hugged her stiffly. She clutched at him as well, fitting perfectly against him. He could feel her muscles contracting and releasing, smell her perfume. He compared this with the last time he had hugged Angela, who had been in a hurry to dump him at Kennedy and return to the city.

"We were curious--Erika and I--so we came over," she said, catching her breath, smiling directly up at him.

"So, Erika's here," he replied and cleared his throat. Milo still dreaded, and yet was somewhat thrilled at the prospect of seeing her.

"Naja," she added nervously and glanced back over her shoulder. "Somewhere She was right behind. We saw you enter the square," she said pointing to one of two identical stone-faced buildings that flanked the east entrance, "from over there. I have had music classes there--see?"

He looked over and saw several lights still on in the upper floors, and from several windows, people leaned out. These two buildings were not considered part of the platz, being actually on the end of Briennerstrasse and eclipsed in spring and summer by a row of tall willow trees. But now it was late fall in Munich and he could clearly see them through the mesh of black branches.

Then came Erika, walking slowly through the crowd, deliberately, an unlit torch in each hand. She did not look particularly happy to see him and took him in coolly from the distance. Her face was, as always, a pale serene mask. She lifted her chin a little high and smiled at him--vainly, he judged--only when they were at last face to face.

"You must be even more important than I thought," Milo said upon greeting her.

"Oh?"

"They only gave me one torch," he said, trying to be engaging. "And you have two."

"Where's your torch?" she asked without formalities.

He patted his side coat pocket. "I've been carrying a torch for years," he retorted and felt silly almost immediately that his remark had so badly missed the mark of cleverness.

"Yes, of course, you really are the subtle one," she said in a tone that signified dismissal and looked away. He and Birgit watched Erika for a moment as she scanned the square and sized it up as if the entire event had been staged for

her benefit. Erika had always been arrogant and condescending in her relations with him, and it was difficult now for him to let this conversation drop until she chose, in her upstaging manner, to pick it up again. He couldn't help but notice how her face seemed so perfectly fit for the severe and doric enclosure of the Königsplatz--yes, severe, he thought, and classically devoid of emotion, the triumph of Apollo over Dionysius. God pity her devotees, he thought.

"Tell me, Fraulein Sigmund," Milo said at last in the urbane tone that he had used on his students at Boston College, "just what is it about Germans and fire? I don't think I've ever seen torchlight processions in anything other than old German newsreels and . . ."

"Frankenstein movies?" she said, completing the sentence for him.

"Exactly. What is it about torches that so appeals to the German mentality?"

"Oh, I don't really know," she said as she passed both torches to her left hand and used her right to adjust a heel strap on one of her patent leather shoes. "I suppose many will tell you that it's something primordial, a ritual from the time when the Germanic tribes lived in the far north where the land is cold and the nights are long and so forth and so forth. Unless, of course, you are one of those who still thinks everything is Freudian?" And at this suggestion her grey eyes flared momentarily.

"Psychology is not just a Jewish science," he interrupted

without any noticeable effect on her.

"The simplest minds are grasping after mythological or psychological explanations for everything. Your 'German mentality' remark for instance."

"You have a better explanation?"

"My God, Herr Marsden, don't you know good theatre when you see it? That's all it is--nothing so dark or twisted as pyromania on a national scale. Y'know, Herr Marsden, even your poor Freud, obsessed with genitalia, was forced to admit, 'Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.'"

Milo conceded, adding only that those who will not learn from history . . . etc.

"Speaking of which," she interrupted, "I understand you have been in America where you are considered quite the Boswell of contemporary biography."

His playing Boswell to Hitler's Samuel Johnson seemed a farfetched comparison, but then it served to demonstrate the sort of twisted erudition of which Erika was capable.

"Oh, have you seen the book?" Milo asked, surprised that the German edition had already hit the stands in Munich.

"Of course. I was in a bookstore on the Marienplatz today. There were literally hordes waiting to purchase their coffee-table, family edition of The Fuehrer Testament." She exaggerated the title of his book with broad gestures and a basso-profundo tone that rankled him.

The title of the book had not been his choice, and he started to explain that to her. "Oh, don't apologize--you

are always apologizing. No, I think the title is perfect for the sort of sensational and tasteless American publication that it is," she said without even blinking. "Nevertheless, it is selling very well I must imagine. But you really must tell us if what they are saying at the Hofbrauhaus is true?"

"And what are they saying at the Hofbrauhaus?" he had to ask.

"Word is that you really received the Fuehrer's diaries from Martin Bormann--he's said to be still at large somewhere--can you imagine that?" She tilted her head to one side so that her short dark hair dangled mischievously across the lower part of her face and covered her teasing smile.

Leaning back on his heels, his hands in his pockets, he could only smile at the position she was trying to place him in. He had sworn a sacred pledge to Birgit that he would never reveal from whom he had received the Hitler documents. Now here was Erika teasing, belittling, tempting him to betray a confidence that she obviously already shared. She had tested him from the first moment she had met him over a year before.

As far as she was concerned he had never really passed. But clearly, he thought, he was doing better, because lessons learned slowly are learned well. "Maybe I got them from Hitler himself," he said, posturing. "You know he's been spotted in Nuremberg just this . . ."

"Oh please, don't repeat such rubbish," Erika interrupted impatiently. "There's nothing the Russians like better than

rumors of old Nazis running about in Germany, plotting in high places to invade the Motherland."

"Okay, so you tell me where the diaries came from," Milo said heatedly, "you're supposed to know everything?"

"I have a pretty good idea," she quipped easily, "The question is do you know where the Hitler diaries came from?"

I'd better, he thought. After all, he had uncovered the documents, made the English translation, seen them through publication. No child, legitimate or otherwise, would ever cull from him the patrimony he felt for this newly published work. He had found it, he had translated it into his own native tongue, seen it over the objections of civilized and uncivilized people, defended and lashed out at its enemies-- it was now flesh of his flesh. Even so, he did not know their true origin.

This was particularly a sore point with him since his contact at the National Archives had become so distant and professional with him on the phone. Erika regarded him smugly for a moment as he tried to figure the game. Why did he feel the need to accept her invitations to play games to which she alone was privy to the rules? It can only be explained in terms of certain defects in his character-- lapses in confidence--an inability to discover insincerity until it was embarassingly obvious.

After a moment, she nodded to someone across the platz and excused herself. The two watched her exit at a decided pace, and he sighed, "Erika knows about the diaries--that you

gave them to me, doesn't she?"

"She knows," Birgit replied uncomfortably. Then Birgit took hold of his hand again and, with a voice somewhat dampened from her cheerful opening chatter, asked why he'd betrayed her--why he'd broken his promise.

"What promise?"

Birgit's eyes, heavy with mascara, widened. "You've told where you got the diaries, haven't you? I told you," she said through clenched teeth.

"But I haven't told anyone," he responded, annoyed that she would doubt him--even as he was now almost willing to doubt her. He would probably have pursued her concern. He could see now that she had a nervous anxiety about it. But he was preoccupied with what looked to be a snag at the German National Archives. Then his attention was momentarily distracted by the lighting of the platz.

They heard the switches being thrown on the search lamps that now lit the speaker's platform constructed before the west gate. Behind it stood the gate's twin towers interlocked by the Greek portico of fluted pillars. Because several lamps illuminated the gate from different angles, it glowed without shadow, without depth.

Now it loomed up against a darkening western sky. On the speaker's platform last-minute adjustments were still being made, a picture of Hess was nailed to the podium, flags were being posted on the stand, but it was clear that the speaker or speakers would soon mount the platform and harangue the

audience in the finest tradition of German politics and theatre.

Milo Marsden had returned to Munich earlier that day to tie up some loose ends, but now he felt the whole fabric at stress and ready to unravel. He had not foreseen a neo-Nazi resurgence in Munich, an ominous delay in the certification of his documents with the National Archives, or the difficulty he would have in dealing with Birgit when he saw her next.

God, she was beautiful, he thought as he turned his eyes from the podium and studied her profile. Finally she squeezed his hand and turned back towards him. He felt a flash of heat at his forehead and moisture forming on his palms. She must have seen the indecision on his face. For the moment, he struggled with a disheartening moral resolve which he had taken upon himself weeks before. From the first moment that he had seen her that evening, he had wanted to reconsider everything. Now, Milo was tempted to kiss her--to prove to himself that she was, after all, irresistible.

Nor was he at all sure that his return to his wife wasn't a mistake doomed to failure. But had Birgit in the short time he had known her become an undeniable part of his life? He could not believe it, even now, looking down into her clear blue eyes, flushed with emotion. Milo Marsden agonized as he wondered if he wasn't a man of perverse--because essentially masochistic--loyalties.

Ironically, what he had with Angela at the moment was

nothing but sentimentality on his part and sycophancy on hers. But in his youth, Angela had been everything to him. Birgit, who stood before him now, chattering away, impatiently shifting her weight from one foot to the other, was more, but she had never been everything--and he didn't think she ever could be. He decided to bet the future on Angela.

"So?" she said, expectantly.

"What?" he had to ask.

"So you can take me out of here now--I want to go now." She forced a schoolgirl smile, "You have a lot of money now," she said. He just stood there, and when she was unable to coax any sort of expression from him, she dropped her pose and asked urgently, "Milo, don't give up on me now. You asked me last time to go away with you--I'll do that now--anywhere you like, anyway you want!" She wouldn't look into his eyes, but hugged him desperately.

"Birgit, I can't." At this her body froze--she did not even breathe. "I have gone back to my wife. I'm sorry."

He didn't know what to do with his hands now. He did not want her to misunderstand his feelings for her now. He put one hand in his coat pocket and with the other gently stroked the crown of her head. After a moment of silence she just as suddenly let go her hold about him and stepped back indignantly like a person released from a trance. She passed a hand through her hair as though he had left something on it.

"Birgit, I came back to Munich to explain."

"So now you have explained," she said, turning away and then back, unable to decide whether to leave or stay.

"And to tell you something," he stammered. "Please!"

She stood sideways, her hand towards him impatiently placed upon her hip, her face looking both annoyed and anxious. "I want you to have half of the royalties from the sale of the book." He started towards her, but she pushed him back with a sudden violence. As she turned away, he grabbed her arm and pulled her back. "Listen, you deserve it--I owe it to you."

She twisted free, almost hysterically, and shouted, "I don't want the money. What I need is to get out of here!"

"Then for your father," he said, misunderstanding her last remark. "Think of him!"

"My father is dead!"

"Dead? When?" he asked.

"Last week!" she said with anger that verged on tears.

"I'm sorry," he told her, aching now to hold her in his arms. "Was it a sudden illness?"

She took a deep breath and seemed to be steeling her emotions as she turned her head and stared off. "He wasn't sick at all. They say he fell out of bed."

"What do you mean, 'they say?'"

"They say it was a freak accident--that he fell out of bed, that it broke his neck." Her anger was now firmly in control of her.

"Birgit, you have a right to be upset. But he was a very old man, ja? And even if it was a mistake," he said, trying to calm her, thinking that she no doubt imagined that her father had been injured accidentally by a maid making up his bed or taking him to a shower.

"Not an accident!" she said and looked about her to see who may have overheard. "Don't you see? They killed him. Because of the diaries they killed him!"

He was stunned by her accusation, and as he often did when someone said something to him that he considered extreme or fantastic, he bypassed the implications. Who would kill a senile old man? He assumed she was overwrought--that she didn't realize what she was saying.

"Now calm down."

"Easy for you. Don't you see the position I'm in!" she said, her hands knotted into fists before her, pleading with him to understand with a minimum of explanation.

Milo shook his head and smiled disparagingly. "Now, now, no one knows you gave me the diaries--save Erika, of course," he said. He reached out to her again, but she ducked under his arm and ran off in the general direction that Erika had taken. Milo rubbed the wrinkles peaking on his forehead and called after her, but she ignored his call and without even breaking stride, slipped sideways through the crowd as though it were a curtain and was as quickly out of sight.

The key to her emotions had always been a mystery to him.

He thought now that perhaps she was better off explaining her fears to Erika. The two of them seemed to have a shared knowledge that meshed them into one another's consciousness. He had seen it more than once. They communicated in a glance or gesture an understanding that evaded him.

He shook his head and considered going back to his flat when he was once again distracted by the roar and applause that spontaneously erupted as several green and white police vehicles, their lights flashing, drove slowly around the west gate and stopped before the platform.

"It's Eugen von Dolfuss," someone beside him shouted and laid a hand on his shoulder. He was surprised to recognize in the dim light the face of Professor Kranz, standing beside him as if he had been shadowed throughout the entire evening. A well-studied valet or aide-de-camp could not have held his place as obsequiously. Yes, Kranz had been a staff officer-- hadn't he? Obviously, he had viewed the entire proceedings, but had been too polite to interrupt or signal his presence.

"Professor," Milo slowly replied and shook his hand.

"Pardon me for showing up so unexpectedly," he said loudly, focusing his attention on the developing scene before us. "Eugen von Dolfuss is the leader of the National German Party, the NDP."

CHAPTER II

"Ah yes, the National Deutsche Partei," Milo acknowledged after a moment. He had recently read something about the NDP and Eugen Dolfuss in Der Spiegel. According to the West German magazine, the NDP was a small but financially thriving clique which was now and then accused of laundering Nazi gold. And Dolfuss, a man who had never held public office or attended college, presided over a party that had in recent years elected members to several of the provincial German states, Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein being two traditional strongholds.

"Dolfuss," Kranz said simply and nodded. "He is by far the best spokesman they have--in fact, in this respect I would say that he is as indispensable to the NDP as Hitler was to the Nationalsozialists."

The small motorcade of shiny Audi sedans came to a stop before the platform, and Munich police clustered about Dolfuss's car. Dolfuss immediately stood out from those about him and cut the pattern of the quintessential diplomat: towering and thin, yet erect and muscular in his movements as though he were a much heavier, more substantially built man.

Even from a distance, it was easy to make out his distinctive features, his sharp nose and high cheekbones. He

seemed the perfect exemplar of what many older Germans still called the Herrenvolk, the nobility, and the younger Germans equated with industrialist, master class, and fascist.

It was difficult for Milo not to be infected with a little of the admiration that flowed to Dolfuss from the audience in spite of what Milo had read of NDP politics. In point of fact, NDP politics, to the degree that Milo understood them, seemed totally asinine. For more than fifteen years the NDP had been calling for a series of measures that either frightened or excited ridicule. Dolfuss had demanded the withdrawal of all foreign troops from West Germany and Germany's withdrawal from NATO. He saw all this as a prerequisite for the reunification of East and West Germany. And there were minor planks as well about West Germany's renouncing responsibility for the Second World War and ending compensatory payments to the State of Israel.

But these, of course, did not seem to threaten the survival of the Western Alliance, as they would have a few years earlier. After all, it was 1972 and detente was the word of the day. Hadn't equity for both Vietnams been achieved earlier that year by the Paris Peace Talks? Hadn't Nixon recently concluded a ABM agreement? Hadn't he even spoken on Soviet television? Beyond this, many European statesmen were saying that West Germany should take a more centralist position, a position in some measure embraced by the NDP--though to the National German Party, a 'centralist' position did not represent a midpoint on a line between East

and West, between capitalist and Soviet, so much as a third point on a triangle. The NDP position contained its own corner, its own extreme.

As Dolfuss made his way through the crowd, someone began to sing the low-pitched but forceful Deutschland Über Alles. Spontaneously, the Haydn melody was picked up and quickly subordinated all other sounds into the slow musical unison. As well, Milo noted as merely unfamiliar the forbidden first stanza which defined German boundaries "from the Maas to the Memel, from the Etsch to the Belt," old empire boundaries in present-day Poland on the east and on the Mediterranean in the south. The last verse brought the anthem to an end, sounding less like a dirge than a torchsong.

Then there was a moment of silence. The Königsplatz, now almost half full, focused on the one man who solidly moored both hands to the podium. The man looked prayerfully down at a text before him. His first words came into the world calmly and without distortion through the public address system.

"Alte Freunde, neue Freunde, Deutsche Leute--people of Germany," he began in a well-clipped and cultivated northern accent, "it is not only a pleasure to be with you tonight; indeed, it is an honor--a great honor to be here again." He paused momentarily while the word Ehre--honor--punched its way into the consciousness of the people standing there. During the Third Reich, the Königsplatz had been the site of the Ehrenhalle, the Temple of Honor which Hitler had erected

in memory of the Nazis who fell around their Fuehrer during the abortive Beer Hall Putsch.

To Milo's studied objectivity, this seemed innocent enough as long as one kept it in its proper context and realized that much of this was a perfectly logical consequence of his translation and release of the Hitler Testament. Just months earlier he himself had argued against the traditional liberal bias: "Why is it that American liberals were so reluctant to forgive repentant former Nazis but not former Stalinists?" Milo had never understood this. "The evidence is clear, Stalin personally ordered the atrocities committed in the name of Communism--Hitler did not. If any one fact emerges from the Hitler Diaries," Milo Marsden had actually said on network television, "it is this one fact: Hitler had apparently been in the dark about the death camps, Hitler was not the monster portrayed at Nuremberg."

"Aren't we terrible for meeting together like this and acting like free men" was the theme behind his remarks. The irony of this was lost on none of the initiated, particularly those who had been members of the Waffen SS. These had not been deemed regular fighting units and therefore were denied the privilege accorded to regular German army units--that of organizing reunions and clubs. It appears now that many of the surviving members of the SS had circumvented this non-affiliation policy by joining the NDP.

For several minutes, Dolfuss stroked the air with short,

precise gestures. He exploited with humor and irony the scars that many Germans still carried from the occupation of Germany when the gutted state had struggled with what seemed insurmountable problems: unemployment, cities and factories in ruins, and virtually no currency to put things back together. But even had there been hard German currency, there wouldn't be a labor force available in Germany for years. German casualties had been horrendous and were only aggravated by a second fact: eighty percent of the German troops captured by the Soviets (and many that had been turned over to them by the Allies) would never return from Stalin's Russia. Even in the West, many German POWs would not be repatriated from work camps for two or three years. It was easy for Milo to understand how, despite "liberation," many Germans were still bitter about the de-Nazification of Germany.

"And there are those in the world, even those in Germany, that dare criticize us--who think it is wrong for us to honor our dead,"--and there was that word again, creeping in like a remembered pledge--"wrong for us to keep our associations, wrong for us to take an interest in the affairs of our Germany! They say we should be quiet. What they wish is that we were dead! They would like nothing better than that we should leave the running of Germany to the younger generation. But what does this generation know? What can they know of poverty, or war, of sacrifice or even of Germany itself?" he asked, raising his voice sharply. For the first

time since he had entered the platz, Milo felt that Dolfuss had earned a hearty response.

But when the applause had subsided, a chant drifted in from beyond the east gate. From the steps of the Glyptothek, Milo could plainly see in the intersection before the entrance some seventy-five to a hundred students gathering. They had linked arms and were threatening now to push through the undermanned police line. After a moment it was clear what they were chanting: "Fuck den Faschisten--Fuck den Faschisten!"

"And I would like to remind them!" Dolfuss shouted, thrusting a straight arm out towards the dissidents, "that in our time, poverty was more difficult than living on a student pension, war was still preferable to slavery, and Germany, our Germany, was one nation--not two!"

It was amazing to see how quickly and totally he had whipped up the emotions and enthusiasm of the crowd. Their stiffness evaporated. His words carried the force of scripture and vitalized them like adrenaline. In a short space of a few minutes, he had dignified the struggles and wrongs they had been forced to endure when they were the accursed race of Europe, and what's more, he had put them in touch with the suppressed ideals and aspirations of their youth.

An old Tyrolian beside Milo blotted tears with a handkerchief. Dolfuss defied the world with his pro-Nazi, pro-German sentiments. He said what many Germans had been

wanting to say publicly for years but had been afraid of saying for fear of reviving the accusations of guilt. But thirty years later, Dolfuss had the courage and audacity to speak to them as the Fuehrer had. They, in spite of the intervening years, responded now with the energy of boy scouts. Whatever their source of energy, those towards the rear, those some fifty yards from the east gate, were blissfully blind to the growing numbers of radical students sizing up the woefully inadequate police line separating the disaffected youth from their Nazi ancestors.

As a student of history, Milo had separated the significant figures of history into two camps--the thinkers and the doers. Men such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Diogenes, and Epicurus had all been brilliant men, rational men, ethical men, even men of considerable forensic ability. But none, he had concluded, would have held his own in debate before the masses with someone like Paul of Tarsus, the Jew with the fire of God in his voice, a man who knew very well the difference between gaining assent for a proposition and converting the masses. After all, hadn't this one zealot almost single-handedly toppled the philosophical and ethical progress of five centuries of Greek speculation in converting Greece to the new Jewish mystery cult?

In Paul's likeness, history had known men like Peter the Hermit who preached the First Crusade; Savonarola, the Florentine priest who talked a city into burning their salacious Botticelli's; and more spectacularly, Luther, who

succeeded in turning the Holy Roman Empire against Rome. These were men who knew how to use words to trigger in the weak man the strong response. Milo was appalled and fascinated by such men. The great intellectuals may have known what words meant; but the great leaders knew what words felt like, and quite frankly, Milo envied them their ability.

Though handsome enough and a man of normal proportions, Milo struck few as either handsome or masculine. There was something rarefied--almost delicate--in his pale skin, his thin sandy-blond hair, and he moved too exactly, too subtly, to exert much manliness. He lacked the power of speech. Dolfuss was a living flag. He could have made his speech in gestures alone. Milo saw himself as merely one in a long line of philosophical ineffectuals. Had Milo had the demagogue's gift, perhaps his wife would not have left him the previous year.

For five years he had taught classical civilizations courses to students who fulfilled the humanities requirement by reading the Cliff Notes to Homer and seeing slides of the Acropolis. He had hoped that the meager appointment at Boston College would have led to a tenure-track position. But when it didn't, he was faced with the prospect of explaining his situation to his already well-informed wife.

When Milo returned home that evening to his modest but trendy apartment in the Boston Commons area, Angela was listless, sitting in front of the fireplace, sifting through the charred bits and ash from their last holiday fire. Her

lack of immediate response chilled him.

"So what do you want from me--sympathy?" she asked without turning about. "Certainly you knew this was coming-- I did." She dropped the dirty poker on their beige rug and walked into the kitchen. Moments later she returned with what had become of late her favorite beverage, rum and coke.

"You knew that I was going to lose my job?" he asked, still somewhat stunned, and sat on the couch beside her.

Angela had taken up a shopping fetish with the wife of one of his colleagues. Her husband had told his wife that Milo's not getting the tenure position had only been the beginning. If he were smart, he wouldn't wait for the second shoe to drop before he looked about for another position. Angela had overheard this conversation months ago, but had waited until now to repeat it to him with a precision that was calculated. "If you'd had a Ph.D. this wouldn't have happened. Y'know, you could have gotten your Ph.D. before we were married. Then it would be over with now, and you'd have gotten tenure."

"It's not impossible. I could go back now," he said without much conviction. Their marriage during the last year had been tough enough without adding another three or four years of school.

She smiled at him vaguely and stirred her ice with her index finger. "If you were serious about going back, I'd be behind you a thousand percent . . ."

Milo thought of George McGovern's thousand percent

endorsement for his running-mate Thomas Eagleton.

"But even I can see you aren't so serious. So, I think I'm . . . I'm leaving tonight."

Just like that? She must be kidding. Where was she going, he asked.

"That's not important, Milo. The point is I'm leaving you. I've been thinking about it for a long time--honestly, this thing today is just a coincidence." She started to unbutton her blouse and walked into the bedroom.

After a minute or two for self-respect's sake, he followed her into the bedroom and watched as she stripped the bedding from their unmade bed to make room for an open suitcase and some clothes from the wardrobe. So, this was what it was like, he thought.

She had threatened to leave before. But the pretexts before had always seemed so flimsy--once, it had been to live with a girlfriend who needed someone to help with the rent, another time just to give them both a chance to get a new grip on reality. He couldn't take these seriously. But this time he could.

"I'll send for my other stuff later," she said, stuffing one suitcase like a duffel bag.

"Whatever," Milo tried in a nonchalant voice, his arms folded, leaning against the open bedroom door. When she had finished packing two bags, she pulled off her blouse, and walked into their bathroom. He just watched as she pulled her long auburn hair into a pony-tail and tied it with a

barette she had had dangling between her lips. He had never ceased to enjoy watching her bathe and dress and put on her makeup.

She was a beautiful woman--her profile poised even now over the bathroom sink was a work of art, and what allowances he could not make for her character, he did freely out of deference to her beauty. Some people are spoiled--they couldn't help how other people treated them and what they became on account of their spoiling. Finally the water was ready and her breasts shook freakishly over the steaming sink as she furiously scrubbed her face. That task complete, she began once more her free analysis.

"When I decided to marry you, I had no idea that you would always insist on doing things the difficult way," she said, staring wide-eyed into the bathroom mirror as she applied her makeup.

"It could have been so easy for you--for both of us," she continued, obliquely referring to the fact that his father, a publisher of some financial resources, would have been willing to help, she thought, for the usual quid pro quo.

"But you were too proud. Funny, you weren't too proud when you first wooed me to take me to your father's retreat in the Catskills or let him take us round Long Island. But I was so naive then."

It was all he could do to keep from challenging the last remark. "Okay Angela," he said finally, no longer caring to know whether she was bluffing or not, "I'll ask Dad for a

job--I'll go to work for the guy."

"I'd like to see that," she laughed cynically. "And just how long would that last?" Her bottles of cosmetics clinked like so many pieces of silver as she dropped them in her handbag.

"I mean it, Angela, so you can stop the acting."

"Acting? Milo, I'm leaving. Milo, dear, I'm leaving because in our five years of marriage, you've realized my worst fears about you. You aren't going anywhere, and while this may be just fine for you, it's not for me." He had heard this before, he realized, in fact, these had been the very fears that he had confided in her of late as he held her in the dark.

"It's not that you aren't smart enough--you're that. I'm not sure what it is--but it's there, an identification, a love, a need for something pointless but nice. It's like the campus-wide 'Food for Biafra' thing you organized and worked on all last year rather than that paper you might have gotten published with a little more work. And you write great poems, Milo, terrific, but unpublishable because they're in rhymed couplets. Rhymed couplets? Did you think you were going to bring back the 18th century? What's the use of that or even your Libertarian Party for that matter? Call them noble causes, but what you don't see is that these aren't really causes at all--they're symptoms. Symptoms of what exactly I don't know."

Milo tried to smile at her little speech. "That's pretty

interesting, Angela. You should write psychological novels." With her customary indifference, she let her short shorts and panties fall to her ankles and kicked both into the air, the latter rocking a lamp overhead, and walking around him, went directly to a cocktail gown and a pair of panty hose she had sitting up in a chair like a silent witness.

He could feel his greatest fear clinging to his neck like a monkey. "If you leave me tonight, like this, you'll find it difficult to come back," he warned her, and felt the spirit of panic enter him and take possession.

"Difficult? I want it to be impossible."

He didn't know what to say or do. His defenses were shot. But even in desperation he was in no danger of blowing up, of losing control--he had not the physical command for either--he merely felt confused and winded.

"All right . . . all right, but stay tonight? Leave tomorrow. For God's sake, Angela, getting the sack and this in the same day is . . . it's too much--too much!" His voice quavered, and he folded his arms to keep her from noticing how badly his hands shook. "God as my witness, Angela!"

She paused for a moment, and he thought he had somehow hit upon just the right phrase--struck the right posture. She looked as if she were tempted to say something conciliatory, to relent, but actually she was relieved to see him such a shambles--it only reinforced her opinion that she would not regret it, and even if she did, this was not the man who would keep her from coming back. She reached over

and touched his cheek, but then, as though some more powerful instinct or duty had regained control of her, she dropped her hand to pat his shoulder. "No, really, I can't--I have friends waiting."

Without more hesitation, she pulled on her panty hose and stepped into her dress. Her last words to him were simply, "Be a hon and zip me up."

He zipped and asked her since when did she go out braless, but she just smoothed the wrinkles of material off her hips and took one last look in the mirror. She took the keys to their car and left.

That evening he had a few too many. Around two in the morning he called his father for consolation. Milo should have "kicked her little tush," he said. That is, if he had really wanted to keep her--if he really cared enough to keep a woman. It's just good female psychology. And as for letting her leave--that was absolute folly. Milo spilled a drink, and said he could hardly handcuff her to the bed frame.

"No, you miss the point, kiddo. There's a time to be a gentleman, and then there's a time to be a total bastard. When you thought she was preparing to leave, you should have thrown her out on the street. That way they feel punished and degraded and then they get scared and then they want to come back. But if you just let them go, that's it, buddy boy, they're gone."

Only such a man, an idealist and romantic like Milo

Marsden, in such a position of spiritual destitution would have been able to appreciate the alleged last desperate testament of another such man--a man who had brought all that he had loved to ruin. But unlike Milo Marsden, a man whose one true love of his life had not deserted him in his last moments.

CHAPTER III

Shortly after Angela had sent for the rest of her things (which turned out to be most of the furniture), Milo was riding trains in Europe in search of a job and taking remedial lessons in German from strangers.

"The Germans have a word for people like us--Aussteigers," he said and offered Milo an old Bee Gees album as one might offer someone else a cigarette. Milo looked with amusement upon this art student type who thanked people with used LP's and spoke a wretched Hochdeutsch--one without the least trace of a German accent.

Just a few minutes before, Milo had stepped out on to the station platform in Strasbourg to stretch his legs. It was a late hazy afternoon, and the frosty breeze that blew through the few passengers in the process of boarding, refreshed him. He had seen a steepled Gothic cathedral sitting on the edge of a canal as the train pulled in and was considering breaking his fare in Strasbourg to examine it more closely when a motley-dressed fellow with a large carton of lp's dropped the box beside him and, as unexpectedly, took off, running in the direction of the main entrance. Two minutes later, Milo boarded at the last call, and as the train began to pull away from the quai, he glanced back to see what had

become of the neglected carton and their owner. Part of his concern was habitual. In Paris any unattended package would have been snatched up in an instant, but he realized he was in the provinces now, almost in Germany, where theft was still frowned upon.

Then he saw him again, sprinting full speed, a crushed box under each arm. He had good feet and balance as he hurdled an empty baggage cart, but even so his prospects of boarding with all three boxes looked so dim that Milo felt compelled to help. Jumping down from the train, Milo picked up the abandoned carton and boarded at the next compartment. He might have prided himself on his nonchalance had he not compared his feat to that of this desperate student who must have jumped, both hands full, on to the small landing of the last swiftly moving compartment.

Two cars later, he caught up with him, his chestnut brown hair matted with sweat against his forehead. He had large clear eyes and his nose and lips were delicate--almost cherubic. Carlyle Harris said he was from New Zealand then, and in January he wore treadless Pumas without socks, white cotton pants, a tattered Hawaiian shirt ripe with pineapples, and an oversized brown mackintosh raincoat.

"Where you hail from, mate?" he asked, immediately sizing Milo up as American, flashing him his winsome smile. "So, you're in Europe on holiday or what?"

Up to that moment, Milo's entire trip had been a bust--expensive, unproductive, and unenjoyable except in an

intellectual sort of way. A number of years ago, one of his old college chums had invited him to come over for a visit. He had seemed to think that a man with Milo's talents would find a teaching position in any of the English public schools.

But now Europe was in one of its worst economic slumps since the war. On his last afternoon in London--on the way to Victoria Station--he paused a moment on the banks of the Thames and watched for twenty minutes as the Labor Party hoisted a billboard the length of a building on their headquarters. Their argument had been reduced eloquently to one line: 6,433,693 UNEMPLOYED.

In the other grand capital of Europe, he witnessed a rock-throwing contest by students and communists on the Boulevard Saint Michel. At almost the same moment L'Express printed pictures of the petite bourgeoisie, enraged by a new business tax, trampling police barricades and police on the mall in front of Napoleon's Tomb.

A Western economic conference was scheduled to take place at Versailles. Fatalism was the order of the day. The editor of L'Humanité, the leftist daily, had cynically declared the forthcoming conference to be nothing more than an attempt to paper over the real cause of the economic crisis: "The West has entered the gravitational pull of the laws of entropy and disintegration." Simply put, capitalism was a beached whale.

As he was leaving from the Gare de l'Est, Milo noted a

freshly painted slogan which echoed exactly the sentiments of Hemingway's Lost Generation fifty years before: Etudiants de France, vous pissiez contre vent."

But Milo still went through the motions of the pretense. There were said to be a great many American schools in Germany and Austria where he might be hired. In his heart, he felt a strong empathy for the dead-end kids of East London and the radical and pessimistic students of Paris. But he wasn't one of them. He was older, he had been married, he had worn a tie to work and held a responsible job. These were minor differences. The chief difference between them was the protests. People like him, the jilted members of the establishment, merely committed suicide. Milo had considered this, made lists of the pros and cons, and concluded that his life was now entirely in the hands of fate. His suicide when it came should be quiet, quick, clean and discreet. He carried letters of explanation to Angela and his father in his luggage.

In contrast to all this, Carlyle Harris, sitting on his boxes of LP's in the corridor of the train to Munich, presented an interesting accommodation to life. "To them," Carlyle said, pointing to a well-dressed German family sitting in a compartment opposite them, eating a carefully prepared lunch out of a wicker basket, "to them we're just Aussteigerers."

Carlyle took this term, originally a term of derision, upon himself easily and with good humor. In German

aussteigen was the infinitive of the verb "to step down or get off."

"So where you headed?"

"Vienna among other places," Milo answered tentatively.

"Been there, mate; nothing but museums and old women. Did you know the average age in Vienna is over fifty--that's a fact."

"Well, actually," Milo corrected, "I have an appointment in Linz." He had an address there for an American school. "And Linz is about 100 kilometers from Vienna, nicht wahr?"

"Linz! My God, even worse. Dirty little industrial center with only one distinction," Carlyle said, struggling to pull an oversized green apple from his spotty macintosh, "Linz was Hitler's manger." He shook his head. "No, I'd forget that--you should come to Garmisch. Terrific skiing, and if you need a job . . . it won't pay much, mind you, but it's in American dollars." He got along really well, Milo thought. He was happy, and perhaps he'd show him how.

They switched trains at Munich and were off to Garmisch and its neighboring village of Partenkirchen, both at the base of the jagged Zugspitze Mountains.

As Garmisch was a major recreation center for the U.S. Army, Milo had no difficulty in getting a janitorial job in the General Abrams Hotel, one of five American army hotels in Garmisch.

During the next several months he became a fairly proficient downhill skier. And when he was not at the hotel

or on the lifts, he enjoyed meandering through the irregular, sometimes cobbled, streets of Garmisch. Was there trouble in the world during this time, economic failures, assassinations, wars or rumors of wars?--he read nothing of it.

Under steep shingled eaves, small curio shops and restaurants were open practically all hours of the day and night, catering to the resort patrons and the thousands of tourists who made the day trips from Munich on buses. What they had come to see were the inns and churches dating from the early 17th century and the shops with their windows and doors decorated with Italian rococo friezes (painted on after the fashion of trompe-l'oeil) representing ornate marble stonework. Also popular with photographers were the wall frescoes of saints and martyrs, the village scenes depicting harvest carnivals, and the pudgy little blond children carrying buckets and milking cows. Someone told him Silent Night was written and first performed in a Garmisch church, and he believed it.

He was given a room for thirty dollars a month in one of the huge army complexes which sat on a foothill just above the township. This dorm-like room was located in a large, white stucco German-style blockhouse. Three of these buildings made up one series, and they opened on to a courtyard of sorts where the foreign Aussteigers kept their bicycles and let their toddlers play. It was by no means unattractive housing. He actually found that even after the ski-passes and the frequent dinners out with Carlyle in

quaint Bierkellers, he was able to save money, so much so that by the end of the season, he had more money than he had had before leaving the States.

Along with this change in situation came a change in attitude. He felt a sort of spiritual thickening of his blood and surges of clear-minded energy. He felt as if he were building antibodies against emotional disease. By season's end, the rigors of skiing had given him a small, silver trophy and a physical wellbeing that he had not seen since his undergraduate days. Moreover, he thought there was something bracing about the mountain air and the undefiled grandeur of the Alpine canyons. Milo had a growing conviction that there was no better place than Garmisch.

Then late one evening towards the end of the season, Carlyle showed up, drunk, banging a bloody fist on Milo's door, leaving behind its stain, his nose broken and bleeding into his other palm. Carlyle was not without the sympathy and comfort of a lovely Fräulein.

"What happened to you?" Milo asked as Carlyle bypassed him and washed his blood into the sink. Carlyle had shown up late with a number of girls in the past, but they were generally other Aussteigers, American or Canadian girls who were always bra-less but not particularly pretty. But on this evening he was in the arms of a puckish German girl who politely told him her name and that Carlyle had been punched with a fist in the face.

Carlyle left a bloody mess in the sink and lay belly up

on Milo's bed. "Hell, I don't know what happened," he replied and asked for something to drink. Milo had some cheap wine, some Black Cat, and passed it around. "There were these loud-mouthed louts..." he began, but the girl beside him added that he had been pretty obnoxious too.

"Yes, Birgit, but they started it. Regular Nazis!"

From their two accounts Milo was able to piece together an explanation. Carlyle and the Fräulein had gone to the local Kino to see a film. It had been a war film, and at some point, students sitting in front of them had said something insulting about the Jews. Now this had been purely in jest, Carlyle's date had insisted, but Carlyle, still intoxicated from dinner, had called them "a bunch of faggot-loving Nazis."

"But I didn't apologize to the son-of-a-bitches, and I never will," he said to Milo.

Sitting back in detachment, Milo noticed small blotches of blood on the girl's tight sweater and baggy walking shorts. Her knuckles too were skinned and flecked with blood. He envied Carlyle now for the second time since they had met.

Towards the end of the evening, however, after it had been agreed that his nose was probably not broken, Carlyle had wondered how he might find the student to apologize for knocking some teeth out.

"I don't know what came over me," he confessed. The wine had calmed and actually seemed to sober him. "You know what

tonight is, don't you?" Milo was nonplussed. "Hitler's birthday."

"No kidding? How old would he be?" Milo asked, humoring him.

"Eighty-one." Milo looked skeptical. "He was only fifty-four in forty-five. But what I wanted to ask you, what I wanted to know is have you ever been watching some film about the war, you know the kind that tries to show both sides, and on the one side they have the cultured German officers fighting against all odds, and on the other side a bunch of American GI's from places like Oklahoma and the Bronx, and realized that you didn't despise them--that you actually rooted for the goose-steppers?"

Milo had found himself pulling for the wrong side before. The Nazis may have been bastards, but they were cultivated bastards. That seemed, strangely enough, to make a difference. Milo too admitted, "I would not have enjoyed being tortured by the Marquis de Sade, but I'd be willing to venture that he was a fascinating dinner companion. But what of that, get hold of yourself," Milo started, "that's just Hollywood, you shouldn't get so involved."

Carlyle smiled bitterly and pinched his swollen nose. The girl, who may or may not have been following the conversation in English, was sitting cozily beside him, running her fingers through his long, thin, dark locks, combing them back over small ears that grew close to his head like a Doberman's. Milo thought now he looked rather impish.

"Easy for you to be objective, Milo--but my mother was Jewish and that makes me Jewish, doesn't it?" He sat up and disentangled himself from the girl beside him and pulled up from under his sweatshirt collar a gold Star of David on a chain. "See?" he said as if that were evidence. This was the first time Milo had ever seen it. "How do you say that in German?" he asked Milo.

"What? Ich bin Judisch?" Milo asked. The girl gave Milo a queer look and crossed her pale shapely legs.

"Ja, ich bin Judisch," Carlyle said to her in a poorly pitched German. She looked puzzled at first. Then, as if she were slow upon coming on to a joke and playing along, she made a doleful expression and tried to put her arms about him, but he stood up and started walking about the room at random dripping blood here and there. "That's why I started that fight--to tell you the truth, Milo, I don't even know how I knew that the guy said anything insulting about the Jews, my German isn't that good. I just don't know." He put two fingers his nostrils to stem the bleeding, "But I'll tell you, it was more than just the movie--it's the atmosphere here."

This was the first time Milo had heard of atmospheric influence. "This place," Carlyle continued.

"You mean Garmisch?"

"Ja, I mean Garmisch--and I mean this place too," he said, slapping the thick plaster wall of Milo's room.

"Surely you know?" Milo shook his head in complete

bewilderment. "Good lord man, don't you know? Garmisch was the special playground for the SS elite."

"So, the SS . . ." Milo said vaguely aware that the black shirts were somehow worse than the brownshirts.

"Sure, you know," he continued, "the Nazis in the black uniforms with the Totenkopfes--the little skulls on their caps--the Jewish resort counselors . . . Good God, man, it's amazing to me that the Almighty hasn't plucked up this bloody little burg and dropped it into the mouth of Hell!"

Milo took a deep breath and tried to relate. "Garmisch!" Carlyle repeated empathically. "They had a sign on the road to this place--'JEWS FORBIDDEN.' This place right here, the U.S. recreation center, this room, it was all part of an SS training center. The plaster's a little cracked--but that's because it's Nazi plaster, and the floorboards are rotted, but . . ."

"Nazi floorboards," Milo finished for him in pretended gravity. Carlyle who always looked somewhat intoxicated when sober, now looked deadly serious.

"Not much to look at now, but in the old days . . . must have been one hell of a swell place--these were probably officers' quarters. My mother's family emigrated to Australia to get away from this shit!"

"I thought it was New Zealand," Milo almost said, but realized that this was no time to introduce trivial inaccuracies.

What Carlyle needed so much right now was not a story

consultant but some ice for his nose and his swelling eyes. Leaving the two of them on his bed, Milo went out in the cool late evening to buy some ice. The base had a liquor store that never closed, but no ice. The General Abrams Hotel, however, had an overnight bar and Milo grabbed a bag of clear ice and started back.

He was used to putting up with Carlyle at odd hours, but it was not entirely for Carlyle's sake that he put up with him on this particular evening. The junges Mädchen was a pleasure to be around, and Milo derived a good deal of vicarious pleasure just watching them together. He did not protest when he returned some 45 minutes later and found the lights off and Carlyle and the German schoolgirl in bed, both apparently asleep.

Milo took a parka from an old wardrobe closet and sat down in an easy chair in the corner. He thought of the last few times he had had sex with Angela. They had had their different worlds, different values. But they had been good in bed. At least he had thought so. He had enjoyed sex more with her in their last year of marriage, than at any other point in their marriage.

"Milo," Carlyle whispered.

He was startled to see Carlyle squatting beside him, a blanket over his shoulders. But she was still on the bed, curled up, unconsciously aware of the cool air in the room, but without a blanket. Her curves glowed in the dim light.

"You got a cigarette?"

"No--don't smoke anymore."

"That's very good; you'll live longer," he carried on in quiet conversation, staring all the time, as did Milo, at the naked girl.

"You're a good man, Milo Marsden." Milo cleared his throat, but said nothing. "No, I mean that sincerely. If I was ever in a fix, I could count on you, couldn't I?" Milo nodded. "I mean, if I were ever jumped by a gang of scum, you'd be right there beside me, duking it out--wouldn't you?"

"Well, sure, I suppose," Milo said, "depending how many scums there would be in this gang. Two or three--certainly; six or seven or twenty, I don't know--somebody would have to be able to call the ambulance--right?"

And Milo was perfectly sincere in this. Although not a fighter by disposition, he had had to hit a man in the face once or twice, but more out of necessity than principle. Certainly, he would come to the defense of any man or woman set upon by thugs.

Carlyle smiled broadly, almost proudly. "Yeah, fighting it out--shoulder to shoulder. You're a good man, Milo Marsden."

"Thanks," Milo croaked. "Say, don't you think we ought to get an extra blanket--she looks cold."

"Her? Well, you know, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. I can't sleep here; besides I gotta smoke, and I was wondering how long it's been, Milo?"

Milo sat up in the chair.

"How long has it been since you had a girl?"

"What?"

Carlyle arched an eyebrow, and rephrased it. "How long has it been since you made the beast with two backs? Huh?"

Milo took a gulp of air and he felt his heart convulsing itself into a hard fist. "Why do you want to know?"

"I've gotta have a smoke," he said leveraging himself to his feet with one hand on Milo's shoulder. "How long has it been, Milo?" he asked again, gathering up his clothes on the floor. Milo didn't know what he should do, so he did nothing until Carlyle had gone home.

Then he picked the blanket on the floor and draped it over the girl. Immediately she sensed what it was and drew it up under her chin tightly. He stood there and stared at her in the dim moonlight for several moments before he returned to his overstuffed chair. What was he staring at?

He thought she looked a bit like Angela in the dark. Or was it simply too dark to see clearly? Or was he merely superimposing Angela's profile on hers? He tried but could scarcely remember what the German girl looked like now, the room was so dim and the vision of Angela was so strong in his memory.

In the morning, he thought, maybe he'd talk with her a bit. Take her to breakfast even. Who knows, he thought, perhaps she'd be impressed with his not trying to take advantage of a situation. But when he awoke the next morning, she was gone.

CHAPTER IV

For weeks then Carlyle harped on the stories he had heard on his mother's lap and on the pictures of relatives he had seen at Belsen or Buchenwald or Berchesgarten. He used these sites interchangeably, but he never again spoke of the young German girl Birgit, save once when he confessed that she had been pregnant.

"She had been pregnant?" Milo asked.

"Abortion," he said with some stoicism. "It's murder you know . . . not right at all, your son or mine--who could tell after that evening--poor thing, ripped up out of a womb like that." Milo explained that it could not possibly have been his child. "What?" Carlyle asked in amazement. "You didn't . . ."

"No--she didn't tell you?"

"God, had I known that!" he said and grimaced with interior pain. Milo gave this incident more significance than it deserved, and he believed that from that moment Carlyle became more of a brooder--indeed was on the road to becoming an embittered playboy.

As for Milo, his perceptions were souring as well. From the evening of Carlyle's bloody nose on, Milo saw Garmisch in a different light, as if he were, as Carlyle had suggested,

sharing his quarters with the spirits of former atrocities, and he wondered if there weren't a shallowness or worse, a sinister energy emanating from all this Alpine beauty. The ski season was warming to an end, and as he would walk or bike to work, he would imagine the men he saw--some of them enjoying themselves in the company of pretty women--appearing as they might have in black uniforms. And when he saw shopkeepers in the streets scrubbing down the sidewalks with soapy water or their wives planting pots of geraniums on the balconies and window ledges, he couldn't help but picture them congenially giving the Nazi salute to their neighbors, sticking little pendant flags up in the flower pots on holidays, or draping Nazi flags out of their second story windows. They all seemed, of course, decent, friendly, warm-hearted people. Even so, he began to wonder what they really thought when they saw American soldiers, and blacks, and people with Semitic features, crowding their streets, flirting with the village girls, wearing little Tyrolian hats and making a mockery of their language and customs. He discarded that whole business of his becoming a new man in Garmisch as so much Nietzschean claptrap.

The General Abrams Hotel closed for the season and towards the end of May, he was given notice and an invitation to come back in the fall and take up his old job again. Carlyle and Milo took bikes up to Konigsee, a small lake in one of the stone canyons just above Garmisch. The snow was melting in patches, and the run-off trickled at numerous

spots into the glassy pond. There they found a patch of fresh grass on the sunny side and sat down to catch their breath after the steep ride up.

"Ever take a boat out to the center of the lake?" Carlyle asked after a few moments, leaning back on his elbows, indifferent to the moisture seeping up through the matted grass and pine needles. "Never seen the mermaid?"

Another folktale for the tourists? Milo had overheard some of the nonsense the tour guides had passed on as local color and fact.

"Not a real mermaid--a gold leaf statue. The local trinket dealers say this was King Ludwig's favorite lake--something to do with the water's color." Milo looked out and had to agree. On first viewing it, Milo had been amazed at not only the clearness of the water, but its absolutely turquoise glow. Later, someone had told him it was due to all of the copper ore in the mountains that came down in the spring run-off.

"I know a lot of the locals say he was a genius or something, but I think he was daft. Anybody ever tell what became of the gaffer?"

"Who?"

"Ludwig," Carlyle answered.

"Ludwig? He drowned."

"Ja, ja, they'll tell you he went for a friendly swim with his doctor," Carlyle said rapidly. "But the fact is the doctor was a psychiatrist. When they found them, they were

fully dressed, standing in five feet of water, their hands twisted around each other's throats--what do you think of that, mate?"

The two images met for a moment in Milo's mind and disappeared. "I thought I read somewhere that he was drowned at Starnberg See."

"What difference does it make where he drowned?" Carlyle complained and pulled some grass up from the bank and threw it into the water. "Not hardly. It's a damned stupid idea, if you ask me, sinking a statue in the middle of a lake."

"Oh, I don't know, I think it's rather poetic--like the small roadside shrines and the crosses they've stuck up on the peaks."

"Poetic? Childish, that's what. And that's just what's wrong with this country. False charm--phony sentiment." He looked off over the pond dourly. The other evening hadn't been an aberration. Carlyle had changed. He sat up finally and folded his arms around his raised knees. "What's with all the cuteness stuff? It's as phony as the Oberammergau Passion Play--shit, they had Nazis playing the Holy Family."

Milo observed with some sarcasm that he was surprised to hear Carlyle bringing up the Nazis again. Carlyle gave him a friendly sneer. "I've seen people go insane here. It could happen to you, my friend. You'll start by humming Wagner in the mountains and end up dying to play Herod at the Oberammergau festival."

"You've been here longer than I," Milo reminded him.

"Oh, Jewish blood is immune to all this. I've thought of leaving," he shrugged. "I've got a notion about going to London. I have some ideas for music and starting a band. Still, one must plan carefully. I mean, a person would have to be bloody well mad to leave just like that." He snapped his fingers as though that would do it. He didn't really seem to be talking to anyone at all. "The air's thin up here and it puts funny ideas in your head."

"Like the story you told me about the army base having been a SS camp?" Milo had asked a couple of shopkeepers in the area, and they had denied it. "Ah ja, Amerikanische Geschichte--American history," they had laughed, and Milo had wanted to believe them.

"Did I tell you that?" he asked. "I must have really been blasted."

"I figured."

"Ja, but it's true," he said getting to his feet and tugging on the damp seat of his pants.

"How do you know?"

"Common knowledge," he replied, but Milo shook his head. "You don't believe it? Come with me and I'll show you indisputable evidence." Milo tried to just get him to tell him, but he insisted. "No, no, a university fellow like yourself will never believe it till you've seen it. Besides, it's the stuff of legend and romance--like that gilded mermaid."

"Wie gehts, Josef" Carlyle shouted to the cook as the two burst in through the swinging kitchen doors. Once again he was in a cheery mood. On seeing Carlyle, the head cook for the club restaurant checked his wristwatch and raised it to his ear.

"Are you early, Karlell?" he asked in disbelief.

"No, actually, I'll probably be late again this evening." Carlyle responded smiling with finesse.

The old cook started to grumble something which Carlyle checked. "Hey, Josef, let's not spoil our afternoon here with trivial matters. Oh, by the way, let me introduce you. This is my friend Milo Marsden, he's from America."

"Ja, Ja," he said extending his hand in a perfunctory manner but continuing to look at Carlyle.

"The problem with Josef," Carlyle used to say of his boss, was that Josef--like most hardworking, humorless krauts--didn't think that anyone who worked under him had a brain. Carlyle had almost been fired for thinking--but then Josef had discovered he was Jewish, Carlyle joked, saying that he thought Josef either felt guilty or enjoyed supervising Jews.

"Josef, I need the keys to the cellar."

"Why?"

"I want to show Milo our German version of The Last Supper." Josef didn't like the idea. Then Carlyle said, "But he thinks the Americans built the base here, and I want to prove to him otherwise." Only then did the old-world cook

with his antique tasting spoon on a chain around his neck pull the appropriate keys from his pocket and dismiss them with a sweep of his hand.

"Watch your step," Carlyle warned as they descended a narrow, poorly lit stairwell. Milo watched the dark and uneven stairs and bumped his head on a broken ceiling lamp. "Ah, but don't bump your head," he added in hindsight. "You all right?"

"Lead on, Fortunatus," Milo said, imagining the swelling of a bump and thinking of another ill-fated visit.

"Poe's imagination was nothing to this place. We use this cellar now for storing extra or defunct scullery, but in the good ol' days this was a sort of SS-Bierhalle and Masonic lodge." The end of the stairwell ended in a no longer serviceable iron gate and a short corridor, faced in brick.

"Well, get ready, here it is," he said as they stepped down into a large, dank, vaulted hall full of old refrigerators, crates and cardboard boxes.

A few bare lightbulbs had been strung across the ceiling, but the room rather swallowed the dim light. "You're right, this is hard to believe," Milo said with little gravity. Like the hallway, the cellar was archaically buttressed and patterned on a medieval blueprint--but it was not medieval, not older than a hundred years. Here and there were irregularly stacked wine crates.

"Don't look in that--that's trash. Over here," Carlyle said, motioning to something over his shoulder--to a large

blank wall behind in the shadows above a small raised dais of brick. "Strike a match."

"Okay," Milo said at last, striking a match and gazing at the blank plastered surface.

"Damn," Carlyle summed up on looking upon it. "I guess they've been painting down here again. I've been down here twice and seen it both times."

"What?"

"The picture, the wall painting--right here. But they paint over it, now and again, as you see it now--but it always comes back--always bleeds through."

"What bleeds through?"

"The painting, . . ." he said and bit the dead skin from his ski-chapped lips. "A picture of a soldier drinking beer with the Devil." Milo looked skeptical. "Now, come on, look at this thing a little closer."

Milo walked up to the wall and examined it as Carlyle instructed. He ran his palm over the slick surface of the wall beaded with a fine wet film. He put his nose to the plaster and smelled the freshness of the paint and agreed that this was the only wall that had been painted, the others showed natural brick. Carlyle used his keys to chip off a little paint and reveal a darker pigment underneath.

"So keep talking," Milo said, noticing, now that his eyes had adjusted to the dim light, several black iron chandeliers suspended from the high smoke-charred ceiling overhead. If it was built by the Nazis, it seemed odd to him that they

would have used candlelight in the cellar when electricity would have done a better job. But on the other hand, the U.S. Army would never have built the room without electricity.

"The story goes that when the commandant graduated a new class, he used to throw a bash down here. They'd eat, and later they'd do the oath business and receive their ceremonial daggers, but here comes the interesting part. They'd bring some poor Jewish 'schmuck' here and chain him to these iron rings." Carlyle fingered one of the eight brass rings that were stapled into the wall and pulled on it with the entire weight of his body. "Permanent, nicht wahr? Some graduation ceremony, huh?"

"What are you saying? They'd kill somebody as a fraternity pledge? C'mon," Milo said a bit overcome with the gothic elements, and even more skeptical because of Carlyle's own emotional distance. Carlyle seemed fascinated, not appalled, by the idea.

"It was called the 'Night of Blood.' Every graduating cadet was called upon to demonstrate his loyalty to the cause of racial purity." It still seemed a bit contrived, Milo interjected. A bit too horrible. "Don't you see, it had to be horrible--what sort of test would it have been otherwise?"

Still Milo had a problem overcoming his disbelief, though he knew full well that the Nazis had less ceremoniously killed millions of Jews elsewhere. It was all too grotesque and in such an adolescent sort of way.

"And you've seen this picture?"

"Naturally! The first time three years ago, and I could just barely make out the dark outline of the soldier with his helmet--it was too difficult to make out the other side. Then last September when I was helping to bring some old coffee maker down, I could plainly make out a figure in flames. It was the usual sort of portrayal--goat feet, horns, a triangular face, and I swear to God, Milo, out of the flames he offered a cup. Josef says it's a beerstein, but it doesn't look like a beerstein--it looks like a church cup. I'll admit that everyone who has seen it, sees it a bit differently, but everyone sees the devil and the SS soldier."

"And who told you about the 'Night of Blood'?"

Carlyle set fire to the whole matchpack and watched it flame out. "I don't know--people," he said and looked up. "Maybe the base chaplain."

"Sounds like a story you'd hear in seminary," Milo concluded in a full voice that echoed unexpectedly under the vaulted roof. "Where can I talk to this chaplain?"

"Oh, I don't suppose you can. Been transferred back, but a friend of the family's in Munich, a professor at the University knows all about this. If you're ever in Munich," he concluded, "you can check it out."

The most important mythic and literary figure in German literature is perhaps in dispute. For one, there is the hero Siegfried, undefeatable on the field of battle and slayer of dragons. The other contender is introspective Faust, over-

reacher, scholar, defier of Heaven and Hell in his pursuit of knowledge and experience. A comfortable third place must be reserved for Mephisto, the urbane and witty devil who--for the usual price-- made all things possible. Was history that simple? Had the black legions, indeed, had the German nation itself, merely sold itself to the devil? Perhaps Carlyle's tale of human sacrifice was not that farfetched after all? The mythic simplicity of the theme was almost Biblical, and this impressed Milo--though his rational mind rather suspected any revelation portrayed on a beer hall wall.

CHAPTER V

The broad sidewalks of Ludwigstrasse lead up into what is called 'Schwabing,' or the university district. The center of café société in Munich, Schwabing is a area of particular interest because of the sidewalk artists who exhibit their arts and because of the school girls and models who appear at dusk, coming up out of the university metro to meet chums and lovers at the coffee houses that dot the boulevard.

In this way Ludwigstrasse reminded Milo of the Champs-Elyses. Both are broad tree-lined boulevards that run exact as a ruler past elegant stone facades and pass midway under and around a massive Roman Arch. The main difference between the Munich arch--called the Siegestor (the gate of victory)--and the Arc de Triomphe is that the Siegestor is unquestionably smaller--just as Munich is smaller than Paris--and the Siegestor has never been completely restored after the last war. On the south side, the arch is faced with broken marble pillars and Roman busts, all of which still serve to decorate the august pedestal for an Olympian-sized copper statue of the Goddess Bavaria driving a chariot drawn by four lions. The original inscription celebrating the Bavarian participation in the Franco-Prussian War is gone. In its place a sober remainder:

Built in victory, destroyed in war.

Milo had settled on Munich for a number of reasons, which seemed to please Carlyle no end. He promised to visit now and again and had asked him, en passant, to return a dog-eared copy of Freud's Moses and Monotheism to his aforementioned authority on Nazism, Professor Klaus Kranz.

"Sure this book belongs to him?" Milo asked in the Garmisch Bahnhof.

Carlyle coughed up some phlegm and choked, "Of course it's his book." Milo had opened the book, and turned it around now to show Carlyle his own name written on the inside leaf. "Oh that--that's from when I thought I would keep it. But it is his book after all."

There had been a few invitations to go south, to the Greek Islands with several of the other Aussteigers. Cheap food, rents and beach sex had a certain appeal, but Milo had wanted to polish his German, of which he was becoming quite proud, and wanted--now that he had the time and money--to take a class or two at the university. Some weeks later, Milo checked the faculty roster of the history and political science departments for Carlyle's Professor Kranz. But Kranz wasn't listed, and no one had heard of him. It was not until some weeks later when he was viewing a portrait of the former university chancellor that he came across Kranz's name--in this case, affixed as the portrait artist's signature.

Kranz was, in fact, a professor emeritus and had a large though somewhat musty studio in the art building. He first came upon Kranz dressed in a tan smock and towards the end of a sitting. There were a few painting and picture frames, but little furniture in the room beyond a rolltop desk and a few chairs. In the corner behind a few potted palms was an old phonograph quietly playing a piano concerto. Kranz stood with his back to the door, before an easel and in front of a wall of paned glass which looked out onto a walled garden of vines and miniature fruit trees. In front of him, reflecting the afternoon light from the window, was a pretty young woman, draped with green and purple velvet and dramatically posed, leaning on a stack of books as though it were a balcony.

"Professor Kranz?" Milo asked, leaning in through a door left partially open so as to allow for a summer breeze.

"Ja?" he acknowledged, turning but a profile to meet his gaze, and he raised his palm to the model as if to caution her not to move. "What is it?" he asked brusquely.

Milo introduced himself and mentioned that he was a friend of Carlyle's. Kranz's eyes narrowed. The name didn't register.

"Who?" he asked and looked him over from head to toe.

"Carlyle Harris--from Garmisch," he repeated. He raised the old text that he had been asked to return as a reminder.

"Na ja," he said suddenly and abandoned his portrait. "Karlell! Do please come in." He dropped his brush into a

tin of turpentine and shook Milo's hand warmly. "Fräulein," he called over his shoulder, "danke für Ihre Zeit." The girl, a redhead with a creamy complexion, relaxed her pose with some relief and started unpinning her antique garmets.

They exchanged some pleasantries about "Karlell" while he cleaned his brushes with a rag, and Milo watched, from a respectful distance, the artist's model stash her draperies in a wooden chest and step into a sleeveless khaki jumpsuit over pale blue underwear.

"Pretty, yes?" he said finally, leading him over to his portrait and within a few feet of the model who was even now buttoning up the row of brass buttons that ran to the crotch of her jumpsuit. Finally, she smiled complacently and joined them beside the half-finished painting. For a moment the three looked on as Kranz scrutinized his work. Milo cleared his throat and wanted to introduce himself--but he had already introduced himself, and he felt uncomfortable talking directly to her in front of Kranz without having first received a formal introduction. Her arm brushed against him as she ran a comb through her hair, and glancing sideways, he noticed tiny freckles on her shoulders and the blond hair on her arms. Then, just as easily as she had joined them, she excused herself, grabbed a purse and left, receiving little more than a muttered 'ja, auf Wiedersehen' from the old painter.

"She is an Opernsänger, you know," he said after a moment.

"That girl?"

"Yes. Lucky to be so pretty as well, don't you think?"

"Yes, very lovely."

He took a sharp palette knife from his pocket and scratched for a moment at some paint around the face of the portrait. It was clearly a typical 19th-century revival of literary art, Milo thought.

"She has a certain world weariness that I found so appropriate to the theme. Would you care to guess?" Kranz asked his guest.

"The theme--an opera?"

In the dim gray-green background there was the foundation of a fog-shrouded bay; in the foreground, the bow of a Celtic longship. And there was, of course, the nearly complete figure of a sad and dark-eyed maiden. All in all, Kranz's work reminded him of the Pre-Raphaelite work that he had seen in the basement of the Tate Gallery. Exquisite faces, almost flower-like on long stem necks, and yards and yards of shimmering cloth.

"Liebestod," Kranz said finally.

"Yes, of course," Milo added. "the love-death from Tristan and Isolde."

"It is a bit Romantisch," he said apologetically, but the work was commissioned for the Munich Operhaus."

"And that girl is with the Munich Opera?"

"Yes. I guess I should have introduced you. No matter, she is an insufferable prima donna and besides, she is still

married to a Lebanese film maker."

He showed Milo the rest of his studio and recited to him the various histories of the men who had also used this space. The university had a few years before attempted to remodel the room. But he had refused to let them rip out the old panelling, lay linoleum, or do more than replace a few of the glass panes which had been cracked or broken. "This is not a laboratory," he said.

Milo finally presented him with the book that Carlyle had asked him to return. "Oh, Freud," he said flatly without acknowledging ownership. He placed the book on a pile of others which he said were good for only one thing--"propping up models in difficult poses."

"I must admit I was a bit surprised," Milo said before leaving. "I had expected from Carlyle's description more of an academician." In the old days, he had read a good many books but now he must save his eyes for his work. Then Milo mentioned the cellar in Garmisch.

"I know nothing about that," he said adamantly.

"But Carlyle..."

"Carlyle--as you may know if you know him well--imagines a good many things. Still," he conceded, stroking his chin, "I suppose it's not impossible. The Black Shirts--the Totenkopf SS--they were capable of almost anything. Wait," he said drawing him back from the door. "Perhaps, I do have a book that might help you on the subject." Walking over to the window, he bent down and shifted through a large mound of

books till he found two that dealt remotely with the topic. "Some of these are very good, others . . ." he left off, tilting his open palm from side to side like the arms of a scale.

"How good is this book?" Milo asked, recognizing one published 30 years ago by his father's publishing company.

"This?" He paged though it momentarily. "A little biased, I think, if I remember correctly, a little sensationalized and misinformed--you've read it?"

"This was published by a company that often buys reprints of my father's books."

"Your father writes books?" he asked with keen interest.

"Publishes books."

Professor Kranz took the small book back in his hands to reexamine it for quality. "Is it a big house, this company of your father's?"

"Like this one. Middling in size . . . no giant, by any means, but we get into most bookstores in the States. I am, however, surprised to see a copy over here."

"Oh, I bought this many years ago from an American at a flea market. As you must know, good history is a very difficult thing to write. Like an artist, the historian chooses his theme, selects a point of view, even controls the facts he will establish. And of these so-called facts, he may present them any way he wants, diminish their significance by putting them in a shadowy foreground, or magnify them out of real proportions. No, history is no

science--as many would like to think--but an art."

On his way home Mio stopped at the Nordsee restaurant on Ludwigstrasse for some fish and chips and to discreetly admire a waitress who had caught his eye now and again. In all the months that he had been separated from Angela, he had yet to go out with another woman. This waitress was darker and taller than the average Bavarian girl. In several ways she too reminded him of Angela--every woman had something of Angela's--only unlike this girl, Angela rarely wore her dark brown hair up and tied behind her. Angela preferred to wear it down her back and in front, over her small high breasts.

Milo watched her casually as she went about her work in her synthetic, pale-yellow uniform which had been obviously cut for a shorter girl. From time to time she would have to rebutton the third button of her bodice, which invariably popped undone whenever she twisted sideways or reached too far, not because she was buxom but because the dress was simply cut too tight around her bust and narrow hips. Her long tan legs, also, reminded him of Angela, though not the Angela he had known of late, but the cheery song leader he had met as a sophomore Sigma Chi pledge. Angela, too, had long legs, strong, well-developed but slender. He believed she got legs like that from cheerleading, from all that jumping straight up in the air she used to do. He had remembered that, how in coming back down to earth, her skirt

would open briefly like a parachute, and demonstrate her team spirit even in the color of her panties.

He checked his watch and finished the fish and chips. Milo had made it a habit of coming in later and later each time, thinking that one of these evenings he was going to be here when she went into the women's room, as he had seen other waitresses do, to change into street clothes. Then he would leave about the same time. He was ready to invent a plausible reason to be going in her direction if she asked. But it would have to seem perfectly natural when he said hello and walked along beside her. She would recognize him from the restaurant as that polite American who always said hello and never tried anything funny. They'd walk and talk for a while and when they got to her apartment, she'd probably invite him in for schnaps or maybe, in her case, Himbeergeist, a sweet distilled beverage that is made from raspberries and was a favorite with girls in Munich. Milo could visualize it; he'd check his watch and complain about the hour, but he'd go up for a few minutes, etc. Even then he smiled at himself and shook his head, foolishly running through this scenario.

Then he saw her lean into the kitchen and say something to the cook. Her hands reached behind her and untied the bow in her apron strings. She was getting ready to go home. She took a plastic sack from under the counter and started for the Damensalon only some five or six meters from where Milo sat.

But she didn't go in. The door was locked momentarily, and she leaned up against the wall and stared down at her cheap shoes. He wasn't quite prepared for this--he hadn't prepared a conversation for this. He quickly looked down and tried to look occupied with his dinner, only looking up periodically to see if she were still there. Finally she looked up and smiled, and Milo smiled and cleared his throat. He started to say something to her, had just cleared his throat, in fact, when the door opened and a girl came out and stood for an instant between them. A girl, blondish and stylishly dressed, was biting on a blue fingernail and seemed a bit uncertain as to whether she should go or stay, and then it seemed to Milo as though he recognized her. The face was so familiar, and yet, he had not the least sense of association. Was she from Boston? Was she simply a former student, someone he had looked at for several minutes a day over a period of a school term? These near-recognitions happened to him from time to time in Boston.

But this was Germany. The familiar face was at the door and turned left out onto the crowded sidewalk. He was still waiting for the counter-girl to emerge when it dawned on him. This was Carlyle's old girlfriend. The girl he had met one evening and watched by twilight. The poor girl who had had the abortion. This was someone he could talk to!

Milo jumped to his feet and rushed out onto the sidewalk. She might still be on the sidewalk for a block or two--unless she went down into the U-Bahn, the subway which had an

entrance less than fifty yards from the restaurant. He sprinted as quickly as the sidewalk traffic would permit, pursued her as far as the Odeonsplatz, but he didn't find her.

Shortly after his arrival in Garmisch, he had written Angela and asked her if she had any interest in visiting--he offered to send her a ticket. It was a foolish gesture, he knew, but on the off chance that she had suffered a change of heart, that she was finding it more difficult to find her way, she might consider it. Milo heard nothing from her all of the time he was in Garmisch. Then one late afternoon as he was coming in from a lecture at the university, he found the following letter in his letterbox:

Dear Milo,

Your father and I were beginning to wonder what had become of you. You had him really quite worried--shame on you. But we are relieved to see that you are feeling better about yourself.

Your father has been very good to me since our separation and assures me that he understands. Also he has given me a job with Chesapeake House as assistant editor in new titles. So naturally, I couldn't possibly get away from work, but even if I could, I cannot see that it would lead to anything but misadventure. Honestly, I can't imagine what you could

have had in mind?

Angela

AM:ka

He didn't mind that she had written the letter on his father's house stationery. What bothered him was that she had had one of the secretaries type it. She must have been aware that he had known some of those people--that there would be gossip in the office about it. So much more grist for the mill, he thought. The history of his relationship with Angela had been one of chutes and ladders. This letter, this humiliation, was merely one more rung, but it felt like a fresh wound. He thought he had put all that behind him, and that since Garmisch he was finished with it, but it wasn't easy for him to write off five years of marriage and the haunting sense of failure.

After pouring himself a glass of wine, he put the letter in the trash and tried for a while to read Lessing's Nathan the Wise, but after a few minutes, he wasn't able to remember what he had read. His German was getting all fouled up. He kept thinking random thoughts in English. Finally, he retrieved the letter and went for a walk across the street at the Hofgarten; he paced its geometrical garden paths over and over again, obsessed with this last and most current injury. How could his own father have taken her in and made her an assistant editor--did he know what he was in for? Blocking out the rows and rows of sculptured bushes and

precious statuettes, he saw only Angela in her own private office overlooking Rockefeller Plaza and the skating rink. He could almost hear her overseeing the work of under-assistants and secretaries until it was time to take lunch, perhaps with the old man at the Algonquin. No doubt about it, she fell asleep every night patting herself on the back for having the gumption to jump from the burning deck.

As Milo approached the end of one botanical alley, he saw an old gentleman basking in the last light of the garish orange sunset. He was formally dressed in attire that reminded him of a rich Viennese burger of the fin de siecle--pressed linen, satin lapels, and his brass handled cane which he propped up between his knees and rested his two hands upon. He was the picture of ruddy health and genteel wealth.

The man smiled and waved him over. But it was not until he removed his sunglasses that Milo recognized this acquaintance as Klaus Kranz. As he closed the distance between them, he wondered how long he had been watching him travel garden mazes like a laboratory mouse.

"Guten Abend, Herr Professor."

"Guten Abend, Herr Marsden," he returned with cordial dignity which well befitted the setting of the former Wittelsbacher palace and court gardens.

"What brings you down this way?"

"Die Oper."

"Ah yes," Milo said connecting his formal appearance and location in the Hofgarten with the Munich Opera House on the

other side of the Residenz Palace. "Do you attend the opera often?"

He cleared his throat and said, "I am on the board of directors for the opera." Then he glanced at his watch as if to suggest that he was merely biding time until curtain. "And what brings you here this evening, my friend?"

"I live across the street, on Residenzstrasse, above the insurance company," he told him and realized that Kranz was looking at the open letter that was pinched between his fingers like a dead kitten. It was easy enough to satisfy his curiosity. He handed him the letter which he opened carefully and scanned with pince-nez drawn from a vest pocket.

"I see," he said finally. "Is this your girlfriend?"

"Ex-wife."

"And you love her?"

"She was five years of my life," he answered, but then Milo thought that might have overstated the case.

"Amare et sapere vix deo conceditur," he chanted, folding the letter closed and handing it back.

"Which translates?"

He smiled generously at either Milo's ignorance or his predicament, or both. "'To love and be wise is never granted, not even among the gods.' I understand. A long time ago, before the war . . ." he said wearily and turned to see if Milo was listening. "I thought I had realized the impossible, 'I had seized the moon with my teeth,' if you

will pardon a sentimental French expression. But then the war . . . perhaps you can imagine. We wrote to one another until I was captured in Belorussia. Sometimes the guards would read the Izvestiia to us--they enjoyed telling us how Russian armies were advancing on Vienna and later Nuremburg, and then they'd quiz us about where our wives and mothers and girlfriends lived. They didn't have to tell us what they would do when they overran a German city. Mein Gott, the Cossacks!" He shook his head as if to erase the memory.

"What became of her?" Milo asked, though a tragic end seemed predictable enough.

"I can't be sure, of course--so many people were displaced, driven out or exiled. I was released from a labor camp in 1948 when I developed TB and returned here to see if I could find her. Friends said she had gone home towards the end. I applied to East German officials for permission to visit her family's farm outside Magdeburg. Her family was no longer there, but the new tenants showed me some shallow graves. They had been told by the neighbors that they belonged to the owners of the farm and their two daughters."

Milo knew that Prof. Kranz had, in fact, been one of the luckier ones. Still he never ceased to be touched by such accounts. "I'm sorry," he said simply.

"Everyone in Germany has a sad song . . . but the reason I mention it now is this. After the war I settled here in Munich for my work--my work, my art, that was all I cared about, all I intended to do with my life. Even so, it didn't

take me long to notice, even among the ruins of the city, pretty girls, sweeping about the city on bikes like sparrows and sunbathing again in the parks. Perhaps it was disloyal of me to notice, but life is like that, nothing lasts forever, not even tragedy, and as we say here in Munich, 'Die Zeit bringt Rosen,' time brings roses."

Kranz checked his pocket-watch again and put on his sunglasses. He had to be going and asked if Milo would like to accompany him out. As they walked out through the Residenz gate, the baroque towers on the bright yellow Theatiner Church bells announced the hour and sent a flock of pigeons reeling about the towers and copper dome and flapping into the mauve-tinted sky. To their right was Odeonsplatz and the open-air Feldherrnhalle, the Field Marshals' Hall, with its bronze generals and stone lions under the Italian-arched canopy.

Milo was touched immeasurably by the Professor's attempt at consolation. "I believe you're right--intellectually it makes perfect sense. Still, sometimes when there is a particularly strong reminder . . ."

"I try to live in the present, too, but for instance, it's always a small surprise for me," he said walking along and pointing with his cane, "to look over there and not see the Feldherrnhalle glowing with torch light. One can understand why they were removed, but still the pavilion looks dark and lifeless without them."

"Torches?" Milo asked trying to imagine the effect.

"Up on the platform--torches there were, one for each of the members of the SA who were killed here in Odeonsplatz. Fifteen or sixteen, I believe. That was during the Beerhall Putsch."

"Really?" Milo asked, only vaguely familiar with the Beer Hall Putsch.

"You live just down the street and you didn't know? 1923--Hitler with the war hero Ludendorff tried to seize power in Munich. Big march on foot. They were met here by the state police backed up by army regulars. When Hitler and the SA refused to retire from the platz, the police opened fire. It was for us what the Boston Massacre was for you." Milo tried to make the connection, but he couldn't recall any burning torches or monuments for the colonists killed in Boston.

"Sixteen Nazis, but how many of Munich police were killed by the Nazis?"

"Oh . . . none I think, though I could be wrong. You see, Hitler was dedicated to the idea of a bloodless coup. Before they left their staging area at the Bierbraukeller, he had his captains collect all of the ammunition. Of course, the police could not have known that, but there you are. The putsch had to fail should anyone call the Fuehrer's bluff, but it worked out well enough for the party in the end. The party got its martyrs, and Hitler and his conspirators got short prison sentences--14 months--just because they had not tried to take the government by storm as it were. Ja, during

the Dritte Reich, this was just about the most solemn spot in Nazi history."

"And the most solemn spot?" Milo asked, somewhat impressed that Hitler was not quite the fool he had taken him for.

"Also here in Munich--the Ehrenhalle, the Temple of Honor at the King's Square.

"Der Konigsplatz?" Milo repeated, recalling the name from somewhere. He had seen that name on the city map, he thought. When they reached the steps of the Opernhaus, Herr Kranz apologized for boring him with the details of his life.

"Not at all," Milo replied, "I find what you've said very interesting. Nothing I've ever read about all this has ever made much sense to me. How one of the most cultivated societies in Europe could get so involved in a . . ."

He smiled at his awkwardness. "You mean, how could Germany, the land of Luther, Rilke, Goethe, Schiller and Kant get so mixed up?"

"It escapes me. But you lived through it. You fought for Germany."

"And for the Fuehrer," he added ironically.

"Exactly. Perhaps we can speak of this again?"

He looked at Milo for a moment with a grim smile. "No, I value our new friendship much too much to risk offending you," he started to explain.

"No, please, I assure you I would not be offended," Milo assured him.

"Funny, no one has ever asked me to explain. If they had, maybe my memory would be better; I am not the best one to ask, but there are those who saw more than I; I know people who were actually there to see these things happen-- people who actually knew the Fuehrer. Those are the people you should talk to."

"How would I do that?"

He paused for a moment to evaluate his request before he spoke. "Perhaps I will introduce you."

CHAPTER VI

Two weeks later he went by the professor's office only to learn that Herr Kranz was currently on a Mediterranean cruise. Milo had read the books that Kranz had been given him, books which documented the enormity of the civilian casualties at the firebombing of Dresden--he was aware of this already. A famous acquaintance of Milo's in Boston, Robert Lowell, had called the daylight bombings of German cities "unconscionable savagery." Also, there were interesting footnotes to history here and there, minor events which had shaped public opinion, but which were of little consequence otherwise. For instance, the famous film footage of Hitler doing a little jig at the surrender of the French government had been a fraud. Actually, the film footage had been edited into a loop by a western photographer so as to make Hitler's stamped foot appear a dance step. And why had Hitler refused to shake hands with the black athlete Jesse Owens when he had been previously so conspicuous in the congratulations of so many of the olympic gold medal winners? In Thirty Lies Milo learned that Hitler had intended no insult to Owens. Late in the games, Hitler had been told by the Olympic committee that these were not his Olympics, and that he was not welcome on the parade grounds during the

awards ceremonies.

By the end of four weeks Milo had begun to believe that Herr Kranz had forgotten his promise to introduce him to some of his more interesting acquaintances when Kranz called late one evening to ask if Milo was still interested. "Gut," then Kranz would pick him up in his car that next afternoon in front of his apartment--or better still, since the Residenzstrasse was always a crowded and narrow street, the Feldherrnhalle--promptly at three.

Again the belfries of the city clang the hour as Milo arrived. While waiting, he sat on the steps of the Feldherrnhalle between the two buffalo-sized lions and watched pedestrians cross the Odeonsplatz. As always, there were the tourists trekking in and out of the Theatiner Church, taking pictures of everything that looked older than their tourbus. Most of them were unable to figure out what this large elevated platform--portico--whatever--was for, and their petite little tour guide in her Bayrischer peasant dress wasn't much help either, telling them only the names of the two fieldmarshalls whose statues stood on each side. Milo wondered at the time if she knew more than this.

Whether she knew or not, there was little to be gained by telling the tourists anything that wasn't upbeat. For many, certainly, the charm of the 18th-Century platz would pale, were she to tell them that this was the place where Hitler and his friends had been ambushed by fifty state militia and two or three machine gun emplacements.

This sort of de-emphasizing of anything with the taint of a Nazi or military past was common all over the city. The Bavarian Military Museum was the only old city structure that had not been restored from ruin. And there is a monument at the end of Prinzregentenstrasse, a golden statue atop a pillar that sits on a high bluff. The city maps refer to it as the Friedensengel, or literally translated, the Peace Angel. In point of fact, however, Milo duly noted that it was clearly modeled on the classical statues of Nike--the daemon of victory. Athena, the warlike patron goddess of Athens, was often portrayed wearing a warrior's helmet and breastplate, and while she generally carried a spear in her left hand, she always held a miniature elfin-sized, Nike-Victory in the palm of her right. The statue of Nike that overlooks the Old City from the knoll above Prinzregentenstrasse carried a little miniature of Athena in her hand.

More probably, he thought, the schoolgirl didn't know. The American tourists, who looked to Milo to be solid Babbitt-types, weren't really sure if they were looking at anything or not, but just to be safe, many took pictures anyway. Looking through and beyond these at some distance, he noticed a pretty Mädchen walking in his general direction, seeming to look directly at him--though he realized that at that distance she might be looking at anything within twenty yards. Milo had developed a discriminating sense about Bavarian girls. They generally had light brown hair which they wore, like their clothes, with careless vanity.

Particularly popular this summer were baggy skirts and decollete tops which breathed, as fashion dictated, through numerous holes in the design. The typical girl's blouse had, for instance, slits underneath the arms, that ran half way down to a belt that cinched the waist.

This girl wore a pastel sweatshirt which was large and loose and had a neckline which slipped carelessly down over one shiny brown shoulder. Her wrap-around skirt tied in front with an attached fabric belt, and as she walked towards him swinging a large net bag, the movement of her legs and the gentle breeze swept back the front of her skirt like a tent flap and revealed her tan thighs.

The Feldherrnhalle was a popular meeting place for couples, and five yards in front of him, shielded now and again by mulling tourists, she stopped and turned on her heels and surveyed the path that she had just taken. As she stood there, he picked up a strong scent of coconut oil. The back of her gold calves glistened. She fumbled in her net bag for a loose cigarette and a match. Finally, she twirled around and, plopping down on the steps to his left, asked if he had Feuer. Americans ask for a light. In Germany they ask for fire.

"Sorry, I don't smoke," he stuttered somewhat stunned. Had he lost his mind or was merely hallucinating in the bright sunlight? This, albeit in a different hair style, looked to be the girl from the fish restaurant. This was the girl, he thought, who had been with Carlyle in his room in

Garmisch.

"Ach," she said, as Germans are fond of saying, and threw the cigarette back into the melange of small things in her purse.

"Don't I know you?"

She smiled cynically. "Sind Sie Amerikaner?"

"Ja."

She said she had thought so. His German was unnatural, she continued, "besides, you Americans all dress so horribly," she sneered playfully.

"I bought this shirt in Munich."

She paused and reconsidered before concluding it was not American clothes but American taste that was horrible.

"Seriously, I know you," he repeated and told her of their mutual acquaintance. Perhaps, but she didn't think so, she said with a coolness that was very convincing.

"Waiting for someone?" she asked.

He nodded. "Me too," she said as if this were some sort of great coincidence. They made small talk for a few minutes. The quarter hour sounded and another tourist bus arrived. She bummed a book of matches off one of the tourists, a hoosier with a clutchy wife on one arm who immediately took Birgit for a prostitute. Birgit smoked four cigarettes in a row.

"I don't smoke too much," she explained. "It's just that my friend hates it when I smoke and I can't smoke in school, so I have to smoke a day's worth whenever I find the chance."

Then she told him a folk tradition about the Feldherrnhalle which the guides neglected. "If a virgin ever crosses the Odeonsplatz, these glum lions will rear up off of their front paws and roar. But virgins are as rare as lions in Munich," she said dourly.

Maybe she was a prostitute, Milo thought. Perhaps Carlyle had been with a prostitute that evening. She could hardly be expected to remember every John. "You know, I think maybe your friend isn't coming. Maybe your friend is like God?"

"How's that?" he asked.

"Everybody's waiting for him, but he doesn't really exist," she teased.

Even so, she didn't have the I've-seen-it-all stare of most of the streetwalkers he had seen in German cities. On the contrary, she had the pure but wide-eyed stare of a Botticelli study.

"Well I'll just have to stay and meet her--to see if the lions roar."

"I'm not waiting for a girl," he said.

She drummed with a finger on her lower lip and considered. "No girlfriend, then?"

He could only smile at what was looking more and more like entrapment. "We were going to the Englischer to sunbathe," she complained, "but now I suppose I shall have to go alone. Would you like to come?"

"To tan? I didn't bring a swimming suit."

She took a long last drag on the cigarette and crushed it out on the step between them. "Americans and Englishman," she laughed, "they want to put clothes on everything."

This had to be one of the freshest solicitations he had ever heard. Milo looked across the platz, trying to get a handle on an anxiousness that seemed to be clamoring up his chest. The activity on the platz confused him. Where was Kranz? He was in favor of running away to the park with her when he heard the high-pitched honk of a showroom-new, steel-blue Mercedes. It rolled slowly to a stop at the distant curb, and the girl behind the wheel leaned over across the front seat and pushed the passenger door open.

"Ah, meine Freundin!" she said, throwing a crushed package and several stray cigarettes from her purse. "I must run--auf Wiedersehen." And in an instant she was skipping her way to the open door.

She probably wasn't a prostitute, he reasoned now. Feeling foolish, Milo continued sitting there until he saw them disappear around the corner of the Feldherrnhalle and down Prinzregentstrasse. She looked so much like the girl in Garmisch. What had her name been? He cast one last glance over the platz and decided to return to his flat. But as he turned the corner on to Residenzstrasse, he was surprised to see the Mercedes half parked, half blocking traffic, twenty yards ahead with its passenger door wide open. Weaving her way quickly down the narrow street towards him was his new acquaintance. "My friend wants to know, do you want to come

too?"

As Milo eased into the back seat of the sedan, Birgit's friend, a brunette in her early thirties, did not turn to greet him. Rather, their eyes first met in the rear view mirror which she reached up and adjusted to get a better look at him. Her eyes were narrow, steadfast and grey; her name was Erika Sigmund, and no sooner had Birgit closed the passenger door, which clapped shut like a well-made, airtight box, than she put the accelerator to the floor, thus demonstrating the "G" force of a top-of-the-line Mercedes Benz.

"Don't worry about Erika's driving; she isn't reckless," Birgit said, turning about in her seat and hugging the headrest in order to maintain her balance during Erika's violent braking.

Milo braced himself for a red light towards which they were quickly advancing and asked, "How would you describe her driving?"

"Praktisch," Erika answered, looking down on the seat beside her for a pair of sunglasses. "People who drive too slow cause all the accidents. They get run over in Munich, and they deserve it." In a few moments they were speeding down the busy Prinzregentenstrasse, looking for the least hazardous break in the oncoming traffic in which to attempt a U-turn.

"On the corner there--look smartly," Erika said, speaking in nearly flawless British English, "That's the American

Consulate here in Munich."

"Nice, will we be seeing a hospital as well?"

"And a little further up here on the left, there, the building with the long portico of pillars," she said of a building which was impossible to miss, the building itself taking up the block, "that is the Haus der Deutschen Kunst."

"Nein," Birgit corrected, "Das ist nicht das Haus der Deutschen Kunst"--that is not the House of German Art, she said, "but simply the House of Art."

"Das ist richtig," Erika conceded after a moment, and smiled slowly as if from the enjoyment of some deep conceit. Finding a place to double park, Erika took a picnic basket from the trunk and walked into the Englischer Garten careless of whether the others followed or not.

Milo was familiar with this expansive city park, with the chestnut trees that surround the edges and provide shade for the old men who normally sat alone reading their Munchener Zeitungs. The old women of Munich sat together in bunches, always a paper sack or large bag beside them from which they pull sewing and knitting work while they watch grandchildren and carry on conversations in a Bayrisch dialect that many Northern Germans find difficult to decipher. Birgit shared to a lesser extent the Bavarian accent, which is considered uncultivated by the Northern Germans, but which Milo found delightful. It's a softer, less guttural German, and it has a sort of rising intonation or stress at the end of a sentence which gives it a sing-songish rhythm and dancelike

energy.

The park was fuller this day than usual, and it took several minutes of indecision before Erika spread their blanket on the side of a gently sloping knoll below a round Greek pavilion. It was not unusual for sunbathers and swimmers in the park to go nude, but even in this there were more or less generally observed conventions. Women take off their clothes only after they've sat down, and should they see a friend some 50 or 100 yards off, they would put on their clothes to visit them. The Auslanders, or foreigners, who make up over twenty-five percent of the city's work force, were most comfortable in this setting and observed no rules whatsoever, treating the park as either some sort of human zoo or primeval garden in which everything was permitted short of human sacrifice.

Without much ado, Birgit and Erika began to strip while Milo diverted his attention to some students splashing in the Isar. "Aren't you awfully hot in all those clothes?" Birgit chided him as she untied her skirt and pulled it out from under her. Erika, beside her, carefully folded her slacks and placed them in her bag. It really wasn't good manners on his part, Birgit was going to explain.

"Well . . ." he stalled, fingering the top button of his shirt. They were very much amused while he wondered whether he felt a sudden moral reserve or simply seven years old.

"Well?" Erika said and gestured for Birgit to unhook her bra which then slid into her hands deftly. Then she herself

teased him with lines which he recognized from Eliot's 'Prufrock:' "Do I dare eat a peach?/ Shall I go with my trousers rolled and walk upon the beach . . ."

Finally he got to his feet and as casually as possible stripped while Birgit and Erika looked on with an air of detached sophistication, faintly smirking, both lying on their sides, facing one another, one elbow back supporting their stares, like erotic bookends, but the lions of the Odeonsplatz came to mind as well.

"So how did the two of you come to meet?" he asked, trying to divert the subject of attention.

"I used to sing in a school choir, and one night after a performance, Erika came up and asked if I would like to study formally."

"Oh, then you're a voice teacher?"

Erika and Birgit laughed at his characterization. "No, you might say I am merely a patron of the arts."

"Last month," said Birgit, "I auditioned for a position with the Munich State Opera Company, and I have a one-year contract."

"Really? Say, I've met an opera-singer recently," Milo added.

Birgit sat up as if he had posed a challenge to her and asked her name.

"I don't recall her name--but she's singing the part of Isolde somewhere."

They both knew whom he had meant. "She thinks she's so

much," Birgit said.

"She won't last long--and neither will her Arab boyfriend," added Erika, spreading lotion on her right leg.

"And what do you do, Herr Marsden?" asked Erika behind dark glasses.

"I was a lecturer in humanities from Boston College."

They had both heard of Harvard and confused it with Boston College. They seemed very impressed, and he let the distinction pass. But what did he do now they wanted to know.

"Nothing, really . . . I was going through some changes in my life," Milo said and thought it sounded suspiciously vague. ". . . I'm getting a divorce," he conceded.

"Oh no, why?" Birgit asked genuinely disturbed.

"Who knows--my wife wanted the divorce."

"But what do you want, Herr Marsden?"

"I don't know, I guess I wanted her to have the kind of man she wants."

There was a short pause after his confession. For the moment Erika lifted her sunglasses and scrutinized him. "Men should know what they want--that's the kind of man a woman wants," she concluded.

"Oh? I always rather thought they wanted a good husband, and father, and children--of course." Milo said being somewhat stalled in finding a suitable retort. "And have you ever been married?"

"Me?" she asked, as though the question were ridiculous.

"I'm too much my own to be anyone else's. I have considered having a child, but never a husband. Did you and your wife have children then?"

"I certainly was willing," Milo said defensively.

Erika scanned his body blatantly and set her eyes upon his crotch. "Yes, I imagine you would be willing . . . and able." Then without waiting for a response, she dropped the glasses down over the bridge of her nose like the visor on an antique helmet, and pulling a magazine from her bag, she turned over on the blanket, leaving Birgit and Milo staring at her backside.

As the afternoon wore on, it became apparent how different the two women were. Birgit was pretty and charming, an ingenue, the type of girl who is forever looking for recognition, assurance, acceptance. Erika was the seeming contradiction to all these. Even their bodies reflected this. Birgit's light brown hair held and reflected light. Erika's dark hair seemed to absorb the afternoon light. The lines of Birgit's body were all soft and curved, as if she were created by merging various spherical elements, each in proportion to the others.

Erika's body, too, had symmetry and proportion, but it was less a sculpture than an architecture of straight lines and acute sharp angles. In almost all ways Birgit seemed the compass and French curve, which led at best through indirection. Erika's nature, he could see, transversed straight lines, aggressively, without indirection or variance

between points.

They lay on the lawn for the rest of the afternoon, with their conversation directed, filtered, and mediated through Birgit. Then about 5:30 a ragtail football team made up of boys of different ages and teams assembled on the field before them. After a few deep knee bends, toe touches, and inquiries from old women who wanted to touch their shoulder pads to see for themselves that these little boys were not all built like titans, they began to scrimmage.

Birgit thought American football terribly exciting and difficult, and Erika observed that it was the sort of game she would enjoy playing. "Let's go down and play with them," Erika half-seriously suggested to Birgit, who picked up on it immediately.

"Oh, yes, let's do," she said putting on her shoes.

"You can't play football with them," Milo smirked.

"Why not," Birgit asked.

"First of all, those boys"--who were clearly all American dependents from an American school in the area--"won't play with you--you're not wearing any clothes." She acted as if she couldn't see why not. "Do you see those people on the sidelines? Those are parents--American parents."

Birgit looked at Erika who was smiling too. "Then we will put some clothes on."

"Besides that, football is a man's sport. That's why all the shoulder pads and helmets."

"Perhaps we should let the little boys play with

themselves," Erika conceded sarcastically. "But we could play if we wanted. Mannsein ist nur eine Kunst," she rattled off. Birgit completely agreed. "Being a man is only an art."

CHAPTER VII

The buzz from Herr Kranz's small BMW sounded like a propeller-driven plane, and together with the airfoil created by driving with the top down, Milo had more the feeling of flying south from Munich in an old bi-plane than driving the Autobahn.

They were headed towards the village of Mittenwald, southwest of Munich on the skirts of the Alps. Conversation was difficult, and Milo eased his seat back and watched the green pastures pass as they shot by on a highway as smooth as a table top.

"Say what you want about his politics, but all Germans agree," Herr Kranz shouted through the airstream, "he built the first and still the best highways in the world."

"Yes, highways like arrows," Milo thought, "pointed at the hearts of France and Poland."

By dusk they had left the main highway and had begun a drive up a slight incline through irregular meadows and valleys, where the air turned chill, and the shadows of the Alpine ridges cast a false night under afternoon sky.

"One thing I should tell you," Kranz said later as they slowly made their way through the village streets still cluttered with bicyclists and pedestrians with their bundles.

"The Schrams are dear friends, and I will not have them insulted for any reason."

"Of course," Milo agreed, not quite following the gist of his statement.

"Just so you understand. They are still very conservative in their thinking."

"You mean they're Nazis?" Milo expected Nazis.

"Well, yes, I suppose in a sentimental sort of way."

Sentimental? Milo shrugged. He sat up a little in the seat. For a few, for many Germans perhaps, those were indeed very good days, he had to suppose.

"But you'll find Hans' story interesting," he added.

"He's a fine raconteur."

As they pulled into the driveway of the Schrams' white stucco cottage, Herr Kranz honked and coasted the car to a stop. Frau Schram, who had been sweeping the flagstone walk, leaned in the front door to call her husband, who came with his Frau to greet them in the driveway. She was a delicate woman whose face still held a great deal of charm, but whose spine had been bent with age.

But Hans Schram was a robust man with tremendously large hands and a pink, bull neck. Hans struck Milo as being a man's man, and he could sense him assessing his strength as they shook hands. Similarly, he vigorously clapped one arm about Herr Kranz, which did not in the least stagger the Munich professor, who had a deceptively strong build beneath a pedant's old, baggy suit.

"We did not know whether to really expect you or not," Hans kidded.

"Now, Hans," his wife corrected, "you've forgotten a few appointments in your time."

Professor Kranz apologized again for having forgotten the last visit (which had, "coincidentally" enough, left Milo free to go to the Englischer with Birgit and Erika). The Schrams took them through a wood-paneled family room and out through French doors on to their back porch. The flagstone patio was ideally situated for a view of the village, and they sat for several minutes, making small talk and looking down on to the Marketplatz which with every minute became more rigidly defined in the contrast between the yellow shop windows and the imperceptibly slow falling of night.

"Herr Kranz told us that you are interested in knowing more about what it was like in Germany during that time," Hans Schram said after a few minutes. "Many Germans find it hard to talk about those years. Some are ashamed. But I did nothing to be ashamed of," Hans said easily.

"But with most, I think," said Theresa Schram, "it isn't so much shame as confusion. Most of us lived through it without really knowing what was going on."

"Still, we know more about it than those who try to tell us how it was," Hans interrupted. Then, realizing that he had cut off his wife, he apologized and reached for her hand. She smiled at his consideration.

"Ja, under the Drittes Reich no one really discussed what

was going on--nobody really knew. We knew what we saw in the newsreels when we went to the Kino, but what was that? And then the war started and all we knew was what we saw with our own eyes."

"And then after the war," Frau Schram interjected, "it was considered impolite to even talk about the war--as if we were all criminals and our talking would incriminate us. And the students, they only learned in the schools what was allowed, what the Americans and Russians wanted our children to believe about the war. No wonder they hate us."

"And what they taught, you think, was wrong," Milo said, speaking up suddenly for the first time since he arrived.

"Not completely," Hans answered for her. "Not exactly. I mean," he toned down, "we don't know about everything, but some things we do know about."

"And what do you know about, then, Herr Schram?" Milo asked. Kranz cast Milo a glance that told him that he had been too direct.

Spoken German is generally a very polite language, but in asking his questions, Milo had neglected the traditional bitte's that the native speaker liberally sprinkles in just about any conversational sentence. Hans, after only two direct questions, now looked both defensive and angry as he kneaded his two large hands over the patio table.

"Perhaps," Herr Kranz whispered, "you could please tell our young American friend about your experience during the war--start at the beginning."

Milo sat back and tried to look attentive. Hans was born in the Rhine village of Rudesheim around 1920. His father had been a barge captain between Mainz and Coblenz, and not wishing either to work on his father's boat or in his grandfather's vineyard, Hans had joined the newly-formed Rhineland Division of the Wehrmacht. But he hadn't stayed in the regular army. When he was twenty, he re-enlisted in the Schutzstaffel, the SS. So at last, Milo thought, he was actually meeting someone who was actually SS. There was certainly nothing sinister about Herr Schram. Why had he joined, Milo asked.

In the Wehrmacht, the old Prussian generals--Kaiser's Junkers--still believed that being an officer should be a matter of pedigree, not experience and talent. In the SS, however, a man could go as far as his talents would take him and much faster--like the Nazi Party itself.

"The SS was the up-and-coming service," Hans said with old enthusiasm. "And we received the best the munitions people had to offer. There was a lot of nonsense, of course, about the racial superiority of the SS--ridiculous, yes, and nobody really believed that, but we did think we were the best--the elite guard, and we proved that, I think. We were like the Marines--'a few good men,' ja? The SS man never questioned his orders, and he never retreated without the direct order of the Fuehrer. If there was a breakthrough to be made or a hole in the front to be patched, the SS was called in. So, natuerlich, our casualties were very high, but

if you survived, you knew you would become an officer in a short time."

After three years in the rapidly expanding Wehrmacht and the Polish campaign, Hans had gone only as far as artillery sergeant, but in the following year, by the time of the Russian campaign, he was already a tank officer in the first SS Panzer Division. In his thirty months in Russia, he had received the silver and bronze Panzer-medals and the Iron Cross, second class.

"I sent my commission and citations to my mother, but she was afraid after the war and destroyed all that as if it might be used as evidence." He laughed and shook his head, "and some American soldier took my medals when I wouldn't trade them for a cigarette. But once they seemed worth risking my life for. Sounds ridiculous to you, I suppose, but when we met a soldier, that was the first thing we looked for--the red ribbon on the tunic or the Ritter Kreuz on the left pocket."

As Hans spoke Milo thought what a curious mixture of pride, loyalty and humility he was. In many ways he seemed the perfect serviceman. Late in 1943 his division was pulling out of Kharkov when his Panzer engine began to overheat. It was a small thing, his mechanic said, and so he and his crew were not overly concerned as the last elements of the retreating division passed them on the rutted highway. They had for the most part been more concerned with warming up some stew which they had been eating for several days when

they were surprised by a small group of Russian commandos.

"They must have been hiding in the trees looking to pick off some stragglers, but all we knew was that they were there holding automatic rifles on us. We had been trying to build a fire.

"'Unbuckle your belts and lie down!' the leader of the group commanded us in broken German. Then we realized that this was a woman--these were women commandos. They were all thick and broad-chested and dirty, but they were women, and I suppose for this reason we didn't know whether to take this thing seriously or not. We had never seen woman soldiers. My driver Dietrich was the cocksman of our company. He might have stepped down off of one of Goebbels' propaganda posters --he was that handsome.

"'But we are German,' he said, strutting up to this commando, behind a cheeky grin. 'In Germany, Fraulein Comradski, the men are always on the top.' I don't know that she understood what he had said, but when she didn't answer, he grabbed her right hand from the trigger of her rifle and tried to waltz with her. She shoved him back, and fired several rounds point blank into his face and neck.

"There was nothing I could do. His face was half blown off, his throat torn open. Next thing, I was hit on the side of the head and forced, face down, into the dirt beside him. They stripped my belt and used it to tie my elbows behind my back. I remember even now hearing Dietrich choking beside me.

"They took our boots and prodded us back down the road we had been on in the direction of the Russian lines, telling us that they would see what was so unusual about the master race. One beside me nudged me on with her rifle barrel-- though my pace was quick enough --and said she would cut my balls off when we got back to their camp. And I didn't think then or now that that was an idle threat. Our corps commander had warned us several times, 'Save that last bullet for yourself. If you surrender, you may live a little longer--but I assure you it will seem like an eternity.' These were the sort of subhumans we were up against. They might begin by cutting off your ears, nose, lips, eyelids. I had seen photos of what they had done to some of our boys.

"But that wasn't what I was thinking as we straggled down the road. What I was wondering was 'Where's Fritz, where's my mechanic?' I hadn't seen him lifted to his feet like the others. Then I remembered that Fritz had been working under the tank. Maybe he was still there--I tried to think what to do--I knew he'd come after us. Then I heard the sound so familiar to my ears, to the ears of anyone in the tank corps--the crack of an exploding Panzer shell and the roar of igniting petrol. If he were still under the Panzer, I thought, he is dead now.

"But, Gott sei dank, he wasn't. Fritz had slipped into the ravine with a handgun and a grenade. For close to a mile he was behind us, looking for the best moment. When I heard the sound of gunfire, I instinctively jumped into the ditch

beside me and shouted for my crew to do the same. But one of our potato mashers, what we used to call our grenades, exploded among them, killing three of our crew and several of the commandos. Ernst, my gunner, alone had made it into the ditch a head of me, but he was promptly shot by the guard beside me. Then she turned her rifle towards me and would have killed me had she not been struck in the side of the head with one of Fritz's bullets. 'Why me?' I used to ask myself. Perhaps it was fate. For his initiative, Fritz received the Iron Cross, first class . . . later he was killed at Königsberg, or so I am told.

"In all the shooting I took one round in the foot, which was later responsible for my posting back to East Prussia in the spring months of 1944. It was common for wounded SS soldiers to be posted back to sentry duty in the Reich. I didn't particularly want to go, I remember, as there was little chance for promotion in it. Then I learned that I was going to be attached to the Fuehrer's own guard. But I was not at the Wolfe's Lair long. The war was coming to an end, and I was told that the Fuehrer would soon be moving his headquarters into the Fuehrerbunker, below the gardens of the Reichskanzelei."

Until then, Hans Schram had only been to Berlin once in his life, and that was in the summer of '36 when he had competed in the decathlon in the new Sportpalast. Now on his return, he scarcely recognized the city designed by Frederick the Great and embellished by the Kaisers. There were no

longer Linden trees on Unter den Linden. Amazingly enough, the Luftwaffe ministry had escaped serious damage, but the rest of the avenue was in ruins, and for the first time, Hans began to think, 'Maybe we will lose the war?'

And what was life in the city like? There were not many children, but those who were stared listlessly as old men or climbed on the rubble. Where were their fathers? Hans knew that most of them didn't know--they were in the army, that was all they knew, and their mothers, more often than not, had taken to entertaining soldiers to feed themselves.

There were still the rich who came in during the day from their Jaqdschlösses and villas in Charlottesburg and Wannsee to shop on what was left of Kurfurstendamm. And everywhere there were soldiers on leave who had heard that in spite of the devastation, Berlin was still the only capital in Europe where champagne was plentiful and every woman was for sale.

At first Hans would wander about the streets of Berlin in his free time and take note of the fresh destruction. It amazed him when he would see officers with elegant ladies on their arms, come up out of the restaurant cellars at two in the morning, the women laughing as they covered their hair and white minks with newspapers to protect them from being soiled by smoking cinders which drifted in the air like snowflakes. Or he would see some old man or pregnant woman, whom he had unintentionally surprised, stripping branches and dead leaves from broken trees for fuel. Towards the end, he scarcely ever left the bunker, preferring the quiet and

opulent gloom to the smouldering streets.

But in all this, he never questioned the leadership of the Fuehrer. It was Roosevelt and Churchill and Stalin who refused to talk peace, who had forced Germany into this war. And while his allegiance may have been rather blind, Milo had to respect it. To Hans, the Fuehrer was still a genius and somehow he would save the Reich. When the Eastern Front collapsed unexpectedly in the early months of 1945, it was not the Fuehrer's fault. Hitler could no longer trust his generals in the Wehrmacht--that was obvious after the July 20th plot to kill him. Hans had figured it all out. Hitler's mistake was in placing loyal SS men like Himmler and Sepp Dietrich in command on the Eastern and Western Fronts. Himmler had been hopelessly incompetent, and the front had fallen in like a house of cards. No one could have foreseen it, partially because no one knew the true strength of the enemy or even of the German divisions in the East--the field commanders had lied for so long about their command strength that it was anybody's guess what defenses were really there.

"And there was another reason for the collapse of the fronts," Hans explained. "For four years the Fuehrer had made his plans based upon the present strength of his divisions and the estimates of resupply which he received from people like Herr Speer. What the Fuehrer was to find out in '44 and '45 was that the reports upon which he planned his strategy had been exaggerated. Divisions, like mine, were only at 50% strength but were reported at 75%. And munitions estimates

of production were often doctored so as not to show the inefficiency and incompetence of the factory managers. Herr Speer had not worked miracles in production, but accounting.

"So where the Fuehrer thought he should have had strength, he had weakness, and what's more, where he thought he was weak, he was often strong. And why was this?" Hans asked rhetorically. "Because toward the end of the war, division commanders, who were convinced the war was lost, underestimated the strength of their divisions, hoping by that means to remain out of the last battles.

"So much has been made about Hitler's last days in the bunker, how like a lunatic he ordered ghost divisions into action. Not so. I saw him every day. Does a mad dog shave, put on a clean shirt, ask after the health of his cook, bring sweets to the bunker children? Of course not! By the end, the Fuehrer had learned not to trust the intelligence from his field commanders. Because he didn't know what he had and what he didn't, he acted on the assumption that he had better not overlook anything. How many commanders would be so smart? But they do not tell you that when they talk about Hitler's last days."

As Milo listened to Hans's explanation, he had to agree that he had been given a distorted picture of Hitler's final hours. "Then he wasn't a raving lunatic at the end?"

Hans meditated for a moment. "He had his outbursts. His doctor had started him on morphine shortly after the bombing attempt on his life. Towards the end, it was clear that he

was addicted and that his addiction prevented him from sleeping for days on end. But the situation itself was enough to plunge anyone into moments of paranoia and insanity. Seventy-two hours before the Russians entered the city, Steiner's Panzer army group north of the city was supposed to come to the relief of the city. Yes, a Panzer army could have held the Russians while the front was reorganized. But Steiner had not come. Why? With the Russian tanks in the suburbs, we finally found out. Himmler had ordered Steiner to stay put. Himmler had countermanded an order by the Fuehrer! When the Fuehrer learned why the last hope of Berlin had not come, when he learned that Himmler had betrayed the city, then he was angry. Then he exploded.

"I was standing guard in front of the situation room in the bunker--I heard him shouting. To add to this, the Fuehrer had learned that Himmler had also met secretly with the Swedish ambassador and had tried to negotiate a surrender! To this day I can hear the Fuehrer shouting, 'That bastard Guderian had been right, Guderian knew! Why in the hell didn't I listen!'

"Guderian had warned the Fuehrer about the coming Russian offensive. He had predicted that the front would disintegrate unless divisions were brought down from Danzig, but Himmler had accused Guderian of being disloyal. Himmler said if German troops withdrew from the Baltic, Sweden would enter the war on the side of the Allies and create a new

front in the north. What nonsense, but Hitler had trusted Himmler's intelligence.

"Immediately, Hermann Fegelein, brother-in-law to Eva Braun and liaison officer between the Fuehrer and Himmler, was pulled out of his bed and brought into the bunker for questioning. The SS officer who arrested him told me he had been in bed with two whores. Inside Hitler's suite, the Fuehrer and Artur Axmann, the Hitler Youth Leader, questioned Fegelein about Himmler's treason. What could Fegelein do? He denied it and was taken up to the chancellery garden and shot. I didn't see him come out, he was taken up the other exit which led from the Fuehrer's suite, but those who were there said he was obviously guilty. Not even Eva tried to intercede on his behalf. Ordering the execution of Fegelein was his last order of the war, I think."

Hitler would make other appearances in the next twenty-four hours, but he relieved his staff officers from further duty and did not talk about the war again. Axmann, who now commanded close to ten thousand Hitler Youth cadres in the city's defense, had asked the Fuehrer to decorate some of the boys under his command. Someone at the Chancellery had found a box full of Iron Crosses and the Fuehrer was glad to do the honors in the Chancellery garden between air raids.

"After that, we were all free to leave, I suppose, but where was there to go?"

To the surprise of some, Hitler went through the formalities of marrying Eva before a justice of the peace who

had been dug up at the last minute and had even had the stupidity or mindless loyalty to regulation to ask Eva Braun for her national identity card.

Hans would ordinarily have been on duty the following morning, but his SS unit--there were two in the bunker--had been given three days' rations in the morning and encouraged to leave the bunker compound. But Hans had not left. A few weeks earlier, he had met and fallen in love with one of the Fuehrer's secretaries, and he was anxious now to see what would become of her.

"I was in the corridor between the two bunker complexes when I noticed the Goebbels family and a few of the other members of the Fuehrer's staff leave the Fuehrer's personal suite. I remember the women were sobbing, and I turned to Theresa to say that I thought this was it for the Fuehrer.

"The guards at the door leading to the Fuehrer's suite of rooms had been given strict orders to wait ten minutes after they heard the shots before letting anyone in. We were all--those of us who had stayed on--in the corridor waiting quietly. Then we heard one shot. After ten minutes, the guards stepped back and we filed in to see what we had already imagined for ourselves.

"Eva was lying on one end of a blue velvet couch in the Fuehrer's sitting room, her legs drawn up under her modestly. She had taken cyanide. On the other end of the couch, his neck snapped back over the armrest was the Fuehrer. Strangely enough, his coat was lying on the couch between

them--I had never seen the Fuehrer with his coat off--and his shoes, too, were in the center of the floor. He, as well, had taken cyanide and had been shot in the face. It was an eerie feeling for us. For the first time in five years of constant service, our duties were totally meaningless."

"But, Herr Schram," Milo asked, startling him and his wife from their reverie, "Did you say the Fuehrer (now they had me doing it, Milo thought, calling him by his title) . . . why did you say the Fuehrer had been shot? By all accounts I ever heard he shot himself."

Hans drew his right hand across the corners of his mouth before answering. "That is of little importance, I think."

"Maybe, but please explain," Milo asked.

"What is there to explain? The Fuehrer did not shoot himself. I helped cover the Fuehrer's body with a blanket and carry it up to the garden for cremation. I smelled the cyanide--and I saw the entry wound in his mouth and the exit wound in his forehead. There was no bleeding. No blood to speak of. He had obviously been dead for some time--ten minutes maybe--when the bullet wounds were made. The Fuehrer could not have died of cyanide poisoning and then shot himself."

"But why shoot him if he is already dead and who was there with them to do such a thing?"

"Just Eva, though I suppose someone else might have-- might have shot them and then gone up the stairwell leading from the Fuehrer's suite to the chancellery garden. I've

wondered a bit about that myself, but I don't know, and I don't suppose it's of any real importance--a mere footnote to history at best."

Several minutes later, Artur Axmann, who had been frequently in and out of the bunker at the end, showed up at the bunker conference room, now wearing civilian clothes, and asking rather casually if anyone wanted to accompany him out of Berlin. Ten thousand Hitler Youth, he told them, were in northwest Berlin holding a crucial bridgehead leading out of the city. If they acted fast, following a path that led under Herman Goeringstrasse, across the Tiergarten to the Zoo Station, and other devious routes, they could, he strongly assured them, be at the Pichelsdorf Bridge and outside the Russian ring around the city by morning.

After the cremation, Axmann divided the staff into three groups; each was to leave fifteen minutes apart, following in the steps of the previous group. Most of the SS guard, which had by now stripped the rank and insignias from their tunics, went with Axmann, Bormann and Bergdorf in the first group. Hans did not remove his insignia and chose to stay with the third group which included Theresa.

Almost immediately upon leaving the bunker, they came under small arms fire, and Hans was about to make a white flag when elements of the SS International Brigade came rumbling up towards the Chancellery with six new Panzers. At first Hans thought Steiner had arrived to relieve the city after all--here were new tanks and fresh crews with support

infantry. What they were, in fact, were elements of the SS that would not and could not surrender. Being made up as they were of French, Russian, and Balkan soldiers, they knew that surrender would only mean a later execution for treason. In the days that followed the death of Hitler--the end of the war, in fact--they continued to fight on, eventually being killed, to the man, in and around the Reichstag. Now, however, they were a godsend. After several minutes, they had flushed out the advance infantry units which were all converging on the bunker.

So with a little luck, Hans and his small group managed their way to the Tiergarten and across to the Sportspalast which he recognized from his previous trip to Berlin. What had happened to Bormann? Hans didn't know exactly, though he suspected the worst for him. "We followed the same route they had outlined, and yet we never caught up with him."

When he had arrived at the Pichelsdorf Bridge, Hans and the others were welcomed by the remnants of the Hitler Youth Brigade. In the last few hours they had taken a devastating artillery barrage from the Soviets--but they had held on. Hundreds of boys in oversized uniforms were lying about dead or bleeding to death. Their field equipment had proved worthless to them, not knowing even in what direction to fire their cannon.

But what was unforgivable, Hans said, was that their commander had not even ordered them to dig foxholes. Why hadn't they run to safety? "What did they think they were

holding on for?" Hans demanded of the student commander. They were waiting for their commander, Hitlerjugendfuehrer Axmann.

The mercurial Axmann, who intended to escape the Allied dragnet in civilian clothes, had told his last command that they must hold on. Hold on for Germany's and the Fuehrer's sake while somewhere else, he slipped through to safety.

Hans told them that the Fuehrer was dead. He ordered those who would listen to follow him and the others out into the as yet unoccupied western sector. "Some did, but many were too badly wounded to move." Hans was stoic but Theresa's eyes brimmed with tears as he spoke of the dilemma of having to leave so many boys behind. "You must understand, I had Theresa to think of and the Russians would have killed me on the spot; I was SS."

"And how many continued to hold the bridgehead at Pichelsdorf?" Milo asked.

He shook his head and cursed Axmann. "I threatened and ordered and begged them to leave, but they had no way of knowing and they didn't believe me. That Axmann deserved to be shot."

CHAPTER VIII

On the return to Munich, the edging forest appeared a long dark line of hooded friars, seemingly an endless procession that reached back in space and memory. For kilometer after kilometer Milo stared at the moving blackness and re-visualized the Schrams' experience. It was easy to confuse the vivid with the real--to suddenly feel himself a witness to the history which he had only heard. And why not? It was the sort of heroic narrative that one would rather like to believe. The saga of a man of loyalty and courage unwittingly defending an evil empire. It was not until they turned off from the mountain road and on to the well-lit Autobahn that he was roused to the dispelling presence of the familiar.

Herr Kranz, beside him at the wheel, was tired and yawned like an old lion.

"Like me to drive for a while?"

"Won't be long now," he answered, rubbing his eyes. "I thought you were asleep."

"Just thinking."

"So, what did you think?"

Milo was very impressed, but to say so, he thought, would be to appear unsophisticated. "It is so entirely different

from what I have always read and heard."

"Yes, yes, of course," he said and said no more. He seemed perfectly comfortable with his skepticism and intended, apparently, to leave it at that. As they descended into the lower altitudes, the air thickened, and by the time they reached the surrounding Munich neighborhoods the streets were wet from a recent shower. "And what did you think?" Milo said after a while.

"Think? I've heard the story so many times before. Always essentially the same, but I do think Hans is getting a little better at the telling.

"But you believe him?"

"Do I believe that he is being honest? Yes, certainly. Hans would not lie--he is often wrong--but he does not lie."

Kranz was becoming an anchor for Milo, and he felt comfortable at hearing Kranz depreciate Hans' testimony. "When you told me he was a Nazi of sorts, I half expected some kind of lunatic, a Dr. Strangelove."

"Naja, Hollywood Nazis. Do they still have an American Nazi Party in California--boys who wear brownshirts and talk about killing Negroes?--as if Nazism were simply racism and paramilitary fashion. How simple for all of us to have avoided it if that was all it was. But here in Germany--most authentic Nazis were not like that. Good people were Nazis--bad people were Nazis. National Socialists were like everyone else. No different. Yes there is no point denying the anti-Semitism--but that was overlaid by the Western

media and rather hypocritically so. Nobody in Europe wanted the Jews. And while that is no defense of what some Nazis did, one must also realize that the anti-Jewish laws that the average German had knowledge of were nothing new. Such laws had been practiced by almost every government of Europe. We thought little more about those laws than most of you Americans thought about the racial laws in your own country until the Kennedy government. You segregated Negroes, kept them out of government, the arts, most institutions of higher learning. We thought we were doing little more than that."

"But what about the evidence? What about Dachau? --the films, the mass graves, the bodies--what about all the evidence at Nuremberg?"

"Well, yes, but that was after the war--wasn't it? And even then, the lesson has not been well learned. Our friend Hans still does not believe it entirely, and I think I understand, though we have not talked of it. Herr Marsden, put yourself in his place. Suppose that a hostile government--the Russians, for instance--had ravaged your country, outlawed your government, and put your leaders on trial for crimes which you had never even dreamed of. Would you believe it? Would you believe Russian documents, Russian witnesses, Russian films? Goering was not a brilliant man, but he made a very good point during the trial when he said, 'Inasmuch as I have not my freedom to investigate or document the allegations against me, I have no reasonable way of judging the evidence or defending myself.'"

"Yes, but the death camps--the crematoriums," Milo argued. "You can go to the camps, you can see for yourself."

"There are no crematoriums in America? What did their mere presence prove? When people die you have to do to something with them."

Yes, Milo understood what he was saying, but there was other evidence--Nazi films, Nazi documents, mass graves. Huge drops of rain splattered suddenly on the windshield like shiny half dollars, and Kranz turned on the wipers and shifted to a lower gear.

"Ja, Ja, you are completely right," Kranz conceded politely, "and I quite agree. I was merely telling you the way it was to many Germans. But even those Germans who finally believed what the Allies were saying had a difficult time blaming the Fuehrer. You see, Hitler was not just a Nazi, he was the personification, the idealization--the incarnation of German pride, nationalism, race, etc.

"And when he took his life--it was like the death of God. Hitler had taken us from the worst years of the depression to the pinnacle of power that no one has dreamed of since Charlemagne--and in only nine years! Everything until 1943 was just as he said it would be, just as he had promised, and until we actually began to lose the war, it all seemed like a miracle. This is not easily accepted even thirty years later. All reasonable Germans will tell you that the Nazis did some terrible things, yes. But the Fuehrer was not just one of the National Socialists, somehow he was above that,

much as God is above the Spanish Inquisition. Goering could be a pompous and strutting peacock, and Hess, a nervous nail biter, Goebbels a hysteric with a message, and Himmler, a crude butcher even, and none of this even touched the hem of the Fuehrer's garment. Yes, there are many rational Germans, even today, who will argue with you that Hitler made only one mistake: he was too loyal--and by this they generally mean he took along with him to the top the beer-hall crowd who made up the party in 1921. The Himmlers, the Goerings, the Streichers."

"And what kind of man do you make of him?"

"Make of the man? That is just the problem--what we Germans made of the man. Before the war I was a journalist. I began my career, very nearly, working for the Ministry of Propaganda. I know what we made of the man because I helped --all of us in propaganda did, and we did this with a clear conscience because we believed that in making der Fuehrer great, we were making Germany great. It was part of the old formula, 'ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuehrer.' But what did we actually know about Hitler--any of us? We knew he was Austrian, that he received the Iron Cross in the First World War, that he was the center of the Nazi Party, the driving force, the voice, the soul, and that was it. Now, years later, I can see that a lot of that was propaganda, but I also suspect that what is written about him today is propaganda too. Only people like Hans, I think, or his wife, came close to actually knowing the real man. The real man

has never been written about in my opinion, and will probably never be known."

"Have you ever considered writing a book about the real man?"

"I never met the man."

"No, but based on the testimonies of these people like the Schrams, and if you could find others."

"Oh, there are others."

"Well then."

"But I could not possibly write the book. One, because of my position at the university--I would be dismissed --and two, because there is not a reputable publisher in Germany that would dare print the book."

Milo wondered if his father would be interested. Certainly, he reasoned, it would not arouse the controversy in the States that it would in Germany. He also wondered if he could write it. After all, he had some credentials in history--not modern European history, but he spoke the language fairly well. He had no desire to write a defense or apology for Nazi Germany. What he wanted was to return to Hans' generation some of the honor which they were due. "Could you arrange introductions to some of these other people you know?"

"They are not always very interested in talking to every curious student that comes along."

"Tell them I'm a journalist."

"Ah, that would be even worse."

"Tell them I am collecting materials for a sympathetic but honest book?"

"Are you?"

Milo shrugged his shoulders and looked out and recognized his street. All along the Residenzstrasse couples were huddled in the lintels and doorways of the store fronts waiting for the drizzle to let up. "I'm interested."

"We are getting back much later than I had intended," he mumbled as he brought his car to a sharp stop and replaced his pocketwatch to his vest pocket.

They exchanged a short goodbye, and Milo walked into the dark hall of his apartment building. All the lights in his building were on thirty-second triggers. Even if he ran, he was usually pitched into absolute darkness somewhere between the second and third floors. This he got used to, and he quickly developed an awareness and caution of potential hazards that were often left on the landings like mop buckets and small garbage cans. On this particular evening, as he rounded the banister leading up to his floor, he sensed the dim outline of something at the foot of his door. It was almost like a large dog. His hand skimmed the long corridor as he approached, trying to find a light switch. He could tell now that it was not a dog at all. Perhaps a drunk from the street, he thought, though it seemed improbable that he would climb three flights to sleep it off. Milo cleared his throat. It didn't move. Finally, reaching over with a cautious hand, he touched wet hair. He cleared his throat

rather loudly, coughed, and stooping down, found a soft shoulder to shake, a girl's shoulder.

"Whowho . . . Fräulein . . ."

"Ja? Milo?" a sleepy voice answered. The dark played havoc with his other senses as well, and he mistook the voice for Angela's. It was an improbable but logical guess. Who else would be sitting in front of his apartment because she had nowhere else to go? For an instant, a pure sweet energy permeated his flesh, and he reached down and, grabbing her under the arms, pulled her up into his. "Angela!" he whispered and hugged her. But almost immediately he realized his mistake. The lithe body was too short and under the heavy musk perfume, he recognized the subtle scent of tanning lotion.

"Angela? Ich bin Birgit," she said, clutching onto his shoulders, pulling on him in the dark as though he were a handrail, and tried to find her feet.

"I came by to visit, but I got so tired," she said. Milo felt her damp soaked clothing as he pulled his keys from his pocket and fumbled with the lock.

Then he waded into the center of the apartment searching blindly for an overhead lamp, which, upon his finding, shed a dull light on the dreary sitting room. When he turned about, there Birgit was, leaning on the door frame, looking older and more beautiful, in a contrived sort of way--as if a rose had taken on the appearance of an African orchid. He invited her in, but for a moment she stood loitering in the doorwell,

wearing a Japanese headband and banzai t-shirt, a black mini-skirt, tights and rain-soaked, ankle-high suede boots. She said she had been with some friends at a nearby bar and had deserted them on her way home to see where he lived.

Residenzstrasse, being literally right in the center of old Munich, sounded like a great address, but in fact, his was not much of an apartment. Now that she had seen it, he believed, she was trying to make up her mind as to whether she should stay for a polite five minutes or leave immediately.

"Would you like to sit down?" he asked folding his arms, leaning back and sitting on the backside of the reversed sofa. No, she said distractedly, venturing into the sitting room a little, still a little unsure on her feet, examining the few wall pictures, leaving the front door wide open behind her.

"So, this is where you live?"

"Not all Americans live in grand style," he wanted to say, but that was now quite obvious. The last tenants had been bricklayers from Ireland--it was that class of place. "Would you like something to eat?" he asked realizing just after that he had only water to drink.

Her eyes, which had been everywhere else in the room, shot a glance at his. "What do you have?"

"I have some cheese," he answered.

She smiled. "My mother used to say, 'Birgit, cheese is for mice, as liquor is for young girls, both are used in

traps.'" She ran the fingers of her hand through her hair like a comb and smiled as if she were very satisfied with what she had said. "Do I look like a mouse?" He shook his head slightly. "Don't you have any liquor? Well then. . ." she said with a sigh and glanced once more about the room, "Could I use your WC?"

He pointed to the bathroom through the open bedroom door. She went in and closed the door behind her. He closed the front door and straightened up the apartment, particularly the bedroom where he had most of his clothes on chairs or on the floor of the closet. Momentarily, he heard some water in the sink, a jiggle on the knob, and after a small delay, she came out, her hair combed back in straight lines that ended in curls, her eyes darkened and enhanced with lavender eyeliner.

"Thank you," she said and sat on the edge of his lumpy bed. "So, you live here alone?"

"So far," he said and threw the switch that turned on a light behind her on a nightstand. She smiled at his gesture and pulled down on the hemline of her mini-skirt which had crept up over half her thighs; finally she solved the problem all together by crossing her legs tightly and placing her hands in her lap.

"It is not such a bad apartment," she continued, coyly kicking her watermarked boot out again and again. Milo was completely nonplussed by the situation. And what was all this modesty business of pulling on the hem of her mini-

skirt--hadn't they been sunbathing in the Englischer?

"You know, my friend . . . my friend . . ."

"Fräulein Sigmund?" he helped her.

"Ja, she doesn't like you very much I think."

"That's surprising," he said and knitted his brows together seriously. "I thought she rather fancied me." Birgit laughed easily and leaned back on her elbows. With the toe of one boot, she pushed on the heel of the other until she had slipped it off. He noted that her toes were stained purple from her shoes and there was gold chain around one ankle. "I tried to explain to her--to tell her that you were . . ." For a moment she searched through the short catalogue of her English expressions. "Komisch" she said finally, giving up.

"Comic?"

"Ja, comic--Funny," she said stroking the mattress with her palms.

He tried to remember what he used to do in college when situations like this arose. But these sorts of things had only happened to his fraternity brothers.

"Could I ask a favor of you?"

"Of course," he said warily.

"I want to spend the night here."

"Oh--sure."

His surprise was just another thing that amused her. "You thought I was going to inconvenience you. It won't inconvenience you, will it?" He shook his head. She shook

her head too. "Truly, it is so late, a girl isn't safe on the streets. There are some very evil people out there. There was this young girl walking alone at night. It was cold and so she let this man give her a ride. They talked pleasantly for maybe an hour. Then he drove her to a forest. He tied her hands together," she said, crossing hers before her. "Like so. Then he raped her." She lay back now on the bed and rested her hands behind her head.

"After, he tied her legs and poured gasoline on her. It was a terrible thing, ja?" She shook her head and smiled below the serious expression in her eyes.

"Yes, of course," he agreed.

"But she's okay, now," she said cheerfully and sat up energetically, and they were back to where they had started the conversation. She's toying with me, he thought. Angela had treated him like this once or twice towards the end of their marriage. She felt totally safe in acting so provocative precisely because she doesn't believe that he would do anything, he thought. Teasing at my expense. Angela had thought his being a gentleman irreconcilable with being a man. Birgit continued to just sit there, one boot on, the other off. 'She doesn't want me to make love to her - yet it would serve her right,' he thought, 'if I did, if I did take some of her suggestions, if I took off my belt and used it as a leash to tie her to the bed frame and if I then violated her . . .' Her toying with his sexuality made him angry, but what made him sick at heart was the suspicion that

if he did indulge himself, if he did make love to her ruthlessly, selfishly, even violently, she would probably love it. But he wasn't that sort of person--he would never be able to do such a thing, and the sort of things he would like to do, she probably wouldn't enjoy. "Sex is not a sentimental act," he had overheard Angela say once to one of his colleagues at a party.

She started to say something else, but he cut her off abruptly. "Okay, well then, if you won't let me call you a cab and you insist on sleeping here." He walked around the bed and took a pillow from the headboard. "I'll be out here on the couch." He crushed the pillow under one arm and rattled some keys in his pocket.

But then as he turned back to leave the room, she reached out with a hand and grabbed the pillow from him. As if she had been insulted, she tossed it back over her head, knocking a small lamp from the nightstand beside the bed. The plaster base shattered on the floor and the only light in the small room went out. They stared at each other again. Then she laughed out with childish amusement. He mumbled something about her poor shot when she leaned forward and took hold of his belt and pulled him to her.

With her hands still hooked on his belt, she eased herself back on the bed, pulling him over her. When he was at last too close for her to see him clearly, she closed her eyes, and he kissed her. She giggled and he kissed her again.

He kept thinking he should say something, make something clear, explain, but impatiently she tugged up on his shirt and moved her hands up his back and around the sides to his chest. He held her head between his two palms and looked down at her face which was feverishly warm and shifted from side to side as she tried to bite at his fingers. "Use them or lose them," she said in German. He let go and moved his hands to her waist and up and under her cotton blouse. She began to writhe from side to side. Her warm hands and cool bracelets tickled his waist. In another moment she had unbuckled his belt and pushed one small hand through.

All he could think about was the sensation in his groin and he squeezed her breasts until he thought she would scream, but she didn't scream.

Rather she pulled her hand back up and together with the other tugged at his pants. Milo let go and reached to unbuckle his pants.

"Nein, lass mich!" she demanded, and slipping him off her and to one side, she pulled at his slacks again. She was irrationally intense and fanatic. She almost clawed them off without unbuckling or zipping them. Like some sort of bacchanal, Milo thought, she tore at his shoes, and ripped his shorts from his hips. Then she was on top of him, straddling his chest, and though he could only see her skirt riding up on her hips, he knew she had done something with her underwear as well. Milo closed his eyes, and he could feel her fingers in his hair, grabbing at his ears, her face

and tongue all over his face, her torso sliding against him, coupling with him, pulling towards him and pushing against the hook with all her strength.

In the weeks that followed he was fatuously happy. During the day he attended lectures at the university. In the evenings Birgit would, more often than not, drop in or be already there waiting in his apartment, wearing bikini briefs and his old green, BC sweatshirt, which she had remodeled, cutting out the neck and lopping off the sleeves. But what worked well on other sweatshirts just didn't quite work here, he thought, embossed as it was with its stodgy church heraldry--two crowns and a Christian anchor over an open Greek Bible. "Religioni et Bonis Artibus"--for Religion and Good Works, its motto announced. But she favored it the way German youth favored everything pretentious and/or American.

If it were possible, he thought, he would have envied himself, were it not for the ever-lurking puritanical conviction that in the balance all pleasures would exact a price in pain. In September he would be twenty-nine, and Birgit was still seventeen. The more time he spent with her, the more important this age difference seemed to him. Milo found himself regarding her in terms of precious endearment, to which she responded more and more like a child. Certainly, the sex was innocently primitive and orgiastic, but it was clear also that she had found in him a father-figure and his own feelings for her were confused with the

paternalistic.

He would have liked to have had a more mature relationship with Birgit, one more intellectually engaging, one that would have made their lovemaking seem less exploitive on his part, but all of the glossy Municher sophistication had come off with the sassy clothes and makeup, and what he was left with was a junge Mädchen who found politics either arcane or boring and his own difficult emotional adjustments contrived or unnecessary. What she found necessary and interesting was shopping for new ballet tights, spontaneously singing American rock music, feeding the bears at the Tierpark Hellabrunn, and traipsing up and down the Marienplatz in the evenings.

She had an adolescent's craving for cigarettes, sex, and vanilla ice cream dipped in chocolate sauce. And she was absolutely enthralled by the vagrants from three continents who came out after business hours in front of the Glockenspiel to juggle knives, eat fire, or pound guitars. He told himself these were reasons enough.

But perhaps there was another reason for his alienation. During the latter part of August, Carlyle stopped by on his way to America. There was a UFO research center in Evanston, Illinois, and he had given thought to the topic himself.

"No, it's clear to anyone who has studied the matter carefully," he told Birgit and Milo that afternoon in Milo's sitting room. "The Egyptians could not possibly have constructed the Great Pyramids by themselves." No, in fact,

pyramids were landing beacons for extra-terrestrial spacecraft. As a corollary to this was his belief that the Ark of the Covenant had been a sort of ham radio left by the spacemen who took Ezekiel with them. Milo found Carlyle's speculations humorous, but Birgit seemed absolutely mesmerized by him, which led Milo again to think that this had indeed been the girl in his room in Garmisch despite the denials.

On a more serious note, Carlyle confided to Milo that he believed he was being followed.

"Who?" Milo had to ask.

"If I were to tell you, you'd think I was insane," he whispered with a smirk and cast a suspicious eye on Birgit asleep on the couch.

"No I wouldn't."

"You must be very careful too, my friend," Carlyle said at last. "Things are not what they seem--not at all."

"Ah, stop being so clandestine, will you? Who's after you? The PLO, the Russians, the Nazis?"

"Us, Milo, Us. You be careful, Milo. Beware the Armies of the Night."

Later that evening in shadows of the Hofgarten and during an apparent absence on Milo's part, Carlyle made a pass. Birgit's first and best response had been to slap his face. Her second, which followed immediately upon the first, was to be absolutely shocked with herself and to kiss him with some diligence. Milo didn't mention having seen them from a

distance then or later.

That night he lay awake, Birgit asleep beside him, his hands behind his head, staring up at the ceiling, and he wondered what it was that so frustrated him. She never fought with him, was easily entertained (though she did require a great deal of that), she spent her own money, was ever cheerful. But there was no mesmerism between them.

Milo had gotten used to the sound of cars pattering at all hours up and down the Residenzstrasse. Briefly their head lights illuminated the decorative plaster ceiling of his bedroom. What he could not get used to was the faint grinding of the electric-clock motor beside him on the nightstand. On one particular evening, he turned it around and saw it was almost three in the morning. His mouth was dry, and he wandered out to the kitchen for a chilled glass of wine. After a few minutes, he heard Birgit's feet on the creaky floorboards and looking over saw her dark naked form in the doorway.

"Do you want me to make you something to eat?" she asked rubbing the sleep from one eye.

Milo offered her some of his wine. No thanks, she yawned, and opened the windows that looked over the street. She rubbed her nose with the back of her hand and sat crosslegged on the musty couch beside him. He handed her his glass of wine, and she took a sip of it. They just sat there for a few minutes, exchanging sips, staring out of the small sitting room window that looked directly across at one of the

high flat walls of the Residenz Palace. The entire block had two ornamented gates, but otherwise not a single window. As this had been too bleak a prospect, windows, arches and pillars had been painted along the entire block like a theater backdrop, he thought. A slight cool breeze came in, gently blowing the cheese cloth drapery. Then a pigeon landed on the sill, walked the length of the sill and flew off. Was something wrong, she asked.

Something perverse in him wanted to hurt her, but not in any sort of brutal physical sense. "Sometimes I can't help thinking of my wife," he told her. She made no sign, but continued to stare at his profile. There, he'd done it. He felt a little relief and then regret as he glanced sideways and saw her eyes filling up, twinkling with light from the open window. "It's not that I don't care for you, but I was married to her for five years--even now I feel a certain loyalty."

Then she smiled broadly and took a deep breath. She blinked away the tears and stroked the back of his neck as though she were in total sympathy.

"It's crazy, I know, but I'm a very loyal person," he said leaning forward and placed the wine glass on a small table before them.

She picked up a pillow resting next to her and hugged it to her chest with an audible sigh. "Loyalty is nothing to apologize for. I have a father," she said finally. "I was going to visit him on Tuesday."

"You've never once mentioned family," Milo observed.

"Would you like to meet him?"

He nodded slowly and she stood up. "Good, you shall see him. Now we must get some sleep." She tugged on his arm like a rope, and he followed.

CHAPTER IX

"Hello, Dad," he yelled into the electro-static buzz.

"Can you hear me?"

"Milo?"

"Yeah, it's me. How are you?"

"Fine--where are you?"

"Munich--you've been getting my letters?"

"Oh yes, of course, and I've been intending to write . . . Well anyway, how are you?"

"Couldn't be better. Say, Dad, I wanted to ask you something . . ."

"About Angela?"

"I can hardly hear you, Dad."

"About Angela--did you want to ask me about Angela?"

"What about Angela?" Milo felt compelled to ask now.

"What about Angela? She's driving me crazy--that's what. Listen, Son, I sure wish you'd come home and take care of her."

"Dad, she's perfectly able to take care of herself. Besides, she certainly doesn't want to see me."

"The hell she doesn't. Where did you get that idea? Son, if you have any feelings left--not that I blame you any for breaking with her, but"

"Did she tell you that? Dad, I don't know what's going on there."

"Let me tell you. When she came to me, sobbing about how you had left her destitute and all--well, I had to give her a job--and a damn good job I gave her . . . I didn't kid myself, I didn't think she had any talent for our business, but I sure as hell thought she could learn. Now, I've had to hire people to redo her work, and when I try to talk to her about it, all I get are tears and hysterics about how difficult it is to concentrate in her mental condition. I know she's not perfect, but, Son"

"Dad, I can't come home now. Things are just beginning here. I'm sorry. But listen, Dad, what I wanted to talk to you about. I've been meeting some very interesting people here in Munich." Milo explained briefly about some of the contacts he had met and his idea to compile these people's memories of the war and Hitler.

"So you want me to publish a bunch of Nazis--that's what you called me for? I must confess, Son, that's a hell of an idea," he said flatly.

"I thought I would give you first shot at it. Yes."

"Milo, we do almost exclusively how-to books anymore."

"I know, but these people have a very interesting view on things."

"Oh, I know, they always did. Is there anything else?"

"No, I guess not."

"Well, you take care." Click. Toot, toot, toot.

It's funny, he thought, how things were twisted around on the other side of the Atlantic. On the one hand he wanted to believe that Angela missed him and he found it satisfying to hear that she was bungling things at work, but as to the other charge, he found it hard to believe that she was doing anything more than trying to protect her job by playing the deserted waif. Also, he disliked the feeling he had that somehow he was responsible for this added burden which had been placed upon his old man's tired old shoulders. Quite obviously he was disappointing him again, as he had his entire adult life. And now his ex-wife was a disappointment to him as well.

During the week that followed, Herr Kranz made the necessary introductions, and Milo interviewed a couple of the people for the work that was beginning to take shape in his mind. These people's testimonies, coming as they were from the little people who knew the Fuehrer, had a vignette quality to them and a human interest of their own. With a little dramatization, he thought, maybe a few pictures, they would make very interesting commentary.

He took a bus back to Mittenwald and spoke, alone this time, with Theresa Schram, who recounted a series of little anecdotes about the good manners of the Fuehrer and the sweetness of Eva, all in terms that reminded him a little of Birgit, though Birgit's love was, as yet, untested.

"Eva was so good and thoughtful. You know, the Fuehrer had ordered her to stay in Berchtesgaden where she would be

safe, but two weeks before the end she came back to Berlin. I was there in his operations room with his general staff when she arrived at the bunker and broke in on us. We had not received a good piece of news in over a week, and here she came in a festive spirit, freshening the mood in the bunker like a hundred bouquets. How could the Fuehrer be mad at her for disobeying his orders, and how could he continue to mull over war maps? 'Aha,' he said to his staff, 'it is my Eva! Gentlemen, do you know anyone else who would come up to Berlin when they could be in Berchtesgaden?'

"And so she stayed with him those last two weeks, never complaining of the cramped quarters or the bombs overhead, or the stale air--or anything. And when they were married, she was every bit as giddy as any young bride--and this the day before they were to take their lives." Frau Schram's eyes looked him directly in the eye. "Her last words to us were, 'Say hello to all my friends back in Munich--tell them when you see them that I was not sad, only that I shall miss them!' The Fuehrer, standing by, was quite overcome with her courage. None of us understood it. She was the only one who smiled through the moment."

Milo thought of the deaths of Christian martyrs who clapped for joy at their own immolation. "She kissed us farewell, followed the Fuehrer through the door of their suite and closed the door. I wanted to stop her, stop them both, but we knew what they had to do."

It was clear to see that even as much as she cared for

the Fuehrer, she loved Eva even more. The sort of thing, Milo thought, that's very difficult for one woman to inspire in another.

Later that week, he interviewed a man who had been a driver for the party in Munich. He, too, had been SS, and like Herr Schram, he too, had a bad opinion of Heinrich Himmler, head of the SS.

"Himmler was never one of us. He was like his father, a schoolmaster in Munich with a reputation for unnecessary stricture. But Hitler was one of us. He was a plain man and soldier, and he always kept the soldier in mind," former Obersturmfuehrer Evald Hecker told him as they sat in the office of his service station just off the Goetheplatz. "I remember once being at General Staff Headquarters in East Prussia with the Fuehrer. It was January, and as the Fuehrer drove in he noticed a staff guard shivering at his post without a top coat while staff officers inside the staff headquarters wore fur-lined cloaks. This was the sort of thing that rankled him. The Fuehrer never forgot that he had been a corporal. As the staff officers stood on the steps of the field command to greet him, the Fuehrer humbled them all by taking a top coat from one of the generals and giving it to the soldier on duty at the gate."

"What of the death camps?"

"The death camps?" he repeated incredulously. "I never saw a death camp. Yes, yes, I know now--but I was Waffen SS not Totenkopf. That was Himmler's doing--he was a

Schweinhund"--a pig-dog literally. "All that business about racial superiority--we in the SS laughed. Look," he explained, leaning forward in his chair and beginning a list on his fingers. "An SS man must be at least 6 feet tall, right? But how tall was Himmler? And he must not wear glasses, but what were those bottle ends doing on Himmler's nose! Nonsense! Horsepiss!

"And Hitler thought so too, I know that. Whenever the Fuehrer would see me, he would come up and say, 'Herr Hecker, a joke, bitte.' One day I was leaning on the fender of the staff car which I drove, my back to Fuehrerhaus at Konigsplatz, telling a joke that I had heard a comedian tell the night before at the Platzl."

"The Fuehrerhaus," Milo interrupted suspiciously, "you mean in Berchtesgaden?"

"Yes, the Fuehrer had a house in Berchtesgaden--the Berghof, but when he was in Munich his residence was at the Fuehrerhaus. It's still there. It was one of two large marble buildings that we built on the open end of the Konigsplatz, the building just to the north of where the Ehrenhalle was.

"Naja, the Fuehrer had been out in the square with some foreign visitors, I think. In fact, this was at the time of Chamberlain's visit to settle the question of the Sudetenland. Anyway, having seen them off and judging from the laughter in the group around me that I had just finished a joke, the Fuehrer walked on over and asked me to repeat

what I had said that had been so funny. But I was uneasy-- this was not one of those jokes you tell the Fuehrer. It was political. I tried to wiggle my way out, but he was adamant, and I could not think of any other joke he had not heard. I thought, maybe an abbreviated form of the joke would do.

"Do you know the definition of an Aryan, my Fuehrer?"

The Fuehrer smiled, folded his arms and studied for a moment. 'I must confess I don't.'

"Well, my Fuehrer, an Aryan is someone who is tall--like Goebbels.' His smile remained and I concluded, 'and thin--like Goering.'

He chuckled to himself. I thought I had pulled it off. But he had seen where the joke was heading and asked me why I did not continue.

"I protested, but he put one arm about me and shook me. 'Ah, how could you overlook it. The true Aryan is also blond like the Fuehrer'--maybe he had heard it.

He got a laugh from it, and promised to tell it sometime to Himmler, who, he said, would not appreciate it in the least. That was the Fuehrer's little joke."

A short time later, Birgit took him to Oberammergau to visit her father in a rest home. He suffered from Alzheimer's disease, and though he sometimes didn't recognize her, she admitted, he liked to have young women visit.

When they entered his private room, he was sitting up

watching a silent television screen while a small portable radio on the pillow beside him broadcast an evangelical talk-program. Some minister who called himself Helmut von Gott had just described The Apocalypse of Saint John in terms of an East/West showdown, not unlike the radio broadcasts Americans can hear on their own AM channels late Sunday nights.

Milo took a chair in the corner while she sat on the bed beside the old man and stroked his forehead, kissed him, spoke of her plans, and programs she had seen on television that he must look for.

About midway through the visit a nurse came in with a lunch tray, which Birgit was only too happy to take and see to her father's feeding.

"Danke schon," the young nurse said, and with a thick low German accent said something about "another one of those letters." It was in a drawer of the bedside table. Birgit apologized and blushed deeply as she slipped the letter in her fishnet bag. His face was shiny and pink, and his eyes glistened like the eyes of a fish. He made a good many facial expressions and gestures as she spoke and spoon fed him a sort of shepherd's pie. He would raise a finger and touch the tip of his nose as though he were about to interrupt, but then he wouldn't say anything, or he'd whisper, "Yes, desperate men." Then he would wink at her and Milo as though he was sharing a secret knowledge with him, but there was no context for the gesture. Milo ran his hand

back through his hair, pushing it off his forehead; Birgit's father noted Milo's movement and mimicked him. But there was something he did understand: all visits came to an end. After about forty-five minutes, he began to look anxiously about him, to furrow his eyebrows together and moan. Then, it would articulate itself into a whimper.

"He always cries," she said to Milo, but more for her father's benefit, "when he knows it's time for me to leave--I don't know why, he knows I'll be back to see him next Thursday afternoon--I always come, don't I?" she asked with a certain impatience. She kissed him goodbye almost angrily, took Milo's arm and walked mutely with him out to where they had left her old VW.

"That's a fairly nice rest home, as rest homes go," Milo said and started the car. "Is it expensive?"

"More than I can afford," she said with an expression that did not invite discussion.

From Oberammergau they drove to the nearby Linderhof which is generally described as a small hunting Schloss designed after the manner of Louis Quatorze. She was in a funk until they had walked around the white palace and formal gardens which reach in two directions up mountain slopes and channel alpine run-off down into marble reflecting pools full of gold-leaf fauns and Neptunes squirting water from improbable orifices.

This had been another one of Ludwig's expensive little architectural projects like his more famous castle of

Neuschwanstein, which gave birth to the Disney imitation. Birgit had been a tour guide here a year or two before, and she assured him as they entered that because of her connections they would be able to go where ever they wanted without having to follow the tour groups. She was right: at the first portal she was embraced by several pretty, young tour guides dressed in dirndls, knee stockings and starched lace caps. "Oh yes, go where you want, the last tour of the day has just gone through, make yourselves at home," they said, and hand in hand, the two wandered about like homebodies.

The interior, not to be outdone by the wedding cake exterior, looked to Milo to be one baroque, miniature Hall of Mirrors after another. All of this imitative architecture was built not in 1700, as this model suggested, but almost 200 years later in the 1860's.

Returning to Linderhof and seeing old friends had brightened her mood, and she confessed to him a fantasy she had always had.

"What's that?" he asked, looking up from the collection of blue china that Ludwig had started and that was displayed in one of the drawing rooms.

". . . to make love in Ludwig's bed."

He couldn't keep back a laugh. "You're crazy--you can't make love on a museum piece?"

"Shhh," she said and grinning like a cat she took him by the hand to a secret passage in the bookcase that led up into

the little Sun King's boudoir. The bedroom was just what one would expect from an admirer of Louis XIV--a gaudy and effeminate parody of Versailles in gold leaf, crystal, marble, and embroidered fabric. What Birgit had not expected, however, was a group of photographers setting up some equipment for a photo layout. Her hopes were quite dashed as they left down the main staircase.

But about 500 yards from Linderhof, Ludwig had constructed a love grotto into the side of the mountain, similar to the one, or so the late 19th-century imagined, that the legendary Tristan and Isolt were said to have lived in while they hid from Tristan's liege lord and Isolt's husband, King Mark. They entered it through an entrance in the face of a concrete cliff. Here they would have some privacy, she said, as they had passed the last group of the day coming down. They traveled down a long tunnel that wound about and finally opened into a large dank cavern complete with stucco boulders and brightly colored papiermache stalactites. At center was a dark, glassy lake of stagnant water upon which sat a film of dust and an elaborate gondola, stuck as if on a reef, the water motionless about the prow.

"What was all this?" he asked his tour guide.

"King Ludwig wanted a place where he could see Wagner performed. He was a great fan--a patron--of Wagner," she said, and Milo remembered reading how his castle building and his productions of Wagner's operas had practically bankrupted Bavaria. Finally the king's counselors had demanded that

Ludwig either abdicate or send Wagner off. The man was an expense, but what's worse, he had the morals of an alley cat. Ludwig, with tears in his eyes, finally sent Wagner into exile--to nearby Switzerland.

"There's a stage on the other side of that curtain. They rehearsed Lohengrin here--but I don't think it was ever performed," she continued explaining all the marvelous features of the preposterous opera hall.

"The place looks like it would have great acoustics; does it?" he asked.

"Ja, naturlich," she assured him without knowing the least thing about it. As a matter of pride, it was "phantastisch, ja?"

"Maybe, but that's not real stone, it's all stucco, paper and wood," Milo pointed out. He didn't mean to put a damper on her high spirits, and he didn't think she would take it personally. He whistled a few bars of Wagner's "Liebestod." The sound traveled about twenty yards and disappeared into the soft walls and ceiling. "You see," he said, "the sound's no good. The whole thing was an extravagant fiasco."

"No," she said. It was a wonderful idea. Ludwig had been a "genius in his own right to recognize the talents of Wagner. Wagner was the greatest composer--"

"Well, he may have been that," he conceded insincerely, standing on the very edge of the artificial lake, looking into the still murky waters and remembering the image of Ludwig, his hands twisted about his psychiatrist's throat.

"But, you've got to admit Ludwig was nuts?"

No, she didn't have to admit anything. He had never seen her so angry. "But he was," Milo continued, testing the limits of her anger, twisting a finger on the side of his left temple, "coo-coo." Just look at what he did with the state revenues."

She interrupted, "he never spent a schilling that wasn't his by right!"

"His money, their money, the point is--look at the fairy tale castles, the gold kiosks, the peacocks, the gilded bathroom fixtures, and on top of that, they say he was a screaming homosexual . . ." Her eyes flared at the last charge. "That's what the table was for that lifted directly from the kitchen through a trap door into the Swan King's bedroom. Birgit, it was there so he could have dinner set and delivered without any of the servants knowing that he was upstairs banging some stable boy or maybe even Wagner in the ass." And Milo would have gone on in that sardonic vein, had Birgit not done something to interrupt his train of thought. With both her hands spread like fans on his chest, she gave him a violent shove, and Milo slid, like a newly commissioned vessel, into the insane little monarch's grotto. The greenish water was warm and stank. It wasn't deep where he landed, but as he started to stand up, he lost his footing on the slimy incline and slipped face forward into the dim water a second time. Birgit on the water's edge bent forward in hysterical laughter. Concluding that it was too slippery to

walk out of, he swam the few yards across the pond, around the swanshaped gondola, to the proscenium of the stage and pulled himself out. While he wiped the slime on his hands off on his pants, Birgit disappeared into some phony boulders and came up behind him on the stage. Still smiling with delight, she sat down beside him and wiped his face with the sleeve of her sweatshirt. "I'm sorry, but you shouldn't say such things," she said.

"No, you were right; no self-respecting Bavarian would have done anything else. I deserved it," he freely confessed. She laughed again, but a bit more soberly. Milo took off a sneaker and poured the water out.

"It's just that's it so sad, you know, and sometimes it makes me angry." She pulled the letter from her purse slung over her shoulder. It was a small white envelope addressed simply to "The Fuehrer."

Milo reached for the letter, but she held it back. "It's too embarrassing to let you read. He can't help it," she said tearfully. Milo put his arm about her and she let the letter drop into the murky water.

In front of them and across the pond was Ludwig's empty viewing box. "Come, you'd better get out of those clothes," she said tugging on the top button of his shirt. Behind them on stage was a painted screen done in the manner of another century after a picture of the world as it had never existed. There were valley mists beneath snow-topped sawtooth mountains and decaying Italian castles. Swarms of eagles

circled high above. And down in the valley, courtly ladies
saw their mounted knights off and kissed their standards.

CHAPTER X

"I can't help but suspect that Kranz's influence at the university was instrumental," he said as they sat in the elegant dining salon of the Hotel Vierjahreszeiten.

"What makes you so sure he had anything to do with it?" Birgit asked dryly and plucked the petals from the table's rosebud centerpiece.

The old Hotel Vierjahreszeiten was to Munich what the Ritz was to Paris, the nineteenth-century expression of taste and discreet luxury. Everything in the way of refurbishing and service had been refined and finished to the last detail. This was not a frequent haunt of theirs, but earlier in the day, Milo had received word that the department of philology at the university had not only admitted him for further study but given him a grant to continue his studies--"no visible strings attached," he said, and Birgit smiled dimly.

"And speaking of patrons . . ." Milo said as he noticed Erika, dressed in a red taffeta evening gown with the usual accoutrements of pearls and rubies, standing under a neo-classical proscenium archway on the far end of the dining room. Joining her moments later was a swarthy cardinal who also wore red taffeta, as trimming on his black cloak, on the sash which he tied about his broadcloth tunic, and, of

course, on his cardinal's cap. Now there's a matched ensemble, he said--something with which to illustrate a passage from the Apocalypse. They were seated several tables from them, and after a moment, the nuncio gained the waiter's attention by tapping his wine glass with a gold crucifix which dangled on a long neck chain.

"Pretend we don't see them," Birgit said, turning around and studying again her selection on the menu.

"I thought you would be delighted to see her?" She looked up at him over the top of the menu but said nothing. It was odd that he should so immediately recognize Erika. He had seen her only once in the Englischer, but she had made an indelible impression. Even at that time, there seemed something not entirely new, not entirely unfamiliar about her. Of course, during the time that he spent with Birgit, her name was frequently coming into the conversation. Birgit had gone to see such and such with Erika, or Birgit must remember to meet Erika at such and such. That was basically it. So, who is Erika, really?

"Just a friend of mine," she answered simply.

"I know, but what's she doing having dinner with the Pope--or whatever he is?"

"Stop looking over there," she whispered, shaking her head.

"Then tell me who she is."

"She doesn't like it when I talk about her."

"Why are you two so secretive?"

"Why are you so curious?" Birgit's face flushed, and she sat up in her chair and put her napkin on her plate as though she were considering getting up. "She comes from a very old family--that's all."

Some famous old family with the name of Sigmund? The only ones he could think of were Freud and the B-grade hero of the Nibelungenlied. "What family? Royalty? The Wittelsbachers? What?"

"What, are you in love with her or something?"

His initial assessment of Erika had not changed, but seeing her now in silk wrapped tightly in layers about her small bosom and thin waist, he was willing to grant her a sort of untouchable elegance--not a virginal, but a vestal quality which he found irresistibly intriguing. "Do you remember the first day we were driving in her car and she pointed to the museum and called it the Haus der Deutschen Kunst?"

"I don't know."

"You said, 'No, that's the Haus der Kunst'?"

"So?"

"So, why did she call it the Haus der Deutschen Kunst?" It seemed a trivial point to Birgit, but the sentence had stuck in his mind as if it were a nail and he had come across something later to hang on it, something a museum guard had said to him. "Before the war," Milo said in a quiet tone "--under the Nazis it had been called the Haus der Deutschen Kunst; in fact, it was commissioned by Hitler himself to be

the museum of Nazi art. So what's Erika doing calling it by its former name? She's not that old."

"I see; more Nazis, you think?" Birgit said, lashing back, taking the offensive for once. "What is wrong with you? Since you started this thing, that's all you talk about. You have Nazis on the brain."

"I can't help noticing things," he said, feeling a little like a crackpot but pushing on. "Was Erika's father some old Nazi patrician?"

"Who cares? Listen to me, Milo. If you are going to keep on with these idiotic questions, I am going to leave-- understand?" Birgit's face absolutely glowed, and there were blotches of scarlet on her throat. He was not used to receiving ultimatums from Birgit, but he realized that there were better places to pursue this sort of questioning.

"Guten Abend," Erika said, surprising both of them. She reached down and kissed cheeks with Birgit who seemed, as if on the throwing of a switch, both surprised and delighted to see her.

"Grüss Gott," or God bless, she returned in typical Southern German fashion.

"Where have you been hiding? I have not seen you in over a week, and then it was scarcely more than a greeting."

"Oh, I've been so busy. Visiting Papa, rehearsals, y'know."

Erika looked over the table and pointed at Milo with her rolled up opera program. "I can see that you've been busy,

but even so, we really should see more of each other."

"Won't you join us?" Milo asked, pulling at the chair beside him.

"Thank you, but obviously I can't," she said glancing back towards her priest. "I know, you must come up later to my suite and have a drink."

Birgit began to explain, but Erika interrupted, placing one hand on top of Birgit's shoulder near the nape of her neck. "No, really, I insist. There are so many things we need to talk about."

As for Milo, he was very interested in going up to her suite and finding out more about Birgit's patron of the arts, but as Erika returned to her table, Birgit's smile dimmed and she went directly for her cigarettes.

They dined slowly, taking espresso on the restaurant balcony afterward. It was a quiet evening on the Maximilian Strasse, a few cars only, a few pedestrians walking small dogs; Birgit stared at the moonlit clouds and people, Milo counted the trolleys that made their run up and down the boulevard every few minutes.

"If you don't want to go, it's fine with me," he said finally, trying to rouse her. "I am not romantically interested in Erika."

"You're so smart, I hate to tell you anything," she concluded, throwing out a half-empty pack of cigarettes.

Without consulting at the desk, she led him up to Erika's

suite and rang the bell.

"Herein, herein, kommen Sie herein," Erika said cheerfully, sweeping the door open and drawing Birgit in. She had changed out of her evening gown and was now wearing an elaborately embroidered gia top bound with a belt and black satin pajamas.

The suite was plushly furnished with large soft chairs and couches. There was, Milo noted, a William Morris tapestry in the sitting room, "Love Leading the Pilgrim Through Briars," and Ming vases--everywhere--filled with lavender and pink orchids jutting out yellow tongues, and taller bunches of bright orange Birds of Paradise pointing their green beaks out at random like umbrellas in a stand.

"What would you like to drink?" she asked and recommended orange juice and vodka all around. Milo consented, and she suggested that he do the honors. "The wet bar is in the study--if you wouldn't mind--I'm sure you can find it."

He left them sitting together on the couch, and found the next room, like the one he had left, full of heavy chairs and tables, a liquor cabinet, and upon a shelf an 8"x10" of Birgit and Erika standing at the bow of a large yacht--Birgit in a bathing suit, their arms were around each other, smiling behind their deep tans, and although it was somewhat obscured by them, he could guess at the entire name of the ship as it was also the title of a Wagner opera--the Fliegende Hollander.

By the time he had returned, Birgit had moved to a

straight back chair, and Erika was standing behind her with a hair brush, combing her hair back and preparing it for French braids.

"Dà n k e s e h r," she said perfunctorially and placed it on a marble-topped table beside her. With every stroke of the brush, Birgit's face betrayed more and more impatience and discomfort. "Don't you agree her hair looks much better braided back on her head? It's a simpler, pure expression."

"Yes, I suppose it's all right if your name is Heidi," he cracked trying to get a smile--even a half smile--from Birgit whose face remained impassive. "So, Birgit tells me you have connections with the ancien regime."

Erika's grip tightened almost indiscernibly on Birgit's hair.

"Everybody in Germany--native Germans that is--has ties with somebody who was something in Nazi Germany. Birgit here, for example, has an uncle who was an SS General--Nifka, wasn't it?"

"So they say. We've never met."

"Of course not. And now he's a war criminal or was--correct?"

"He's probably dead."

"Most likely," Erika answered.

Milo watched for a moment, yawned, checked his watch. No, Birgit wasn't enjoying this much, so he ventured to explain that it had really been a long day.

"Yes, you must be exhausted," Erika agreed pleasantly.

"You should go home." He stood but Birgit remained sitting, her pliant hair in Erika's white palms. "Oh, Birgit wants to stay and visit for a while--don't worry, I'll see she gets home."

He looked at Birgit, who turned her head slowly, cautiously towards him. "Yes, I think I will. I'll call you soon." As she turned back, her eyes continued to view him with a calm sidelong glance.

It wasn't a long walk home--or a long walk back for that matter, he thought as he neared his apartment. On the way he passed the Haus der Kunst, unlit by night, standing on Maximilian Strasse like a huge tomb. The problem with the building, he observed, was its massive modern pillars which resembled stacked concrete water pipes--or more derisively, fat sausages. These pillars were straight from top to bottom, without the tapering or scrolled pediment at the top which characterized and lightened classical architecture. No, on the contrary, these pillars lent a top-heavy quality to the long portico. This was to be, in Hitler's words, "a temple of German art throughout all times." Standing below it, he got the feeling that the entire building was threatening at any moment to topple over. Perhaps this was precisely the architectural effect its builders were striving for.

He realized that he probably should have insisted on seeing Birgit home, but over her and Erika's objections? Birgit obviously didn't want to be there, but what could she

do, he thought? This was her patron. Even so, he wanted to go back, and sought for an excuse. Milo thought he could apologise, and then explain that Birgit had the extra key to his flat and that he had forgotten his. Then he would offer again to see her home. Ultimately, he still felt that the choice had to be hers, but he could provide a real opportunity.

He knocked several times. At first quietly, then with more vehemence. Erika answered the door--it hadn't even been locked--and stood in the entrance wearing only a short white robe; her face was indifferent, without the least expression of surprise. The apartment was dark behind her.

"Excuse me for bothering you . . . Birgit still here?"

"Of course."

"May I see her?"

"Why?"

He stepped forward a little. "Is there some reason I shouldn't?"

Milo thought she looked at him with glaring hatred. "Very well," she said after a studied pause. Arrogantly, she turned on her heel back through the small marble entry way and into the sitting room. He followed at a few paces and tried to explain about the key.

"Yes, of course, my dear boy," she said stopping before a panelled walnut door, "I shall let you get it for yourself." She threw open the door to the bedroom, flooding the sitting room with her tall shadow within a rectangular tunnel of

light. Then, as she stepped to one side, he saw Birgit within, undressed and sitting on the center of the bed, hugging her knees to her chest. Her eyes did not look up to meet his. Rather, she continued to stare down at the satin quilt as if hypnotized by its pattern.

Milo didn't remember letting himself out, nor getting into the elevator and crossing out through the lobby. Not until he was again on the street, waiting for a trolley to pass did he become conscious of his movements.

It did not occur to him until days later that he had been the one to lose the moral victory. He had had his chance to put his foot down, take the high ground, as it were, rescue innocence, but he had simply folded his cards. He had, in fact, been unconsciously looking for an incident that could jeopardize their relationship. If he had thrown Birgit's clothing in her lap and said, "Get dressed, you're coming with me," he would have been asserting a moral superiority over the situation, but he would also have been taking responsibility and possession of Birgit. Yet who was he to do that? He was neither a patron of the arts nor even an eligible bachelor. He had to content himself with stomping out in righteous indignation. Love like art, he concluded, required both courage and fanaticism.

The other foolish thing he did was waiting for her to call. When she did, he told himself, he would remember that his feelings for her were also paternal, and he would counsel

her, in spite of the obvious disadvantages, to break off this perverse relationship with her lesbian high priestess. But she didn't call. That was understandable and probably best, he later reasoned. It was not simply her career at stake, but her father's continued maintenance. That's obviously what she meant when she said, "more than I can afford."

A couple of weeks later, he went over to her apartment, but she wasn't there and probably hadn't been there. He skipped lectures all week, looking around Munich for her--but no one who knew them from familiar places had seen her. Finally, early one afternoon as he returned home from a search of the Englischer Garten, he found her in the foyer of his building, trying to stuff a note in his mailbox.

"Birgit!" he shouted and took her in his arms tightly.

She did not respond. Her body was limp against his side like a heavy coat. "I've been told that you've been looking around for me," she said simply.

"Yes, of course, I have been looking everywhere."

"Did you try the Vierjahreszeiten?" she asked dourly.

". . . But--you said you'd call."

"I came by to ask you to stop."

"What?"

"Looking for me."

"But why?" he asked, letting her go. She just stared at him in disbelief. "Birgit, I've had a chance to think a lot about that evening. I think I understand--I really do."

"I'm sorry," she said placidly.

"Birgit, why are you acting this way?"

"You see how things are," she said impatiently, and pushed the note back into her purse and snapped the clasp shut.

"Yes I do, and I think I was wrong to act so judgmental. I think your relationship with Erika is regrettable, but if that is the way it has to be . . ."

"So you don't think it's so bad?" she asked coolly.

He threw his hands up, exasperated. "Who am I to judge?"

"It's not bad?" She was disappointed that he pretended not to see it. She started to go.

"Birgit, I still want to see you."

She smiled grimly below tired eyes, "Naja, I get it, you are willing to share?"

"I don't want to lose you. Come up to my apartment--let's talk about this." He put his arm about her and nudged her gently. She wouldn't move.

"No, don't be stupid." She looked down the hall and through the open doors on to the street. There was no one on the sidewalk, but edging into view was the silver hood of a Mercedes. He understood now. Erika wasn't willing to share. She quickly leaned forward, squeezed his hand and walked away.

"Wait, just a minute," Milo called after her, but she continued to walk as if he had said nothing. "What would it take? How much? How much money would it take?"

She stopped and swiveled her head back over her shoulder.

"Don't, Milo." Swinging her net purse from her right hand, she walked out onto Residenzstrasse and was gone.

He thought to himself, 'I'm not going to stand by and let this happen--I'll do something.' He didn't know what, just then, but he would do something.

A week later, he still didn't know and he quit thinking about it. There was nothing he could do. In the weeks that followed, it seemed that he couldn't help but run into Birgit here and there, going about her life as if they had never met. On Wednesday afternoons she could generally be found sunning with Erika in the Englischer, or at a sidewalk cafe on Ludwigstrasse. Thursdays he could always see her riding her bike across the Odeonsplatz around 2:30 as she went from her music school on Brienner Strasse to a voice lesson at the Munich Opera House. And she didn't look totally unhappy; in fact, she looked exactly as she had always looked, shopping on the Marienplatz with Erika or riding about in her Mercedes.

Milo concluded he wasn't totally unhappy either. After a lapse, he returned to his studies, his projected book and his trips in the evening to Nordsee to eat fish and make small talk with the waitresses. But things never quite got back to where they were before they met. He felt in his heart that he had learned something about himself in all this that he would just as soon not have realized. Life is full of difficult trade-offs, and with each poor choice, he lost just a little more integrity.

Then, early one rainy morning, he received a phone call.

"Hello . . . hello . . . who is this?"

"Birgit," she seemed to be whispering. "Milo, can you meet me at 6:30?"

"Birgit? Birgit, how are you?"

"Can you meet me at the west gate at Königsplatz?"

"Yes, today?" he asked, but she had hung up. So, he was finally going to get around to seeing the Königsplatz, he thought, and whatever it was she called the west gate. He got out his map and looked it up. The gate looked to be a small grey box at the end of Briennerstrasse. The Propylaeum--built, 1862.

CHAPTER XI

Taken all in all, the Propylaeum, or West Gate, as Birgit chose to call it, is a rather curious architectural blend of Olympian temple and rampart situated, as it is, fronting a large cobblestoned square dividing two museums: one, the Glyptothek, for Greek and Roman sculpture, the other, the Antikensammlungen, for antiquities. Milo realized immediately that he had been in the Königsplatz before. When he had first arrived in Munich, he had made it a point to visit the two museums of classical art.

But since then, he had never gotten over into this part of the city, and judging from the trickle of museum visitors who walked across the broad gray square, neither did many others. Maybe this was because of the general coldness of this cul-de-sac of Graeco-Roman monuments which does not fit in well with the overall feeling of Munich--a city where most of the buildings are either high German Gothic, like the ornate and spired Rathaus in Marienplatz, or Italian baroque, like the Theatiner Kirche with its large bronze dome and cupolas. King Ludwig the First--not Mad Ludwig II--had for a short time, while still a German Elector, been named the provisional King of Greece. During his short tenure in Athens, he had acquired a taste for the Hellenic. Some time

after he was deposed and sent packing back to Bavaria, he had decided to construct a little 'Athens on the Isar.' The result of his desire to infuse a little 'Golden Age' into Munich had been the Konigsplatz. But the Konigsplatz, with its perfectly balanced, but heavy Greek porticos, and its blank stone facades unrelieved by even one single window, reminded Milo not of a thriving Greek City State, but rather of a massive necropolis, and he could not walk the Platz without wondering, 'What race of men built these walls, and derived pleasure from such formal sternness?'

He was anxious to see Birgit again, and he arrived a few minutes early and walked about the gate and in the towers, examining the old paint that had decorated the ceiling and wondered at the possible uses this gate could have served. It wasn't like the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin or even the Sieg Tor on Ludwigstrasse--one couldn't march a regiment through it. Apparently, however, it could be defended. The pockmarked stone walls, both inside and out, still showed the effect of large caliber automatic fire.

Ten minutes later, he saw her riding her bike towards him, across the platz, her dress billowing around her, an old brown suitcase precariously tied behind her to a wire book rack.

"Guten Taq," she said, smiling upon him naturally as if for the first time.

"Hi there," he said like the typical American tourist--awkward in unfamiliar surroundings. His eyes traveled the

curvature of her body, admiring, wondering about the small bruises on her neck. He wanted to kiss her as she dismounted, but the bike became a sort of moving barrier between them which she rolled up over the curb and into the main open hall between the sculptured columns.

"How have you been?"

"Good," she said, a little out of breath. "And you?"

"Getting along."

"I have something for you," she said raising her eyebrows, "but you have to promise me one thing first."

"What's that?"

"You won't tell anyone where you got it? This may become difficult later, but you must keep your promise."

"Is it hot?"

"Hot?" she asked, not understanding the idiom he had transliterated into German.

"Stolen?"

"Oh no . . . well, no, I don't think so. I mean, it doesn't really belong to anyone any more. Never mind that, you must promise."

"What is it?"

"No, you must promise," she demanded, placing a hand on top of the suitcase.

He licked his lips, he was getting curious. As she unbuckled the brown tin suitcase, he stroked a hand across the scratched and dented surface. "Where did you get it--at least tell me that first."

"From my father. I just mentioned to him the book you were writing, and he demanded that I give you this."

"More letters for the Fuehrer?" Milo laughed.

"No, this is serious. Believe me, but I don't want him mixed up in it."

"Where did he get it?"

"From an airplane--he took it from the wreckage of an airplane . . . during the war."

"What airplane?"

"Milo, do you want to see it? Then you must promise," she kept insisting. He looked in her eyes for the least sign of jest. "When you see it you will understand, but you must swear first to protect me and my father."

Milo had developed a phobia of secret oaths--he had forsworn so many. Milo wanted to resist now, but he also wanted to know what sort of thing she had dug up that she thought could result in such dire consequences for her and her father.

"Very well, I swear."

She sprang the two old locks on the suitcase which ricocheted against the metal casing like rapid fire, and lifted the cover. Inside the case were eight, perhaps, nine slender journals, all but one wrapped in string and old newspaper.

"Was ist das?"

She reached into the case, turned the book face up, rubbed the dust from one with a stroke of her open palm, and

handed it to him. In the suitcase it had looked to him very much like an accountant's ledger. Then he saw the light brown cover embossed with a sort of art-deco eagle perched over a wreath, the wreath around a swastika. As he opened the binding, he smelled the rot of aging paper, and he glanced down at a perfectly pressed page full of old style gothic scribbling that he could not readily read, save the date: 1 January, 1939.

"What is this, Birgit?"

"Diaries," she whispered, rubbing the ends of her dusty fingers on her skirt.

"Yes, but whose?"

"Des alten Fuehrer."

"C'mon," he said, looking for the smile, but there was nothing in her eyes but earnestness. In half measures of belief and disbelief, he paged through the book, nervously checking the dates. Februar, Marz, April, Mai, Juni, part of Juli. He laid the book down and lifted up another and tore the paper from it, brown newsprint which disintegrated into shreds. This one began August 1, 1943. He tore off all of the covers until he had found nine diaries dated from January of 1938 through to December 20, 1944.

"Some of these are missing, six months here in 1942 between July and December--and the last four months of the war?--where are they?"

"This is all there is," she answered shrugging her shoulders.

"And where did you get these?"

"I told you."

"He's had them all these years and he never did anything with them--why not?"

"What was he to do with them?"

"Publish them, or at least sell them to someone who could publish them," he said incredulously. "These are worth a fortune."

"That was not my father's way. He would never have sold the Fuehrer's diaries. He respected the Fuehrer too much to make a profit off his books," she said in a tone that sounded more like improvisation than explanation.

"Still, he could have published them."

"Maybe he was afraid."

"And you?"

She nodded woodenly.

"Then why?"

"I promised my father. You can see how things are?" Milo gave her a blank expression. "In today's Germany?"

Milo gave up on trying to understand her. He turned his attention back to the ledgers. "Something has got to be done to stop the trends, to show people how it really was--to stop the Russians."

The light was retreating quickly from the porticos of Konigsplatz, and Milo was anxious to examine the diaries under a strong lamp. "May I take these?"

"They aren't mine," she said and backed away from the

suitcase.

"Then you are just giving them to me?"

"Yes, I suppose . . . but you mustn't forget your promise."

"Yes--okay," he said bringing the lid down on the case and securing the latches. He thought at the time that it was the most marvelous gift that anyone could ever have given. The Armor of Achilles, the Spear of Longinus, the Holy Grail, none of these could not have pleased him more--in fact, probably less. Those were merely artifacts. He looked over at Birgit, who was feeling a chill in the evening air and was rubbing the lengths of her arms gently back and forth in the shadows. "Birgit, this is the most fantastic thing--what can I say? I love you!"

"You're just saying that."

"No, I really do!" he said, quite unaware of what exactly he was saying.

"The diaries," she questioned, "are they really worth so much?"

"Birgit!" he shouted with exultation and pure delight, "you really don't understand, do you? You have just given me the personal diaries of one of the most powerful and sinister figures in the history of the world since Herod Agrippa or Judas Iscariot! Valuable?" he said lowering his voice, "This is worth a million if it's worth a pfennig!" He placed the suitcase securely under the bridge of his arm, and reached out for her with his other. She put up the kickstand of her

bike and rolled it out of the gate.

"Are you going now?"

"I have to," she said, pulling up her knee socks and turning her bicycle about.

"Why don't you come home with me? With these I'll be able to get enough money for us--for all of us," he said, remembering her father.

"We'll see," she said and started away across the platz on her bike. About half way, she circled around and swooped back towards him, peddling rapidly. It was dim, but he could see that she was now smiling broadly. She stopped the bike in front of him, and without getting off, took his face between her two hands and kissed it, strongly, sloppily, leaving lip gloss all about his mouth and chin. Then just as quickly, she peddled away, standing up, leaning forward over the handle-bars, pumping at a furious speed across the empty square softened with twilight.

Between January 1, 1938 and the last entry of December 20, 1944, Milo estimated that there should have been at least fourteen separate journals. He had nine. Where were the other six? It really didn't matter now, he was so completely overwhelmed with the partial discovery, but it occurred to him that in time, scholars would seek to uncover the missing Hitler diaries. So where were they most likely? In the dust of the field where the plane carrying Hitler's personal papers crashed and burned.

Milo placed a reading lamp on the dinner table and stacked his nine thin volumes beside it. Absent-mindedly, he threw the old newspaper out, but then dug it out of the trash, thinking that it, too, might be important evidence when it came time to prove the authenticity of the journals. He pieced some of the faded, worn shreds together and tried to read the smeared type. Most of the papers were from the Wiener Zeitung and were dated from August and September of 1945. That would be four months after the end of the war in Europe.

Evidently, Birgit's father had decided at some point to wrap the journals up, either to protect them, which seemed unlikely, or just to cover them up so as to keep them from being readily inspected. This seemed reasonable enough, anyway.

Admittedly, Birgit's father was senile now, but why had he sat on these diaries all these years? Was the old fellow really afraid? Of what? Would he have been arrested for possessing such documents? Maybe, if he had been in East Germany or the Soviet sector of Vienna. But Birgit's father had been in West Germany for the last few years at least. Perhaps there was something in the diaries themselves that he didn't want to see published? Something not dangerous, but embarrassing? People can have a very proprietary attitude towards history--believing at times that because they own the only text on a given subject, they have the copyright on the truth contained therein. Or perhaps he had acted thus to

protect the Fuehrer's memory. That seemed unlikely; still, these diaries might prove to be a sort of Portrait of Dorian Grey which would reflect the evil heart of the Nazi dictator better and more conclusively than any speech ever delivered, and certainly better than Mein Kampf.

Had there been a last diary covering the last four months of Hitler's career, he would have been tempted to go right to the end of the diaries--to his last entry which would have been on April 30. But as there was not, he chronologically arranged the diaries on his dinette table and opened the first book and read, with a great deal of trouble, the first handwritten entry.

1 January 1938

{General} Blomberg says he has misgivings about the Austrian situation. How much can we threaten without taking action? "We must not be seen as a barking dog," he said. I agree, but I would rather unite our people without turning the Fatherland into a battlefield. Afraid he is right. At some point, if we are to keep the support of the generals, the talk must end and we must act. The rest of the world watches.

Goebbels tells me that the BBC continues to accuse [me] of bullying Austria into joining us [merging politically with Germany]. This is not the first time Austria has wanted to join the German Reich I would tell them. These English are old enough to remember the Austrian attempts of 1868 and 1918. It is not Austrian sovereignty, but continued English

mercantilism in the Balkans that concerns the British. What liars these English are!

This one entry took Milo close to twenty minutes to decipher, but as he grew more accustomed to Hitler's handwriting and peculiar diction, he found he could read Hitler's entries readily enough and with a minimum of omissions. He continued to read throughout that night and into the early hours of the morning. In all, he had read the first three journals which took him well into 1941. The more he read, the more he kept looking for evidence that Hitler was writing mere propaganda for Goebbels to use. But his journals included entries that, quite frankly, seemed too personal, too potentially scandalous to suspect that they were written with publication in mind. More than this, the diary seemed--on the face of it--to support the opinions of those whom Milo had recently spoken to about the basic rationality of Adolf Hitler. Here in these passages was the thinking of a man--not a perfect man, by any means (and this admitted imperfection particularly impressed Milo) but a man, nonetheless, and not a minion of Hell.

11 November 1938

This situation with the Jews is being handled very badly. I can't handle the.. [word indecipherable].. of the SA in reaction to the murder [of a German diplomat in Paris] by that Polish "kike." Since Crystal Night, I have

reconsidered the wisdom of having put the SA in control of the Jewish labor camps. All this can only lead to even more reprisals and mischief from the International Zionists. But I suppose the important thing for the movement is to pick itself up and keep moving.

Made Eva see the Doctor.. [passage blurred] . . . good soldier. She understands the necessity of the procedure [abortion?]. She is still a young woman.

10 May 1940

Still great success but with great losses on both sides. But didn't we negotiate honorably as long as we could--let them take responsibility for this. . . . I have dreaded direct war with France and England. Dreamed again last night of the hammer that broke in my hands [at the dedication of the Haus der Deutschen Kunst in 1936]. Goebbels said it was a foretelling of Todt's death [Hitler's architect], but since Todt is dead now, why then does this dream come back?

12 June 1940

Will be in Paris within the week. Eva complains more and more about being left in the shadows, even suspects me with another woman. Says she is now unable to have children --blames [me] and threatens herself. I feel responsible, but I cannot have her blackmailing me like this.

Around noon the following day Milo called Herr Kranz, who

wasn't in, but would be in his office, a secretary said, after three.

"Ach, Herr Marsden, you do not look well today," he said upon seeing him, unshaven and hollow-eyed from reading all night.

"But I never felt better."

He grinned, opening his door to his studio and returning some sketches to a large file cabinet behind his desk. "Die Zeit bringt Rosen, ja?" he chuckled.

"I have something that may--or may not," he added playfully in a mood inspired of exhaustion that made him look idiotic, "be of some interest to you. What sort of interest would you have in reading a war diary?"

"Depends," he said deftly, slitting some correspondence open with a sharp letter opener.

"Well, this diary I came across was written by a man who claims to have been in the inner circles of the Nazi regime-- as a matter of fact, he tosses names like Goebbels and Goering and Hess about as if they were his squash partners."

"It's easy enough to check and see what sort of Nazi this man really was," he said, tossing his mail on the desk and raising his eyes to Milo. "What's his name?"

"All I have is a first initial and a last name . . ." he hesitated.

"That may be enough," Kranz said seriously and poised a pen over a note pad.

"First initial A." Milo watched him write it down.

"Last name spelled: H-i-t-l-e-r."

He scribbled out the A and H-I-T and dropped the pen on the desk. "Herr Marsden, you will have to explain the joke to me."

"No joke," he said and pulled the first notebook out of his bookbag. Klaus Kranz glanced down at the cover, and upon seeing the seal, sat down in his chair and reached for a pair of glasses from his top drawer. First he fingered the embossed cover. Yes, it was really there. Then he opened the first page, and scanned it.

"Kluq"--'clever,' he said. Where did you get this?"

"Can't say."

"Can't say or don't know?"

"Can't say--scout's honor."

"My poor friend," he said, handing the book back, "I shudder to think at how much you may have paid for this."

"I didn't pay anything for it."

He reached again for the book and examined it more closely. "Just this one?"

"No, eight more," Milo replied.

"Ah, and how much will they cost?" he nodded knowingly.

"Nothing, I have them as well. I know what you are thinking, Professor, but believe me, I have these from a trusted source."

He searched his face for a sign. "Perhaps this is worth just a little more investigation," he said and asked a department secretary to cancel his afternoon sitting.

CHAPTER XII

Herr Kranz was furious when he learned that Milo had left the other volumes lying about his flat. "What sort of idiot are you!" Too nervous to drive, Kranz sat in rapt silence on the passenger side, one arm dangling out the car window, banging the side of the door impatiently at every red light and slow driver. They had gone back to Milo's apartment, Milo had believed, so that he could check on the remaining eight journals, but when they were once inside, he insisted on seeing the nine volumes safely salted away in the nearest bank vault.

"But I don't want to go to the bank every time I want to work on the diaries," Milo complained.

"You want to leave them in your flat--you must be crazy! The apartment could catch fire, you could be robbed. You want to read the Fuehrer in bed? We'll have photo copies made."

With one volume in his hand, Herr Kranz forged ahead of him through the crowds of shoppers on the narrow Residenzstrasse until they located a bank of suitable prominence--in their case the Bayern National Bank. Herr Kranz, looking every bit like a staff officer, reported to the first counter and politely, but firmly, demanded to see

the bank president.

"Womit kann ich dienen?" said the heavy-set bank president in a perfunctory tone and tired eyes that suggested 'This had better be important.'

"I am Professor Klaus Kranz of the University of Munich . . ."

"Jawohl, Herr Professor," he returned with a solicitude that comes when rank acknowledges rank.

"I have important documents which are to be placed in your vault. But before they are stored for safekeeping, we require that copies be made of each document."

The bank president lowered his brows and cleared his throat. "But this is a bank not an archive, Herr Professor. What exactly is the nature of these documents?"

"Die Tagebuecher des Fuehrers," Herr Kranz said soberly and lifted the first volume into a space about nine inches from the banker's nose. The Nazi emblem, which has been banned in Germany since 1945, acted almost as a hypnotic drug upon the surprised banker. Then, promptly and with some ceremony, he bade them please follow him into his private office while preparations were made. Two hours later they left with a bound copy of all nine diaries, a silver key to a steel safety deposit box, and the invitation of the president to feel free to use his office whenever they came to visit his new charge--the protection of which he obviously took as a distinguished honor and as seriously as the Reich gold.

Kranz and Milo returned then to Milo's apartment and put

themselves to reading. Hour after hour the professor poured over the nine journals, checking dates, scribbling illegible notations in the margins, shaking his head, as if denying, but mumbling to himself, "Ja, das ist wahr," Yes, that's true.

Around 2 Am he placed the journal he was working on beside the others, took off his spectacles and massaged his eyes slowly. As for Milo, he had finished a cursory reading about eleven and had been since then lying on the couch, in the most pleasurable contemplation of the money he would make from the publication, the honors that would be his, the people he would "cut" upon his return to the academic circles in Boston and the others he would look up. He hadn't quite decided into which category he would put Angela or his father, but he was intrigued with the possibilities and considered several scenarios.

"So what do you think now, Herr Professor?"

He stood up slowly and cinched up a thin green tie around his thick neck. "Looking at you, I am reminded of something Shakespeare said about some men having greatness thrust upon them."

"Then you think they're genuine?"

"I consider myself by no means an expert--but yes . . . why not? The East Germans or Russians maybe could have produced such a thing physically, but they would never have written it like this. No, nothing could be worse for them from a public relations point of view."

They closed the door on his lodgings and drove up Leopoldstrasse for something to eat. Even at 2:30 many of the sidewalk cafes were still serving and littered with the as yet undiscovered or undiscoverable artistic and literary talent of Mitteleuropa. "In the previous century," Herr Kranz said, "all the exciting ideas, all the new arts, were coming out of Vienna--even our own Gustav Klimt deserted us with the first taste of success. Today, it's Munich."

They ordered pizza and beer and leaned back in their chairs each with their own thoughts, each enjoying the comradeship that exists between two men who alone know something that is about to shake the world to its socks. The professor smoked a short little cigar, and Milo watched the sports cars that cruised up and down the boulevard, thinking that he would like to find an old Alfa Romeo. And it happened that he saw the waitress from Nordsee walking home, clutching a purse to her chest, a chatty girlfriend beside her gesturing wildly. If I had my car tonight, he thought, I could offer her a ride.

"Have you talked to your father about the diaries?"

"My father? No, not yet. Frankly, I think he'll be pretty skeptical."

"Natürlich, so you will need to have the diaries authenticated."

"I was thinking earlier that we might show them to the Schrams and see what they thought for a start."

"The Schrams? What do they know? No, no, for something

like this, you will have to get the most authoritative source--the very best scholar on Hitler--to look at the documents."

"And who would that be?"

"There are many. A couple of men in England and an American, but if I were you, my pick would be a man in Vienna . . . Jacob Levi . . . Schulzinger. He is a Jew who has spent his lifetime examining Nazi documents--particularly those of Hitler and his inner circle. He is also an expert in Handschriften--handwriting analysis. Besides all this--Did I tell you?--he's a Jew."

"And you know him personally?"

". . . by reputation," Kranz responded, sliding somewhat back from the table.

"If these diaries are authentic," Milo hedged, leaning across the table towards him supported under one elbow, "If they are, just how important do you think they will be?"

"If these are the Fuehrer's diaries and you publish them, you'll change the accumulated opinion of fifty years. And that is merely the academic community. Who can say where the repercussions will end?"

But Milo wasn't so sure. What most people believe about history has little to do with what the scholars say. "When I was in Paris last year, Herr Professor, I told a Frenchman about an article I had read in Time Magazine. New evidence--scientific and conclusive--had shown that Napoleon was murdered--poisoned over a period of months so as to suggest

to the world that he died of stomach cancer. A recent investigator, who had become aware of a new police technique for ascertaining the presence of poisons by testing hair samples, had taken old memorial locketts of Bonaparte's hair to a lab and found trace elements of arsenic in it. I explained this, but the old Frenchman wouldn't believe me, no matter what evidence I promised."

"But you see, Germans will believe these diaries because these diaries tell them what they already suspect--what they have always suspected."

"Well, we have a saying in America," Milo said raising his beerstein, "'Sooner or later, the truth will out'--here's to the truth."

Kranz laughed and lifted his glass. "How differently you Americans see things. We have a saying in Germany about the same thing. 'When you are closing in on the truth, beware lest it turn around and bite off your nose.'"

"No, I am sorry if this disappoints you, but the Fuehrer did not keep a diary," Frau Schram said simply, looking as self-composed and sympathetic as one of Kranz's oil portraits.

Her quiet confidence rattled him, and Milo was annoyed that he had bothered with her opinion. "Are you sure?" Milo stammered.

"Well . . . no, I can't be sure--no one could be sure of such a thing, but I did work with him a great deal, both in

and out of his office, and I never saw him write in a diary. As a matter of fact, the Fuehrer hated to write, he always dictated. Why do you ask?"

Milo opened here one of the diaries he had taken with him from the bank that morning before he had taken the bus to Mittenwald. She placed the bone china cup and saucer on the table between them and took the book into her hands.

"Perhaps it looks familiar?"

"No, if anything, it's a bit ostentatious. But wait . . ." She got up from her chair and without another word disappeared into the next room. In a moment, she returned with an old leather-bound copy of Mein Kampf. "There is an inscription in here written to me by the Fuehrer," she explained, laying the book open and comparing the writing in both books.

"This is at least a clever imitation," she finally granted. "You know, in East Germany today they have regular factories and workhouses turning out this sort of stuff--not diaries necessarily--I've never heard of that--but things like medals, daggers, autographed photos of the Fuehrer. Some are very good, others are not. But clever or not, they always seem to do something that gives them away. Let me show you."

She showed him a book which was, reportedly, a collection of never before seen pictures of the Fuehrer. In some he was--if they were to believe the fuzzy photos--performing the rites of spring with pigtailed girls in diaphanous togas. In

others, he was simply presiding over his court. "This one, for instance," she said. "Can you detect anything wrong with this photo?"

Milo looked closely at the picture of the Fuehrer saluting an honor guard. The photo was grainy and badly focused, but still, it looked very authentic to him. "Perhaps you can't, but to those who know, anyone who was really there, it is an obvious fake. Look again, Herr Marsden, at how the Fuehrer is saluting?" He still hadn't a clue. "Any good German would know immediately that you never sieg heil with your left hand." Milo stared at the photo. She was right, indeed, everyone was saluting with his left hand.

Milo took Klaus Kranz' advice and called Jacob Levi Schulzinger in Vienna and asked to see him. Curiously enough, he never thought to distrust Birgit, but how certain could he be that her father had taken the diaries from the plane crash as he had told her he had?

It was pouring warm rain when the train pulled into greystone Vienna. He hailed a cab and went directly to the address that Schulzinger had given him over the phone. He had asked specifically what the document was that Milo wished him to look at, but Milo had declined, saying he'd rather not mention it over the phone. The reason, of course, was simple. He didn't want to be laughed at over the phone, and he figured that if he were there with one of the journals, he would have to at least look at it.

"And what have we here?" he asked, rolling up to him in his wheelchair and taking the journal from his hand as if he were his paper boy. That Jacob Schulzinger was not Viennese, Milo detected from his accent. His German accent was too Slavic. A degree in classical studies hung on his wall from the University of Budapest. It was a huge diploma elaborately detailed and printed as carefully as a hundred dollar bill, its seal affixed with gold coin and a faded purple and red ribbon. Milo had expected an office cluttered with Nazi memorabilia, or at least photos dotting the walls of wanted war criminals. Kranz had told him Jacob Schulzinger had actually been involved, indirectly, with finding Eichmann, but about his office there was no evidence of this, no trophies. Instead, he noticed on his bookshelves small, red clay Greek and blond brick Sumerian statues. The Sumerian were easily distinguished from the Greek by their stiff postures and their saucer-sized eyes, which represented for these people the all-seeing nature of the Sumerian deities. Also, he noticed an old photo of a young dark-haired woman who was quite lovely, in a matronly sort of way, surrounded by children in sailor costumes. This looked antique, perhaps pre-World War II, and as there was nothing more recent, he wondered if these people were still alive.

"Where did you get this?" Schulzinger asked routinely after a minute, without looking up.

"I'm sorry but I can't tell you that," he told him as he

had Herr Kranz. Schulzinger shook his bald head at him and wheeled his wheelchair back round to him. "I'm sorry, but I am a very busy man, and I have no time for illegitimate documents." He handed Milo the diary and returned to his cluttered desk.

"But do you know what this is?" he insisted. "This is Hitler's diary!"

"So you say--or rather so it says."

"Listen, Professor Klaus Kranz at the University of Munich was impressed with it . . ."

He looked at him in disbelief. "Klaus Kranz? So he gave you this? I might have guessed--get out."

"Do you know him?"

"Get out of here," he reiterated.

Milo started out, but then thought that he had come too far to leave without an explanation. "Wait a minute, Herr Schulzinger, I've come a good distance just to have you look at this, and I think you owe me an explanation."

He rolled himself back from his desk, sorted a few papers, and in a controlled voice, said, "You must excuse me if I seem insulting or bellicose when I find myself asked to work in the same field with fascists, but I have my reasons!"

"And what has that to do with Herr Kranz?"

"Don't waste my time. I suggest you take that up with him if you don't really know yourself. Now, good day," he finished and slammed the top drawer to his old wooden desk.

"Are we talking about the same Klaus Kranz? This man I

speak of was a journalist during the war."

"Hah, a journalist--for the army I suppose--was that his story?"

"Yes it was."

He stared at him for a moment, no doubt wondering whether he was just stupid or incredibly audacious. "Your German is not really Hochdeutsche--You said you were a student in Munich--what are you, American?" Milo assured him that he was. He studied him for a moment, sizing him up. "Believe me, Kranz was Gestapo or worse."

"I suppose you have evidence," Milo said, a little shaky with anger.

"Do you know about the Generals' plot to kill Hitler?" Milo nodded. "The plotters against Hitler had a list of people in the Reich who were to be arrested immediately upon the death of the Fuehrer. Klaus Kranz's name was very high on that list. That is all I have, but that is enough. Good day," he said, now trying to pry open with a metal ruler the desk drawer he had slammed.

"I was told you were a scholar in the highest sense of the word. I cannot possibly see why your blind hatred of Professor Kranz should keep you from looking at new evidence. As you wish, goodbye, Herr Schulzinger."

Milo left his office and walked down to the elevator, which was slow in returning from the first floor. He was well on down the street when a shopkeeper caught up with him on stiff old legs and motioned him back. Schulzinger had

opened his office window that looked down upon the street and was leaning over the short balcony. Schulzinger had reconsidered, but was neither apologetic nor particularly polite upon his return.

"You can at least tell me that you did not get this book --whatever it is--from Kranz?" Milo nodded affirmatively. "If you would be kind enough," he said, "to leave your material here and return in three or four hours?"

For the next three hours Milo walked up and down Schwarzenberger Platz; at first before the opera house, still later he tried to make out the inscription on the large unwelcomed gift to the city, a Russian monument to the 'liberation' of Vienna. It was notable, he mused, that the inscription was in Russian only. He bought and read a paper, ate a 'kaiser' sausage, checked his watch. Time moved as slowly as the old residents of the threadbare capital. Finally, he walked up to the Belvedere Palace, a gift from the Austrian Monarchy to Prinz Eugen for routing the Turks at the gates of Vienna. On display in one of the carriage houses were some of the thousands of Turkish shackles and chains with which the Sultan had hoped to take back the Austrian aristocracy. Inside the Schloss itself was a notable collection of Gustav Klimt, including his famous Athena--no doubt influenced by his days spent in Munich, Milo thought. He returned exactly three hours later. Herr Schulzinger was simultaneously studying several texts with a magnifying glass and had several of the passages in his

Xeroxed journals marked with red pen.

"Ah, three hours already?"

"Yes, mein Herr."

He looked at his watch. "This is not so easy to dismiss. Could you come back at eight? I could tell the concierge to let you back in?"

"Perhaps you would you like to have them over the evening?"

"Yes," he agreed. "I cannot tell you anything yet, but this is sehr interessant!"

"Then you think it may be an authentic document?" Milo pressed him.

Schulzinger bit on a yellow fingernail for a moment. He no longer looked at him with the suspicion he had when he first arrived, but he could see that Schulzinger was still trying to size him up, "Well, at this point," he concluded, "I will not say that it is not an authentic document."

CHAPTER XIII

There is eight hours' difference between Vienna and New York. As it was already after eight pm in Vienna, Milo decided to wait until twelve so as not to call his father before eight. If Schulzinger authenticated the diaries--and Milo felt more confident of this probability the longer he thought about it--he knew he could get the diaries published by many of the houses in New York; still, he called his father, though somewhat prematurely, out of a sense of loyalty and acknowledgment that Alfred Marsden had some right to be skeptical of his son's past behavior.

"Hello. Dad?"

"Just a moment," a cool female voice answered. There was a long pause followed by a groggy hello.

"Dad, Milo here."

"Milo?" he asked in a surprise which bordered on alarm.

"Where are you?"

"Vienna. Hey, how come you're still asleep--it's after eight?"

"It's Saturday."

"Oh, yeah . . . sorry; say, who was that on the phone?"

"On the phone?" he stalled; "that was, that was Angela."

"Angela? What's Angela . . . ?"

"It's a long story," he interrupted in a quiet tone. "I had to give Angela the 'sack.' She just wasn't cut out for the work. So, she's been staying here--in the guest room--for a few weeks while she gets back on her feet."

Milo said that it was decent of him.

"Ah, it's nothing," he said modestly. "But you must have had a reason for calling. What can I do you for?" he asked like a congenial salesclerk.

"Dad, I've come across something that I know you will be interested in publishing--now just listen. I've stumbled on something that is going too big, really big. Much bigger than that other thing--I've got Hitler's diary." Milo's father yawned into the phone.

"We don't do autobiographies," he said.

"Dad, listen to me and think! Hitler's war diaries--his personal record."

"Oh, you've found Hitler's war diaries? . . . Sorry. What I mean is, we don't do fiction."

"Okay, forget it!" Milo shouted in frustration. "This is the hottest property to come along since the Pentagon Papers!--but I forgot, you do how-to books!

"I wouldn't have done the Pentagon Papers either," he said calmly and hung up.

If it had been anyone else offering him such a find, he would have been begging, pleading, and promising anything and anyone just to get first bid on the manuscript, but since it was something Milo had come upon--immediately it was

worthless or bogus. Milo's father didn't even ask the first question which he would have asked anyone else in the business to determine its worth. Tomorrow, Milo vowed, he'd get a publisher--in fact, he'd go to his father's chief competitor.

Milo slept poorly, waking prematurely at odd hours, but suffered nothing on that account. In fact, he felt bursts of wild energy as he dressed. Later that morning, Milo found Herr Schulzinger in a plaid bathrobe and still deep in the texts. "Ich muss mehr Zeit haben," he complained with pink, sore eyes.

Schulzinger had originally thought that it would be an easy thing to dismiss these hand-scribbled texts as hoaxes; indeed, it would be a duty and a pleasure to do so in an afternoon. Any fraud as pretentious as Hitler's diary would surely unravel after the first several entries. "Do you understand the complexity of such a fraud?" he asked Milo later. "Virtually every moment of the Fuehrer's life was a matter of public record." But this was no amateurish production. Milo must give him more time, he said.

So, for two more days Milo sat in a dank, roach-infested pension on Seilerstrasse or took long walks in the city. On the third day when Milo entered Schulzinger's office, he found the scholar's completely cleared of all reference books and papers; the diaries were placed neatly on a chair in the corner, and Herr Schulzinger, still in the flannel robe, was eating his breakfast in an adjoining room which also served

as a bedroom and kitchen.

"Ah ja, Herr Marsden, kommen Sie," he called out when he heard the knock in the next room. "Here, sit down. Would you like an egg and toast?" Schulzinger was pleasant and well pleased with himself. Certainly, Milo concluded, he has discovered something to disqualify them. Otherwise, why would a Jewish expert on Nazism be so genial?

"No--thank you, you are very kind, but Herr Schulzinger, what have you decided on the diaries?"

"The diaries? I would like to study them at greater length," he said and spread a soft-boiled egg on a slice of charred toast. Milo interrupted, shaking his head and murmured something about his disappointment at being postponed another day in Vienna.

"Very well, I shall give you my opinion. They are apparently authentic--in fact, I have very little doubt in my mind about it."

"But you do have some doubts then?" he asked.

"There is always room for doubt--always in science and even in religion, yes?" Schulzinger could be quite charming when he trusted someone. "You must have breakfast, such as it is, and then you must tell me where you got them."

Milo couldn't, of course, and he turned the question back on him. "You're the expert, Herr Schulzinger; you tell me where they came from."

Schulzinger drained his cup of coffee and sat back as he considered. "In the last weeks of the war," he told him,

"there had been something called 'Operation Seraglio.' 'Seraglio,' I must suppose, took its name after Mozart's opera--though that seems a bit unrelated--still the Fuehrer was a lover of opera, as no doubt you already know. 'Seraglio' was the code word used to designate the transfer of the Fuehrer and his household from Berlin to Obersalzburg."

"Seraglio," Milo repeated, puzzling over the origin of the word. "What is that--Slavic?"

"No, it's Arabic for harem or household. However, Operation Seraglio scarcely got off the ground. Of the two cargo planes that had been filled with Hitler's personal effects, only one had arrived in Salzburg--the other was shot down en route. I would hazard a guess that your diary was taken from that plane."

Milo smiled and nodded with satisfaction as Schulzinger continued a tale corresponded so well with what Birgit had told him. "When Hitler had heard of the loss of the one plane, he was reported to have lamented bitterly over the loss of records, records that he said would have vindicated him with posterity."

"Did he tell you on what he based his judgment?" Herr Kranz asked that very evening in Munich.

"There were lots of things that impressed him about the documents. First, the handwriting matched in almost every instance writing samples of Hitler's that are a matter of

public record. Furthermore, he said, these diary entries were not written in a studied hand, as one would expect of a forgery--but swiftly jotted. And there were other things, of course. There was a diary entry on July 20th. Hitler had narrowly escaped death . . ."

"Yes, I know, the Generals' Plot."

"What we do know--Schulzinger said--was that Hitler's writing arm was paralyzed by the bomb blast for several days after. Consequently, if Hitler had a journal entry for that day, it would be highly suspect."

"And there were no journal entries for the days after?" interrupted Kranz, feigning somewhat his own ignorance.

"Ah, but there were, but here's the telling discovery: the entries between the 20th and the 27th are not in Hitler's hand at all. Whose? Schulzinger thinks he knows that too. The handwriting compares remarkably with the writing samples of Martin Bormann." A young couple at the next table looked strangely at him, Milo thought, because he was speaking so uninhibitedly about Nazis and in such a public spot, but he decided he didn't care, and he didn't lower his voice.

"Of course, Hitler's personal secretary. Yes, indeed, Schulzinger would think of that. What a clever fellow," Kranz concluded, slapping his thigh in enthusiasm.

"But probably the most impressive piece of internal evidence has to do with the Doppelgänger."

"Yes, he's on top of things," Kranz continued with a chuckle.

"You knew about Hitler's double?" Milo queried.

"Oh, that's just--It's an idea," he began again, "that has been going around in some circles. All I've heard is that Hitler had one, maybe two, doubles, lookalikes, whom he often employed when he wanted to be one place but was obligated to be somewhere else. But there are so many false stories about the Fuehrer . . . There were similar stories about the Tsar and Nero and, well, Jesus Christ, too, for that matter--means nothing."

"But in 1941 when Hitler was at his staff headquarters in East Prussia planning 'Operation Barbarossa,'" Milo added, referring to Hitler's plans for the attack on Russia.

"But that's just a theory," Kranz interrupted.

"No, the diary confirms what several of Hitler's generals had been saying privately. On June 22nd the diary places Hitler at the Wolf's Lair while the rest of Germany--and the world--saw him sitting all day--though not speaking himself--at the party congress in Nuremberg.

"I see . . . Yes, but was there anything in the diary which he said he distrusted?"

"One thing," Milo remembered, "Jacob Schulzinger did not believe that Hitler was as ignorant of the things that the SS was doing in the camps as the diaries suggest." Kranz folded his arms and leaned back in his chair, his entire mood changed by this last statement. "'Just because it's authentic, it doesn't mean it's true,' Schulzinger cautioned me just before I left."

"Yes, well, I suppose we can expect that from a Jew," he quipped with a little arrogance. "So what else did he say? Certainly he must have been impressed with the Fuehrer's predictions about the Russian threat to Europe?"

"He said you were a Nazi criminal," Milo added casually, but watched his eyes carefully for a reaction. Kranz took a sip of coffee and replaced it to the table easily before he responded.

"Did he say why he thinks I'm a war criminal?"

"Were you?"

"I was a member of the party, yes. But so was everyone else by the end of the war--besides it was not the party that did those things. It was the political SS--the Totenkopf."

Milo felt uncomfortable. Up until this moment he had never seriously considered Schulzinger's charge. But now there was something so easy about Kranz's response, a lack of surprise, perhaps, on Kranz's part that made Milo doubt him. He looked away in partial disgust and sadness.

Kranz realized his mistake and dropped his easy demeanor. "Listen, I was never convicted of anything."

"He said that Von Stauffenberg and the others were also out to get you. You were on a hit list."

". . . In the midst of all the carnage, it was a little hard not to get a little blood on my own boots. Although I was war correspondant with the propaganda ministry, I was, on occasion called on to do other things. Once, I participated in the execution of partisans. Someone had to do it.

Believe me, these partisans would not have hesitated a second to kill us were the circumstances reversed. They never took our boys as prisoners. They didn't even wear uniforms. If nothing else, they deserved to be shot as spies . . . Surely, you can see how it was?"

Milo gave him a sober nod. "You don't have to explain."

". . . But that wasn't all of it," he suddenly continued. He combed his two hands through his hair and then looked at the shiny tips of his fingers. "I was also a counter-intelligence officer. I believed in the Fuehrer, and when I found disloyalty among members of the general staff, I reported it. In time, this attention to details became my speciality. I was wrong, my friend, but I didn't know that at the time. I thought I was serving my country. I have seen the films of the execution of the convicted members of the general staff. They were hung on meat hooks and then strangled with piano wire. It was a very ugly thing, and it haunts me even now. There is no adequate explanation. I am sorry if I am not the man you thought I was or if you think I misled you. But, I think you would have had to have been there to really understand." He left off with a simple shrug of his shoulders.

"It isn't for me to sit in judgment of you, Herr Kranz," Milo said and gave Kranz a sympathetic smile.

The connection was very poor, but there was something in the plaintive voice that Milo recognized. It was the voice that had been used on Milo's mother when she had caught him

not really "working late at the office."

"Milo," Alf Marsden said several times for rhetorical effect. "Milo, this is your father."

"I hear ya."

"Son, what are you doing? "

"I'm eating a Schweinfleisch--a swine flesh sandwich."

"Son, I got a telephone call today from Nelson Weber at Companion House. He told me they were just about to sign you. 'My son?' I asked. I told him he was dead wrong, I told him that you wouldn't do that without talking to me first."

"That's right. Does Companion House know that Nelson's on two payrolls? Or is that your little secret?"

"Hey, I thought we were talking confidentially?" he retorted, as if he were deeply wounded.

"Don't we always?"

"He said they're going to send a couple of historians over to take a look at the documents you're preparing and that some bigshot already says they're legit."

"That's right. They're sending a scholar from Cambridge and another from USC. But I could have told you that the other night."

"But you didn't tell me that!" he said, slipping momentarily into hysteria and dropping the phone on the floor. "Milo, I had to find out from some s.o.b. at Companion Crap."

"Dad, you had your chance, but you wouldn't listen, you

just hung up on me, so I went to Companion--it's as simple as that."

"Milo, you know I've been under a lot of stress--and I think you know why. Now don't you think you should reconsider signing this book with your own press--it will be yours someday--you know that? Son, I don't think you realize how big this thing is going to be. We're talking half a million hardback, a million paper--and that's just the start. You know, I am your father, god-damit! Didn't I always buy you mitts and bats, go to your hockey games, let you steal lunch money out of my pant pockets in the morning? You thought I was asleep, didn't you, but, but . . ."

"Okay, okay, okay," Milo said irritably, feeling once again like an amiable sucker. He had simply never been able to enjoy the subtler pleasures of sadism or revenge. Besides, this groveling and humiliating self-abasement meant nothing to Milo's father, so why should it mean anything to Milo? It was merely a tool, a pose that he had refined into an art form. How was Milo to enjoy shaming a man who had no shame?

"Hey, now you're talking!"

"But I want an advance--I want \$25,000 up front."

"I'll wire a check special express with the standard contract," he added. "Say, now that you're on board, just exactly what do you have there?"

"Your standard journal entries."

"Yeah, I've heard that, and I've also heard that Hitler

comes off sounding like a fuckin' Marcus Aurelius."

"Yes, it's not quite what one would expect--does that bother you?"

"No, why should it? But I was thinking about some of the potential problems. I was up all night thinking about it; how in the hell does one market a book like this in New York? Do you think you could get this Jew in Vienna to write an intro?"

"His name is Schulzinger."

"I don't care if his name's Shylock. The main thing is he's a Jew and we can use that against the Jewish Anti-Defamation League."

Just exactly what did he have? Milo had, he supposed, the Fuehrer's answer to the charges at Nuremberg. To listen to Hitler, he was merely the scapegoat behind everyone else's legal defense. To a man, the leading Nazis at Nuremberg had tried to be excused from responsibility for their crimes by claiming that they were only following the orders of a dead man--a national leader and hero who could make no defense and for whom no defense would be attempted. Mussolini and Marshal Petain had suffered the same fate. Each like Christ --if one may be allowed a skewed comparison--had been in the end either deserted or sacrificed by his followers to cover a multitude of real and imagined sins. Now, thirty years later, Hitler was at last entering the docket, and with nothing to lose, he turned the responsibility back to the men

who had claimed to be acting on his authority. "Yes, it was on my authority that these crimes were committed," Milo could see Hitler saying to his accusers, "but those were the perversions of my ideas, and more importantly, those were not my orders!"

Jacob Levi Schulzinger in Vienna did agree to write an introduction to the collected journals, assuming that he would be perfectly free to state his own conviction that in the final analysis, the diaries showed only that Hitler was a man so dishonest as to be unable to admit the truth even to himself. Milo, too, had considered this possibility. But wouldn't one then have to assume that Hitler was a psychotic liar?

Furthermore, this opinion of Schulzinger's was simply not borne out in the journal entries that Milo was translating. The tone of the diaries, although passionate at some points, never sounded psychotic, and there were simply too many entries which showed the Fuehrer able to face the truth about what he was doing. As well, there were also moments when the Fuehrer showed himself to be every bit as astute as Churchill at predicting the Russian intentions in Eastern Europe. In fact, at times, he seemed positively prophetic. For instance, Hitler in '44 had predicted the Russian occupation of Iran in 1946 and Stalin's support of Mao in bringing about a communist government in China. No unprejudiced person could fail to see this in the diary entries.

All through August and September, Kranz and Milo worked, discussing their work with no one, sending their rapidly growing manuscript on to New York as they completed each year of the series. The actual diaries themselves were not very long when gathered together into a single volume. About two hundred manuscript pages for the better part of nine years, but the simple annotation would run as long. Wisely, it was decided to leave the commentary to the modern historians.

By late September their work was nearly complete, and news of the upcoming publishing event was released to the press with the following tantalizing excerpts.

. . . Daily, the reports become more conclusive. Stalin is massing for [a] surprise attack. I knew he would not keep our treaty. Molotov had said as much to his German-born mistress. Barbarossa will come as a complete surprise.

. . .

We're going to reveal the Katyn Massacre--let's see how Roosevelt and Churchill justify being allies then with the Communist government that butchered 4,800 Polish officers and prisoners of war!

. . .

With great reluctance I have given Himmler his parade divisions. Himmler confuses being a soldier with wearing a uniform . . . whatever would he do with thirty SS divisions?

. . .

I will not introduce the use of gas. Some things human

beings should not be willing to do to others.

. . .

The Bolsheviks have never kept even one treaty . . . and if left to their own devices, [they] will subvert, under the guise of democracy, every country in Europe, if not the world within fifty years. Why do they [the Allies] build her up? They must know what a Russian victory in Europe will mean.

. . .

I know that I have been deceived by those whom I trusted most . . . How can I be so powerless? . . . I can't get a simple directive through to Rundstaedt without having the words changed utterly--I see my name everywhere on papers I have not signed!

. . .

. . . The camps are being run by the scum of the corps.

. . .

If I could only kill three men, I think I might still win this war: Goering, Himmler, and Canaris.

. . .

Who could be better than Eva? She insists on coming to Berlin. I told her the whole business was at an end. She won't listen, says she understands completely but doesn't care.

"We're causing a sensation, a helluva sensation," Milo's father declared shortly before the end of the translation. "Have the Munich papers picked up on the story yet?"

"No, but Herr Kranz said there was a mention of it in the Frankfurt paper last evening."

"I want you to grab the papers and the diaries and come home--now!"

"But I'm not finished."

"Finish it here."

"Why can't I finish it here?"

Alfred Marsden struggled to come up with a plausible reason. In the past few weeks he had succeeded in some measure in rehabilitating Milo's tarnished image as a failure with his wife. This counseling was actually motivated out of self-interest. "Listen, son, this thing is going sink or swim in a big way, and if you want it to swim, you'd better get home."

CHAPTER XIV

As he passed through the gate at customs into the TWA terminal, he noticed the usual news entourage of long-haired camera men with mini-cams, and short-haired, on-the-spot reporters gesturing with microphones. Milo was wondering who the celebrity had been on his flight when he spotted his father and Angela standing in their midst. Although they had their backs to him, it was clear that they were the focus for the cameras.

"Dad," he managed to get out before he was blinded by the camera lights and besieged by arm-jostling media.

"Milo!" Angela squealed and threw her arms around him with all the enthusiasm of a pom-pom girl.

"Welcome home, Son."

"Tell us, Mr. Marsden, is it true . . ."

"Yes, is it true?" another asked, "Mr. Marsden?"

". . . Because you received the Hitler diaries from a well-known former Nazi?"

"Have you met Joseph Mengele?"

It was like trying to walk through a rugby scrum, dragging Angela by one arm and his suitcase in the other, the reporters and their hoisted cameras everywhere. Twenty disputed feet later, a frightening possibility occurred to

him. "Where are the diaries? Jesus, the diaries!" He spun around and started back into the melee. There was his father, still in the limelight, holding aloft in one hand, like a trophy, one of the journals, the cardboard box under one foot like bagged game.

"Are you denying then that you are trying to shield someone from prosecution?" another reporter pressed, misjudging the distance and shoving his microphone into Milo's left ear.

"Isn't this exciting?" Angela laughed.

The small crowd reopened as he started back in and flowed back around him like a gestating amoeba. What was his father saying? Now he was looking directly at him. Was he talking to him?

"Make a statement to the press, Milo," Alf called calmly, and Milo thought, 'Strange, no one is jostling or crowding him, no one is stabbing him in the back with a microphone. He knew how to handle these kind of wolves, they knew it--instinctively--and they back off.'

Milo raised his hands, the traditional masonic distress signal, and called for quiet, which was only partially successful. "Okay, okay, one short statement. These diaries, when published will clearly demonstrate . . . will clearly demonstrate . . ." Will demonstrate what? He struggled to clear his mind after witnessing one of the most incongruous of events. A white egg disintegrated on the shoulder of his coat and left a yellow yolk slithering down the lapel. In

front of him was a wild youth shouting obscenities and fighting to free his arms from the hold of two others. In the wrestling that ensued, a small, round, striped cap, looking something like a knitted doily, fell from the crown of his head. A yarmulke, Milo realized.

"You Nazi-fascist bastard! You fuckin' liar!" he shouted through his teeth. Then an airport security man had him in a choke hold with his night stick and was pulling him back through the crowd, his face flushed and grimacing as though he were dangling at the end of a rope.

"Tell me, are you surprised at this hostile response?" one of the news people asked him.

"What, was he crazy--or Jewish?" Milo asked in bewilderment.

This was the first time that he had considered the possibility that his forthcoming book might elicit this kind of response. After all, the evidence was irrefutable, and besides, Hitler was dead with all his Nazis.

"Mr. Marsden, did you mean to imply that Jews...?"

"No, of course not!" He ignored the questions from the crowding reporters. Having picked up the box of journals on the floor and repossessing the last volume from his father's hand, he made his way directly to a checkered cab at the sidewalk.

"How in the hell did the press know I was coming in?" he asked on the ride back.

"I told them. What a media event, huh?" Milo's father

crooned, punching his right fist into his left palm. "And when that demonstrator lobbed that egg--that's news, my boy--that'll be on the six o'clock report."

"Yeah, it's just too bad there weren't a lot more of them, heavily armed--maybe we could have had a small riot," he postulated sarcastically.

Milo sulked without sympathy for several minutes on the way home from Kennedy and stared out of the cab window across the sandy fields around the airport and north towards Manhattan Island. The long flight, seeing his father and Angela limelighting together, the confusion and egg in the terminal, all this had put him in a strange, vaguely resentful mood. Moreover, he couldn't help but notice the way Angela's nyloned thigh slid now and again against his. It had been so long, the touch was almost electric between them, and he wondered if she were really as unaware of his body as she pretended. Meanwhile, she looked on, with his father acting as curator, at the diaries they could not read.

"Y'know, I rather fancy these covers," he said, indicating the large German eagle, flapping its wings over the tilted swastika. "I think I'll talk to graphics about having this on our book cover, but maybe a bit bigger, but with the same color, everything the same--for authenticity's sake--except, maybe, just below the eagle, we need something in bold type like, "Der Fuehrer."

Just what sort of sideshow did his father have in mind to promote the book? he wondered, as he endured Angela's sliding

and bumping into him at every turn, at every corner, at every possible excuse. Too, he noticed the sweet closeted smell of her wool coat and perfume.

His father's Westside neighborhood had not changed much over the years, except of course, during the years that he had lived there, the old streets had been filled with Mustang Cobras, Lincolns and Olds 88's with their pleasure craft exteriors. Now there were mostly foreign jobs, expensive for the most part, and he was reminded of something his father used to say whenever he'd see a Mercedes Benz. "Why in the hell would a Jew want to patronize a German car maker?"

What was a surprise, however, it was to see how much the interior of his father's brownstone had changed. In all of the years he had lived at home, he never saw his parents go out and buy a new sofa or dining room set. There were new mattresses for beds, yes--but generally the old Brownstone was furnished with used furniture that his mother had inherited or gleaned from various yard sales or public auctions. Otherwise, he did not think, for all his father cared, that they would have had any furniture at all. But now, in the two years that had passed since his wife's death, Alf Marsden had gone out and purchased a love seat, a pair of matching wingback chairs, an oriental rug for the entry and numerous little nicknacks for the house.

"I see you've done some furnishing."

"Oh, that," he said as if it wasn't worth mentioning.

"After all, it isn't like I can't afford it."

And, quite frankly, he was dressing considerably better than Milo had remembered, though he chose not to bring that to his attention. Without much further ado, he left them both standing in the front parlor and walked up the backstair to his old room. He scarcely knew the place. None of his mementos were left hanging on the walls, nothing left sitting on the bookshelf.

"I hope you didn't mind," Angela said. "I've put some of your stuff upstairs. The lot of it was just collecting dust and getting in the way."

"Heck no, make yourself at home," he said under his breath, and returned to his unpacking.

"Well, supper will be ready in a few minutes."

"Good," he said, holding up a semblance of a conversation as he hung a few shirts up. "What's for dinner?"

"I haven't decided yet . . . since you just got home, what would you like?"

"I haven't had spaghetti in a long time?"

"Nah," she dismissed the suggestion, "I'm tired of that--Y'know," she went on, abruptly changing the subject, "when I saw you at the airport today . . . Milo?" He turned around from the closet to look at her.

"When I saw you at the airport, I didn't exactly recognize you. I mean, I did, of course, but I realized that I must have remembered you wrong, or else, you've changed."

"I've changed. Do we have any coat hangers?" The closet

had been stripped.

"No. Sorry. I mean, like in the old days."

"Oh yeah?" he asked uncomfortably. He knew a line when he heard it.

"You've lost some weight--exercising?"

"Skiing, mostly."

"Y'know, I've been thinking of joining a health spa."

Angela smoothed the wrinkles of material that gathered over her hips. "And how do I look to you?"

"About the same," he noted complacently and returned to his suitcase. Actually, it had been difficult to see in her madeup face and floozy hair the ingenue he had married in college. That girl, of course, had been an illusion.

"So, how are you and my father getting along?" Milo asked finally, but received no response. He turned around to the door and saw that she had gone.

At dinner, Angela served as arrogantly as a Paris waiter and sulked off into the guest room. The food was qualitatively better than she had served during the last years of her marriage to Milo, but the attitude was a fresh reminder.

"I hadn't been doing much cooking here since your mother died, but now with Angle here . . . coming home in the evenings is kind of--you know, something to come home to."

"That's just what I was thinking," Milo said, but what he was really wondering was, 'if you had wanted company, you could have kept my Irish terrier that Angela wouldn't have in

our apartment.'

"I think she's a mite upset with you--she usually isn't like this."

"Oh yeah? Seems like ol' times to me." Milo understood well enough why she was annoyed. Whenever Angela had been uncertain about the status of a relationship, she had always gone on the offensive, always lashed out first. In Vietnam the military had called it 'preemptive strikes.'

"So what's the schedule for publication look like?" Milo asked, to change the subject.

"Well, I'm going to try to get the galley to print just as soon as possible. This publicity we've been getting has been more than I expected--caught us a bit flatfooted. We thought it would take weeks to get the word out and stir up the public's interest. But here we are now, still three weeks from the markets with both Time and Newsweek coming out next week with cover stories, and the street demonstrations . . ."

"You've had street demonstrations?"

"And bomb threats. The hymies in this town are really paranoid. Y'know, to hear them whining, you'd think all of them had been in concentration camps themselves. Tuesday, the Jewish Action League said that if we go through with the publication, they will call for a nationwide boycott of bookstores that carry our books."

"Sounds serious."

"Serious, it's fantastic. Absolutely the best publicity

we could get. As I've always said, in this business, there's no such thing as bad publicity. By the way, I hope you don't have any plans for tomorrow."

"What did you have in mind?"

"A talkshow." Milo replaced his water glass without drinking from it.

"Now just a minute, Dad."

"Hey, don't worry. We'll start you out with a couple of local nobodies and gradually work you up. Don't look at me like you just swallowed a roach; a Carson Show appearance alone can generate 100,000 book sales; besides, you'll have a great time--you'll be a big celebrity, my boy!"

They finished their greasy porkchops and waited for Angela to serve sponge cake. "Why don't I just go in and bring it out?" Milo asked.

"You know how Angela is about her kitchen."

"So do we go and get her or what?" For the last several minutes they could hear her in the room above them slapping cabinets and furniture about.

"Well, I don't know. Maybe you ought to go up and say something nice. Apologise."

"For what? Sponge cake? It's not worth it."

His father wiped his shiny forehead with the napkin and carefully folded it next to his plate. Angela had evidently been reforming his table manners. "Listen, my boy, where women are concerned, you can't expect to win the war unless you are willing to lose a few battles--capice?"

But he didn't want to win the war. The war was over as far as he was concerned. In the guest bedroom Angela was ripping blouses from wire hangers and stashing them into a Samsonite overnighter as though it were a duffle bag. He observed her fury for a moment, cleared his throat and asked what she was doing.

"You're the genius, what does it look like?"

"Ruining some perfectly good hangers," he had to say, judging from several on the floor of the closet with broken spines, their wings bent up like dead sparrows.

"Oh, don't worry, you'll have plenty now!" She stared at him for a moment for a response. Then in melodramatic fashion she turned about and covered her face with her hands. "I'm just in your way, so I'll leave. Don't bother to ask where, I don't know myself."

"Angela," he said, remembering the last time he had tried in vain to get her to stay, "you're not really in the way, y'know. C'mon, Angela, come have some coffee and spongecake with us."

"You know I can't stand sponge cake."

"Come have some coffee then. C'mon, you can always do this later."

"All right, but don't try to change my mind, because after coffee I'm leaving."

"Don't be jittery and you'll do fine," Angela said.

"There's nothing that makes a person look stupider on TV than

self-consciousness." She had taken upon herself the position of publicity agent. Meanwhile, he was sitting in a barber's chair and facing a large makeup mirror with all of its thirty lights exposing to the surface of glass every flaw and freckle, every discoloration and wrinkle. He had never looked so closely at himself before. For the first time he noticed large holes in his skin, and he had a twitch in his right eye. When she looked in her purse, he sneaked a broad smile which looked back at him like a sneer.

"That's because your teeth are dry and sticky."

"What's that?" he asked back.

"Lick your front teeth before you want to smile, that way your upper lip won't stick to your teeth and make you look like a goon." He licked his teeth. She was right. You do learn something in high school beauty contests. "So how do you feel now?" she asked every two minutes, as if she expected at any moment a sudden collapse or hysterical outburst.

"I feel just fine--perfectly relaxed and lucid. Just tell me one small thing if you would. What's my name?" He detected a "humph" as she paced behind him. Then the makeup woman came in with her little wooden box of paints and lashes.

"Are you Mr. Marsden? You're on next," she said sitting beside him on a stool. "Do you want some makeup?"

"I don't know--do I need any?"

Normally people with fair skin blanch under the strong

lights, but because of his deep tan, it was decided that the person who needed the makeup was Angela. "But she's not going on--I am," he said, looking like a retarded adult, staring wide-eyed in a mirror with a lobster bib on.

Again he tried a few mechanical smiles. The lips moved more naturally. "What time is it now?" Milo asked. Angela tugged on her left sleeve and inadvertently showed him a jewel-studded watch that had belonged to his mother.

"Angela, I only have one question for you," Milo asked after the makeup woman had left. "What did you have to do for the watch?"

"Oh that, what do you mean? It was a gift."

"Are you sleeping with my father?"

"Really Milo," she protested, "do you think I am the kind of person who would do something like that?"

It was rather a stupid question, he decided, and let it slide.

The red light went on above the mirror, and he slowly got to his feet, feeling, as he did, as if all the blood in his body had been suddenly flushed like a toilet. Angela stood beside him, leaning back on the counter and flashing eight crossed fingers for luck. "Break a leg, chum--I'll watch you on the monitor."

Ronald Hartley was a TV interviewer whose programs were syndicated mostly in the New England area and whose popularity was due primarily to the decline in commercial programming since the introduction of cable television. The

format of the program, he said, was simple. Answer his questions for about twenty-five minutes. The last twenty minutes would be left open for questions from the audience.

As he walked out on the bright stage which dropped off like a cliff into darkness, Milo thought, 'This will be a piece of cake' and checked to make sure that he had removed the bib.

"So, tell us, Mr. Marsden, how did you come to be interested in this line of research?"

"Oh, I've always been fascinated by the Nazis," he found himself spouting glibly.

"How's that?" he prompted, but Milo really couldn't think of a response that didn't make him sound like some kind of nut with a morbid fetish, the sort of fellow who subscribes to True Detective and sends away for exotic weapons.

He cleared his throat and tried to compensate. "Well, I've always had many interests of the historical nature--like the Etruscans, and Greeks, and Vikings." But now he was sounding like a pedantic adolescent.

"Yes, of course--but perhaps you could tell us a little about how you came to have the diaries?"

He shook his head slightly but with vigor. This had been one of the questions that, he had explained before the show, he would not answer.

Ronald Hartley cupped his lapel mike with his palm and apologised. "We'll cut that out." Then he tried again,

"Many of us have followed this story with great interest, and we've read some of the excerpts from the diaries. Tell me, are there any particularly interesting passages that perhaps we haven't seen that . . . ?"

"Well I suppose it's interesting," he went off like a tape recorder, "because we get a very different picture of Hitler than is generally presented by the historians." He couldn't remember what his question had been, but he was quite sure that wasn't an answer. But the words were flowing like a song, and he decided to just continue on the roll. "The picture we get is of a very dedicated National Socialist, someone who is a patriot, but a patriot confused by the issues, someone who is making momentous decisions, but a leader unable to see or understand the effect those decisions will have, someone who means well, but is misinformed at every turn . . ."

"Yes, I see, now that's an interesting point," Hartley said, interrupting. "Some critics of the as yet unseen diary have wondered why you haven't sent the diaries to the German National Archives for verification? Is there a reason why you have not sent the diaries to Bonn for their scrutiny?"

Milo sat in a blank stupor.

"Why haven't you sent the diaries on to the German National Archives?"

"I don't know. It just hasn't occurred to us. But the verification we have from many of the best authorities is really very good," Milo said and went blindly off on another

tangent.

Then the part of the program came when he was to field questions from the audience. The house lights were turned up, and he looked out upon row after row of chubby old housewives and their retired husbands. Milo could see now that the line to the audience mike had been cueing for some time. Good, he thought, there'll be a lot of questions.

The first woman looked about 65, wore a nylon plaid dress with a paisley scarf over her bobbed hair, and was built like a sturdy peasant in a Brueghel painting.

"My nama ist Hedda Goldman," she said in a thick Danish accent. "My nummer at Buchenwald vast 2769-77-89," she said raising the sleeve of her dress for the camera and displaying the tattooed serial number on her fleshy forearm. "Bot, vut I don't unterstand is vie all dis intrist in the worts of a man who sent sechs unt a half millyon people, children, mutters with babes sucking at dir breasts, jung boys unt harmless old men into gas showers. I don't see anyone looking for der diaries. I don't unterstand vie you vant to make dis Nazi murderer into some sort of German hero. Would you answer me dis, jung man?"

She did not wait for his response, but slowly trudged back up the aisle to her seat while an enthusiastic crowd clapped and hollered their appreciation.

"I think you misunderstand the purpose of the forthcoming diaries if you think it is intended to tell you that what you went through wasn't horrible; I know," he said, "I've been

out to Dachau." Hedda, from her seat in the audience, shouted something inaudible. There was more clapping before he could continue.

"But what you might find interesting is the fact that Hitler's 'Final Solution,' as it was sometimes called, was not to murder the Jews in death camps. No," Milo continued quickly to get the point made, "Hitler's diary shows us clearly that Hitler favored another plan for dealing with the Jewish problem."

More boos came from the pit. "It was not the Jews who had the problem!" a man in the front row shouted, shaking a bony fist.

"Hitler's first choice would have been to send all of the Jewish people who would go to Palestine. In fact, he records in his journal a discussion with Eichmann where he learned from Eichmann that many Jewish people had refused to leave the camps for Palestine; also Eichmann points out to him that the British Government wouldn't allow the transfer of Jews from German territories to English-administered Palestine. Indirectly, I suppose, we could say he was a supporter of the Zionist movement and it was the British Government that was partially . . ."

By now, many people in the audience were standing on their seats, shouting, showing tattoos and scars to the roving eye of the camera.

"It sounds incredible, I know, but the new facts seem to contradict the old evidence that Hitler knew that the camps

were overcrowded, unhealthy, killing prisoners!"

"Well, we certainly want to thank you very much for being with us today," the moderator interrupted, following a cue from a stage manager who was slashing his throat savagely with his left thumb. The stage lights came down. One of the stage crew quickly took Milo's lapel mike; the program had come to an end. As Milo walked off, people who had been in line to ask questions were shouting into a dead mike. Others were helping the more agile to climb up on the stage.

Back in the dressing room, Angela was there to greet him, literally, with open arms. "You were wonderful," she cried.

"What, are you kidding? I sounded like a nut!"

"No, the way you managed that moderator, not getting caught in any of his little traps by answering directly--and then," she continued, mustering her entire body up to his, "the way you stood off that whole angry crowd all by yourself. God, you were impressive! You never once flinched! The moderator was terrified--you could see it in his eyes--but not you."

The selective eye of the camera had performed a miracle. Milo started to laugh uncontrollably. Angela, thinking he was merely laughing in the face of danger, started laughing with him and kissing his nose, eyelids, cheeks, etc. Then they were both laughing like hyenas. He kissed her and there was that old surge of electricity between them.

CHAPTER XV

Many spy novels of the sixties have two elements in common. The first was East-West tension, the second, a sort of timid Everyman as a protagonist. Invariably, he is sexually exploitable and sexually exploited.

Milo had read these novels when he was a reader for his father's publishing house, and so he knew what to expect when Angela first started her stratagems on him, but one can't really say it made any difference.

Why did he allow it?

He was as sexually vulnerable as anyone, but he'd like to think that this wasn't entirely the reason for the collapse of his defenses. After all, Angela was not the rosy-cheeked Jungfrau that Birgit was (though Angela had once had rosy cheeks, he remembered).

Birgit had loved him with all the pure energy of prima-
vera. Angela, Milo knew, was thinking primarily of the royalties he would have from his best seller and his future career with his father's publishing house. How crass had Angela's love become? He had some idea, but he had this feeling that if his love hadn't kept Angela from acting as cheaply as she did, somehow that was his fault.

Obviously, Angela wasn't everything he wanted or

expected. But Milo hadn't been what she expected either, and more important, he then thought, if he took up with Birgit, wouldn't the five years spent with Angela always be for him and Angela a bitter mistake? On the other hand, if he took Angela back, if he saved their relationship, if he redeemed it through an unselfish and generous gesture, wouldn't that make up for the five years of disappointment they had been through? Wouldn't this condescending gesture on his part also ensure their future happiness, as well? The idea of redeeming a fallen woman--to say nothing of redeeming his own past failure--appealed to him rather more than he even acknowledged to himself.

During the next two weeks, while Angela spent the nights cooing like a dove in Milo's room and her days in Connecticut looking for a rambling house with pond and gravel drive, Milo often went down to the press with Alf where he took interviews with Esquire, The Saturday Review, and Time Magazine, or else he observed the progress on his book.

For promotional purposes, Alf had decided to go with a special, cardboard display-bookcase. It was predominantly black with a cut-out on the top of Hitler in a long grey field coat, his collar up like Napoleon. Behind him, silhouetted against a red sky full of war planes, were the burning ruins of Berlin.

"Dad, this is very dramatic and all," Milo said when he first saw the projected display, "but we aren't selling a war novel." Alf gave him a totally puzzled expression.

"So?"

"So? You know what this looks like--it looks like the display that they put out with the last reprinting of Gone with the Wind--Vivien Leigh in the arms of Gable, the city of Atlanta blazing away behind them?"

"Hey, now that's an idea," Alf said and was already one step beyond Milo's objection. Later that afternoon he asked one of his graphic artists if he couldn't get Eva in the picture somehow.

"But you don't get the point; a lot of people are going to see this set up and buy the book, thinking they're getting a torrid romance, but you know what they'll wind up reading--a short diary of purely historical interest."

"Come again?" Alf asked, still staring at the cut-out, pulling judgmentally on his bottom lip, seeing in his mind's eye Eva in a low-cut evening gown showing ample bosom, at Hitler's feet, hugging his pant leg. "Milo, you've always complained that people don't read enough history. Listen, Kiddo, leave the marketing up to us?"

Towards the end of the month, the Jewish Action League, true to their promise, began picketing bookstores which advertised the upcoming edition. A few bookstores had indicated that they did not intend to advertise or sell the Hitler diaries, but those were bookstores in the Jewish neighborhoods, Milo's father said, and besides, the incoming orders more than compensated for the few closed markets.

Also, the mail they received was beginning to shift in

opinion. Many booksellers and book buyers now wrote in to say that they did not believe in the suppression of any book --this was, after all, not the Soviet Union. There were also letters that came in from the Midwest (accompanied by large orders) which said things like, "We are pleased to see that someone finally has the guts to stand up against the Jewish-dominated press in this country!" and "It's about time someone took a fresh approach to the old bugaboo."

To coincide with the release of the book, it was decided to send the diaries to the West German National Archives for verification. They had, over the past two weeks, had numerous American and English scholars come to New York to examine the diaries, so that now there were few doubters in the academic community. Chesapeake House had even received requests from several educational publishers for permission to quote passages from their copyrighted material; nevertheless, the advertising department said the German edition would be better received after a verification by the National Archives in Bonn.

"You know, Milo," Alf said on a later occasion as he looked over designs for future book jackets for the German and French editions, "I was thinking about that other book you wanted to publish--y'know, the first one about the people who knew Hitler."

"I didn't think that was our kind of book," Milo said vacantly. His attention temporarily returned to the demonstration down on the plaza which he had been watching

from the quiet safety of their twelfth-floor suite.

"Well, it wasn't. But this book of yours is going to create a new demand, it's going to create a new interest. After the diaries, that other book of yours will sell like hot cakes--believe me."

Milo was tempted by the idea of a second book with his name on it. "How soon would you want the manuscript?"

"You got it with you?"

As well, it sounded like a pretty good excuse to take a trip back to Germany. He had wanted to see Birgit. He had promised her--though she had not requested it--a portion of the royalties from the up-coming publication. Mostly, he wanted to see Birgit to reassess his instincts.

"Yep, you and Angela could take a second honeymoon."

"Well," he hedged, "I'd rather go alone."

"I thought things were going really well with you two."

"They are," he said rather complacently. "We're making plans about a house now. No, things are fine, but I have some business left that I would rather Angela not know anything about."

Alf nodded in agreement. "I saw one of your letters to Germany--couldn't help it, you left it in the typewriter."

"Okay, so you can see why I wouldn't want Angela there."

"Actually, that sounds like an excellent reason to have her there." He sat down on the corner of the desk and began confidentially. "I think you've finally got Angela where she wants you--and right where you want her. So, let me give you

some good advice from an old-timer?"

"Fire away."

"Now that you've got the reins, you should hold on to them and don't you get down or give her the least bit of freedom till she's pregnant. Believe me, nothing settles a woman down like children."

In his declining years Milo's father had adopted a rugged and manly philosophy of life where everything was black or white, cowboy or Indian. And in his view, which was not foreign to the works of Zane Grey and Louis L'Amour, women were just part of nature like the wild mustangs: "Women understand that this is a man's world. They only get confused when you let go of the reins." Nevertheless, Alf was no fool, and Milo would have to conclude in retrospect that he was probably right when it came to Angela.

"The news of the Hitler diaries eventually found their way even into the leftist German papers," Professor Kranz told Milo on his return. "By then it was everywhere, the story over and over again. And these other things began to happen in the city. You can see it even in the restaurants--people talk politics--nothing but politics since the diaries."

The city was windy and darkening already at three in the afternoon under a massive storm front. As a consequence, there were few shoppers on the streets as they drove across the Maximilianbrucke which spanned the Isar and opened onto

the wide and imperial Maximilianstrasse.

"And why not?" Kranz continued. "This street was the scene of a riot about three weeks ago--broken glass everywhere, students demonstrating, police wielding sticks--protestors were hurt."

"You think the diaries did that?"

"Not entirely. There's a curio shop in the middle of this block. Look," he said, pointing over the dash to a small shop with a boarded-up storefront and smoke-singed masonry above it. "The owner's an old trooper. Anyway, he sells antiques and medals, Kaiser helmets--things of that sort. A couple of days before the first street demonstration, he put an old portrait of Rudolf Hess in the window and draped an old party flag over the frame. Some of our more radical politicos from the university came down that night and broke his window out--destroyed the portrait, set fire to the flag.

"So what happens as a result? Two days later, lo and behold, most of the shops on the block have pictures of Hess in the windows.

"'It's okay,' I've heard a lot of people say, 'He's a national figure again, like Rommel, like Bismarck.' But the students at the university, the younger people see it as some sort of threat; so, they come down a second time--this time to break out all of the windows on Maximilianstrasse, and they would have too, had the police not intercepted them. It was like the old days," Professor Kranz said with an

ambiguous smile. "Like Kristall Nacht . . . Are you sure you want to stay here?" he asked, stopping in front of Milo's old flat on Residenzstrasse. After all, Milo could afford the Vierjahreszeiten now if he wanted.

Milo thanked him but said he had a few errands in the neighborhood to see to. He'd been looking forward to seeing the old place again, walking the Marienplatz, looking around and refreshing his memory of the narrow street. "I'll be getting in touch with you later."

Kranz started off, but then backed up, honking as he did. "Oh, I almost forgot. Something that should amuse you. Tonight in the Konigsplatz--there's a rally scheduled. You should be there."

"What sort of rally?"

"Political." He flashed him that same mischievous smile. "Be there by eight--you'll see."

When Milo had last climbed these flights, he had been on the other side of success. Now after all the congratulations and public backslapping, and after a few of the regrettable public occurrences as well, he felt like a qualitatively different man. Not happier, but qualitatively different. 'Endlich, bin ich wer--At last I am somebody!' he thought. That was something which gave him remarkable confidence. But Munich was the same to prince or pauper, and so was his apartment, just as he had left it, littered with clothes, books and deserted translations; there was still an assortment of hard rolls and cheeses in the refrigerator.

'But the man I was is no longer there and never will be again,' he mused romantically--perhaps vainly.

And this was not as conceited as it sounded even to him. In the last several months he had learned to face down, defend, and even criticize some of the critics of the forthcoming work. Most of these people came not so much from the scholarly community--though a few did--but from institutions and groups that felt threatened by any reevaluation of Nazi war guilt. And, of course, more than a few were communist historians and politicians from the Soviet Bloc. This last fact somewhat polarized his own views and stifled lingering doubts about his own work. Hitler had shown in the diaries how well he understood their intentions and had dwelt long and hard on their subjugation of the Polish and Baltic States. Similarly, Hitler's claim that his attack on Russia was pre-emptive--that Stalin had intended to attack Germany first--did not sit well with the East Germans who were fed-up with hearing of Nazi atrocities and Russian largesse.

Milo had up until recently always fancied himself a stoic of sorts, and he had believed that the problems in the world were like unstoppable running backs, and that only a fool would try. No, the true measure of a man was how well he was able to accommodate himself in a losing proposition via the means of transcendent ideas.

But by this point Milo had reconsidered his Emersonian faith and believed with more and more conviction that man is

defined not by the ideals he pretended to, but by the actions he takes. Only by deeds and daring does a man really discover who he is. Milo had not intended to become a controversial figure, but since he was by virtue of the fact that he was standing up for the unpopular truth, he was not simply going to run away. Greece had collapsed as a society when its leading intellectuals had retreated into their private gardens for the contemplation of escapist philosophies. What the leaders in the West needed to do was face reality--reality about the past, the present, and the probable future if something weren't done at once.

Only staying in his apartment long enough to hang up a couple of shirts, he went back out on the windy streets. Before anything else, Milo headed off towards Birgit's apartment.

"Nein," her landlady told him, "Birgit ist nicht zu Hause."

She had not seen her in weeks. If Milo saw her, he was to tell her that she had some mail, she went on, pointing to some letters on a table beside her door. A letter of Milo's was on top.

Was she still in Munich? Had she gone home to Oberammergau? More likely, he thought, she was living at the Hotel Vierjahreszeiten. Exhausted from his flight, he slipped a note under her door telling her he was back and returned to his flat and lay down. There was still the slightest hint of Birgit's perfume in the bedding and a brush

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CHAPTER XVI

Dolfuss' harangue was nearing its conclusion. He had crafted upon a reasonable base, a rhetorical style whose concluding words took flight and hovered over the platz like harpies or their Germanic equivalent--vengeful Valkyries. Professor Kranz stood almost mesmerized beside Milo, and Milo remembered what he had previously said about German politicians; "Since the end of the Third Reich, Germany has had more than a few smooth-talking diplomats, but not one true statesman."

"Fifty-five years ago this month," Dolfuss shouted and was interrupted with more applause, applause that now pulsed forward from the very rear of the platz. "Fifty years ago this Tuesday . . ." he began, his voice strong but crackling with emotion. Once again he had to stop and begin over, the roar of the crowd was almost deafening. ". . . Sixteen of Germany's sons died here in Munich! Who among us has forgot!"

"Niemand, niemand!" The crowd shouted back.

"But where is their honor?"

"Hier, hier! Hier, hier," they chanted in waves.

"Yes, here and forever!" he said, raising his hands, like a priest at high mass, appealing for a witness from

heaven, orchestrating the emotion in the platz. "So as in the past, so let us do tonight. As in the past, let us light a torch for them and as we do, let us not forget another comrade. This night, in the place where we used to honor the Alte Kämpfer . . . let us stand, here let us ask, for what crime is Rudolf Hess still condemned? For what deed does he remain in prison? We know now the crime, the Fuehrer's diary confirms it. His crime was that he served the Fuehrer! His crime was that he wanted peace! But above all else, his crime was he was a true son of Germany!"

Behind him, on the speaker's platform, an adjutant lit one of the thousands of hand torches which had been distributed before the rally and handed it to Dolfuss, who held it aloft.

"Loyal friends, pledge with me now, here on this sacred ground, that we will not cease, we will not rest until we have freed Reich Minister Rudolf Hess and restored him to his rightful place here in our hearts, in our history, in our Germany! . . . For Rudolf Hess I light this torch!"

The response of the entire mass was unreserved and generous. Dolfuss passed his torch's flame on to another, who passed its flame on to others, each multiplying the fire in geometric ratios until--and very quickly it was--the entire platz was ablaze with quavering torchlight. In the rhetorical pause in Dolfuss' address, the heckling from beyond the east gate could once again be heard. For a moment longer he held his torch in his extended right hand. Then

Dolfuss stepped ceremoniously back from the microphones, shook hands with other party members on the platform, and descended the podium. Someone began singing Deutschland Über Alles. Then, like the torches, it was everywhere.

But Dolfuss, with the other party dignitaries in ranks behind him, did not return to his car. There was a slight sprinkle in the air, scarcely more than a heavy mist, but it was enough to make the torches hiss and sputter to the hymn. Dolfuss, now with several comrades on his right and left flank, walked directly into the mass, which parted now before him like a torn blanket of fire, and Milo noticed the police guards at the platform scramble in complete confusion.

"I'll be damned if he isn't going to walk into that," Milo said, pointing to the other side of the platz where now a crowd of perhaps three or four hundred dissidents pushed at the sagging police line.

Kranz, talking to himself angrily, gripped his cane in his right hand like a cudgel and started down the crowded steps of the Glyptothek. "Herr Professor," Milo said, grabbing him by the arm. He turned upon him a look of indignation--as though Milo were some stranger accosting him on the street. Milo let go and watched as Kranz and others, who too had heard the trumpet, cut paths through the audience to the center of the platz and the Dolfuss procession, spearheading its way toward the young anti-fascist demonstrators, spoiling for a confrontation.

With Dolfuss twenty yards from the east intersection, the

police line disintegrated and hysterical students rushed forward into the breach, swinging fists, kicking marchers, and just generally trampling anyone who looked to be with the NDP. It was at the point of actual contact between the two groups that many of the Munich police, who had been trying to shore up the barricade, abandoned their posts and threw in their lot with the Dolfuss crowd. Not that this made a lot of difference, Milo suddenly realized, there were no more than two dozen green uniforms, and this was taking on all the characteristics of a pitched street battle. Students in the interim had dug stones out of the street and were hurling them deep into the crowd. And then suddenly there appeared a biker, sitting astride another's shoulders, swinging a bicycle chain, moving into the line, mowing people down around him like tall grass. Unconsciously, Milo found himself looking about for a weapon. An elderly gentleman just in front had a metal umbrella. Milo motioned to him frantically, unable to immediately find the words in German. With complete understanding, he slapped its handle into Milo's hand and Milo was off.

Milo broke through the crowd as though he were on skates, and was a bit surprised himself at how quickly he reached the the contested intersection. But never once did he think about what he would do once he arrived, so appalled and vengeful had he become at the sight of old men staggering towards him with bloody faces, and old women lying here and there, holding injured limbs and weeping hysterically.

The old umbrella came apart in Milo's hands on its first application. He had used the handle to trip a demonstrator, who upon losing his forward footing, threw his rock down into the pavement. He was just the sort of fellow that Milo was looking for, a thug with filthy clothes and a tattoo on his forearm. But as Milo moved towards him, he rolled away from him, part of the umbrella still on his ankle, and scampered into the crowd.

For a moment, Milo stood in the midst of all the fighting, untouched by any of it. People were fighting and rolling around him, but no one came to challenge him. He moved up and down the melee at will, as though he stood between angels or were himself invisible. Two students had a policeman on his back, one with his hands about his neck, or else punching him in the face, the other trying to pull his night stick from his right hand. The first was vulnerable enough, and Milo kicked him in the face as though his twisted face were nothing more than a football and Milo were a punt kicker. The second, however, was quick to his feet, and in retreating backwards, had taken a strong hold of Milo's sleeve and was pulling him into hostile ranks. Finally, he tripped over someone lying behind him--a student curled up like a shrimp, his hands up high, trying to cover his head. Milo fell over both of them. Wrestling to the top, Milo had him pinned by the throat by one hand, and was about to punch him silly, when the intended victim sent a straight arm up and his fingers into Milo's right eye. It felt as though

someone had driven a nail into his head, and Milo couldn't see for the pain which flooded both eyes.

A moment later, someone grabbed him from behind and lifted him to his feet. It was a policeman, Milo was relieved to see, and he made no struggle. He led Milo a few feet back out of the fighting, asking repeatedly if he needed medical attention. He didn't know what to say, and was told to sit down and wait.

The whole incident was quickly ended. Within three or four minutes, the police from other positions on the platz had arrived and with the few hundred behind Dolfuss, they had dispersed the crowd of young dissidents, who were now either in police vans or retreating down side streets of Briennerstrasse.

After the melee, someone had given him some aspirin and he was feeling considerably better. His right eye was swelling shut, but he had vision again in his left and he began to look through the crowd for signs of Kranz or Birgit. All in all, there were probably fifty to seventy-five people hurt. Some had simply fallen in all the chaos and broken bones; others, more seriously, had been struck in the face with a brick or a bat and had been taken to the hospital. Milo went back to the steps of the Glyptothek and thought about what had occurred. The old fellow who had lent him his umbrella was still there. "I have lost the umbrella," Milo said, and was told it had been an honor to lend it to him. In the platz, there was another round of applause and cheers.

Dolfuss reappeared with torn clothing and was obviously in high spirits. He waved formally to the crowd and was taken to the Munich police headquarters where he was charged with inciting a riot and released.

For another twenty or thirty minutes Milo waited around, hoping to be reunited with Professor Kranz or to catch a glimpse of Birgit. Neither had they been among the injured. Perhaps Kranz had been arrested as well, he concluded, and watched the square clear of demonstrators. As one might expect, the mood among those lingering on in the square was quite jovial. But as their torches went out, they began to leave, and once again the Königsplatz took on the look of some dark backdrop for a Senecan tragedy.

CHAPTER XVII

The German language has two principal words for fraud. The first is Betrug, the other is Schwindel, which has the additional meaning of "dizziness."

When he first saw the afternoon papers declaring the Hitler diaries a Schwindel, he felt both betrayed and dizzy. But, in a sense, Milo had been expecting it. Milo's life had never gone so well without a telling snag, and his recently discovered activism was only paper thick. Below the surface, the fatalist woke. He bought the paper, sat down on the curb, and read the story.

(BONN) A spokesman for the West German National Archives reported today that the so-called Hitler diaries are fraudulent.

The diaries, which were submitted to the National Archives October 7 for verification by Chesapeake House Publishing Co. of New York, failed to pass several scientific tests designed to determine the authenticity of the documents, spokesmen for the national archives said.

Crucial in their determination was the analysis of the glue and binding used in the manufacture of the

Hitler diaries. Particularly telling was the fact that polymer fibres, which were not developed until the 1950's, were used in the binding of the said documents.

At the writing of this article, spokesmen at Chesapeake House were unavailable for comment

For twenty minutes Milo wandered about not knowing where to begin before he finally caught a trolley on Maximilianstrasse back to his flat. The evidence cited in the paper seemed incontrovertible. Scientists had determined this via precise scientific tests. What could be clearer? Still, it was hard for Milo to believe. He had felt the documents in his own hands, smelt the dust on his fingers, followed the emotional ups and downs of the manuscript in the very slant and stress of the penmanship. And all the scholars had agreed that it was a beautifully consistent manuscript. He did not know what to think.

"Hello?"

"Angela, it's me"

"Milo? Just a minute," she interrupted dispassionately and put the phone receiver down. Milo could hear his father yelling in the distant background.

"Milo!"

"I can hear you," Milo said and held the ear-piece at some distance.

"I just have one question for you. Where in the hell did

you get those diaries!"

"I told you as much as I could."

"You listen here, Sonny Boy, I have warehouses all over this damned country full of Hitler diaries that I can't even give away right now, and you know whose fault that is? Now you tell me where in the devil you got those fuckin' nightmares!"

"Dad, calm down, you're hysterical."

"You better believe it! You've ruined me! And it's not just the 500,000 hardback editions--I've got every goddamn Jew in this country gunning for me with a vengeance because they think I'm anti-Semitic!"

"Dad, there's not a thing I can tell you. Calm down, I'll find out what I can. Now let me talk to Angela."

There was a short pause. "She doesn't want to talk to you," he said. "Was there something else?" he asked. Milo hung up.

His second knee-jerk reponse was to try again to talk to Birgit. He went to her old apartment on Goethestrasse, but Birgit was still "nicht zu Hause." From there he ran up to the university where he caught Klaus Kranz just coming out of his office, grinning in satisfaction, a postcard from Carlyle Harris in his hand.

"Professor," he asked in a breathless voice, "have you seen the papers?"

"Ah, Herr Marsden, no," he replied, and his face hardened. "But I heard on the radio. And how is your eye?"

Milo dismissed it with a motion. His cheek and eyelids were still swollen to a lesser degree and a bizarre shade of black and lavender. But otherwise, there was no need for concern. "Here, come in," he said reopening his studio door. "By the way, I received a postcard from our friend, Carlyle; he's at a religious retreat in Pennsylvania." He showed Milo a postcard with a photo of a lamb and a lion lying together in a field of lilies. "Tell me, what have you heard about a group called the Jehovah Witnesses?" he wanted to know.

"Professor, do you understand, the diaries--they're saying they're a hoax!"

Kranz gave him another pained expression and put a hand on his shoulder. "Yes, of course; hard to believe, isn't it? Excuse me," he said placing the postcard in his desk. "Yes, that is very bad indeed. What will you do now?" he asked leaning back in his chair and building little chapels with his clasped hands.

"I think that, first, I should get hold of the girl who gave me the diaries."

"No, no, no, no," he said dismissingly. "What do you expect to learn from her? Someone has deceived us. Does it really matter who? Perhaps it is best simply to let this thing settle. The police and the press will dig this out if . . ."

"You may be right, but I just can't let it go. Besides, I don't know what I believe. I can't believe that she knew that the diaries were phony, and maybe she can help me trace

them. She said she got them from her father." Milo tried to calm himself, but he sensed he was grasping at straws.

"But if her father is dead? It seems clear enough to me, my friend," Kranz said. "The document was forged years ago--no doubt by people with considerable skills in this area, but then, for some reason the project was abandoned. Somehow, this old fellow came upon them, and . . ."

"Perhaps. But she must know something more."

"Well, perhaps, but if I were you, I think I would forget about her for now and get hold of Jacob Schulzinger."

"You really think I should?"

"Seems like a logical thing to do. He may have some ideas about this. You know, because of his introductory remarks, he's pretty deep in this thing as well, and has a great deal more to lose."

"I'll call him."

"I've heard that he's secluded himself, is talking to no one. Better yet, go to Vienna," he said, pulling the keys to his BMW from his side coat-pocket. "Go on, take them--but one thing," he said as Milo turned to leave. Kranz drew his hand across his mouth resolutely. "Honestly, if I thought it would help, I would personally come out in your defense, but it won't--you know that?" Milo nodded. "So please, don't mention my participation in any of this."

"I can't see any reason you should be dragged into this," Milo assured him, but Kranz went on to make sure.

"All an artist has, after all, is his reputation, and if

he loses that . . ."

The phone rang on Kranz's cluttered studio desk, but Kranz made no move to answer it. Milo extended his hand, shook it firmly, and left in silence, feeling all the distance of disinterest between them. Certainly Kranz had been through some really difficult times, Milo thought. Losing a war, a lover, imprisonment in a Russian gulag: what was a little flap over some Nazi diaries to him? What could they be?

It is about six hours' fast-driving time to Vienna from Munich. During this time Milo had time to think about this sudden turn of events. Why had Angela refused to talk with him? Had that been his father's doing? He wanted to believe this, but then he remembered how she had immediately given the phone to his father. No, all that was the least mysterious of the recent events.

More puzzling was how all of those scholars could have been so totally taken in. And something else struck him momentarily as odd, as he cruised noisily along the Autobahn. How did Professor Kranz know that he had gotten the diaries from Birgit, or that her father was dead? Then he remembered how he had been with them at the rally in Königsplatz; in fact, just after he had talked with Birgit. Obviously then, he had overheard enough of the conversation to know about her father, and he had been able to put two and two together and conclude that Birgit had been the "her" who had given him the

diaries. Still, he wished he had gotten in touch with Birgit before leaving Munich.

He arrived in Vienna about eight-thirty and drove directly to Schulzinger's office apartment on Mozartgasse. It wasn't really a residential street, and the few storefronts had by this hour already closed for the evening, having pulled sliding gates across their storefronts or brought down roll-top covers. Even so, there were a few old couples mulling about on the street inexplicably full of old dented cars. From the street he noticed that Schulzinger's building was dark save for the light, which he took to be in his office, three floors above the cracked and uneven sidewalk.

The portal gate was locked. He buzzed Schulzinger's office; whereupon Schulzinger called down to a concierge, a small Dickensian sort of fellow who walked with the use of a hardwood cane and rattled a ring of antique skeleton keys.

"I suppose you've come here to ask me what went wrong?" Schulzinger said as he gently shut and threw the bolt on the office door.

"You did not lock your door when last I was here," Milo said and noticed an uneven week-old beard on the old man.

"Yes, well, your book has done that for me. Now I am a Haman--a schemer against my own people."

"Who says that?"

"I have received letters. And yesterday someone threw a rock through my window." He ran both his hands over his bald

head. "But please, come in to my apartment and have a cup of tea."

Milo walked in through his dim office, which was once again cluttered with documents, open books, and a complete first edition of the Hitler diaries. In his kitchenette the kettle was trembling and just beginning to whistle.

"Did you try to call me when you found out about the diaries?" he asked.

"No. I just came--I suppose I should have called."

"You would not have gotten me on the phone--I have not been answering. It is not the reporters I am trying to avoid--they don't bother me, but people who think I am some sort of Nazi-lover. Me? Haven't I every right in the world to hate them?" He scanned Milo's face for a visual response. "But I don't hate anyone," he continued, reaching into a low cabinet for a sugar bowl. "I do not love them either. They don't understand. So maybe we were wrong about the diaries--I am not saying that--but even so, who should care enough to throw a rock through an old man's window? Here in Vienna where there are still streets named after Nazis." There was a rock on the counter behind him. A swastika was painted on it.

Milo was sorry that he had gotten him involved and told him so. Schulzinger smiled grimly. "Ach," he rasped and shook his head. "No, it's not your fault. As if we haven't had to live with enough hatred," he lamented. "Maybe I will leave Vienna. I have some money. My interest in such things

had been waning anyway, until these diaries came up, and I can't regret that; in fact, I'm grateful to you for bringing them to me."

Milo was touched profoundly by his generosity. That such a man could survive in this world was either an oversight or a commendation--he wasn't sure which. Schulzinger was a ruined man, and here he was, thanking him. Milo felt no responsibility to anyone for anything he had said or done--except this man, now twice victimized. "What could you possibly have to thank me for?" Milo asked, and sank in an old rocking chair opposite him.

"It's what these diaries have shown me about my life's work. My life's work was all in hate--work for people who like myself lived on the hate I helped generate. What a legacy to have left behind.

"But you do understand, Herr Marsden? Hitler, more than the others--more than even men like Streicher, whose every other sentence was an anti-Jewish slur--above all else, we thought, Hitler was the evil jinn, the one who had the imagination, the energy, the charisma to put the thing together--to make it work. He was the devil's apprentice, the hound of hell, the man-beast!"

He turned away from Milo with his tea cup and stared out the window and over the delapidating roofline of Vienna's Belle Epoque. "Now, because of the diaries, I see him as he really was--a pathetic figure, a man swallowed up in evil no more or less than the rest of us, and I realize that the

demon that left him has entered us." He sniffed the steam and dunked a tea bag into the cup.

"I saw a man scalded to death," he added remorsefully. "I can't remember what he had done, but the mess officer ordered some of us to throw him into a large vat of boiling water for soup. This SS man never touched any of us, but he made us--some of the victim's own friends--his executioners. We were afraid not to."

Schulzinger curled a palm into a tight fist. "Not easy to let it go, this festering hatred! I truly believe that it is a sickness, a disease that infects all people, but some of my people now, more than others.

"I had been trying to forget it all. I thought I had put my hatred behind me, and then you came in with Klaus Kranz on your lips and your Hitler Diary under your arm, and for an instant, I wanted to kill you. But then I saw you looking at my Sumerian statues, and as much as I hated the idea, I could see we shared something--an appreciation. And I remembered one of the proverbs of that little deity--a proverb that had disturbed me from the moment I first read it twenty-five years ago. All-seeing, all-knowing Varnu had warned man, 'reject evil, but hate nothing, for man becomes that which he hates.'

"When Rome persecuted the Christians, what did the Christians do but become Romans themselves and set about to persecute the pagans, then later their own brethren and not a few Jews besides--which I suppose was only tit for tat.

And look at the Nazis; in all their hatred of the Jewish people, they became with their racial laws and prejudices like nothing so much as Biblical Jews. Hebrews slew the Philistines for no other reason than those for which the Nazis killed the Jews: they were of a different race, they worshipped another god.

"This is what I should have written in the preface to your diaries. It is God's judgment on all of us--and perhaps the lesson we have to learn by personal tragedy.

"And this is where your diaries fit in. Having read the diaries, I have come to understand and know the mind of the demon, and in doing so, have seen he was no demon. I hated but the image--I was in that an idolater of the evil one. But now I am free of that. As I approach my own death, I can honestly say I hate neither Hitler, Streicher, Eichmann, nor even that poor misguided fool who threw this rock through my window."

"But what if you haven't read the diaries of Hitler?"

Milo corrected.

"I haven't? No matter if I haven't, but I assure you, Mr Marsden, I have."

"But the National Archives?" Milo said, energized with a glimmer of hope that he had not been a fool all along and that somehow he might rectify the situation.

"They are wrong," he said calmly.

"How can they be wrong about the polymer fibers in the binding?"

"Believe me, no man could have written those diaries except Adolf Hitler. Quite obviously, someone is lying. No one could have produced such an internally perfect forgery. In my opinion," Schulzinger went on, wrapping his teabag in paper for another use, "the German National Archives received the diaries and, searching for a way to disqualify them, hit upon the idea of tampering with the binding. They simply inserted polymer fibres into the glue and binding."

"But why should the national archives do this?"

There was a rattling at the door, which surprised Milo, but seemed perfectly routine to Schulzinger. "Politics," he answered, sliding his wheelchair back from the small table and heading for the office. "Just a moment, that will be my friend--you met him a minute ago--he was about to have tea with me when you came."

"Mind if I use your bathroom, " Milo asked, getting up after him.

"Behind you," he said, and wheeled into the other room. Milo heard him unlatch the bolt, all the while speaking familiarly to the person behind the door, as he entered his small W.C. and closed the door behind him. Milo had been six hours in a car, and needed to wash his face as well. His right eye was looking better every time he looked at it, though the white of the eye was still bright red.

On returning, he was surprised to find the kitchenette still empty. "Herr Schulzinger?" Turning the corner, he saw him slumped in his wheelchair before an open office door.

Milo thought he had had a stroke and that the concierge had gone for help. But when he turned him about, he saw small scarlet wound just below his left breast. There was no continuous bleeding now because his heart had been stopped by the almost surgical knifing. It was hard to believe, but there it was. He had been murdered, Milo thought, while he had been looking for a clean hand towel. At the bottom of the stairs, he saw the open elevator. On the floor was the concierge, lying on his back in a puddle of blood. His throat had been slashed from side to side so completely as to make him appear almost decapitated.

"Now you say you did not see who stabbed Herr Schulzinger because you were in the next room when Herr Schulzinger was murdered?" a Viennese police inspector asked him an hour later. Milo answered affirmatively. "But that was only five or six paces away? Certainly, you must have. . ."

"Not really, there were the sounds in the bathroom . . . the flushing toilet, the old plumbing, water running in the sink."

"Yes, of course. That was well considered of you under the circumstances," he said skeptically. "Did Herr Schulzinger mention to you any possible names of people who he thought might try to kill him?"

"No, but he said he had received letters."

"We have the letters that were in his office," he said, lifting a small stack of correspondence sitting on the edge

of his deak. "Of course, they are all anonymous."

"He said that many Jews could not understand why he continued to maintain the authenticity of the diaries when . . ."

"Yes, that would explain the swastika in spray paint on the door."

"A swastika?"

"You didn't see it as you left?" he asked and jotted into his note book. "And what exactly was your relationship to Herr Schulzinger?"

"We worked together on the Hitler diaries."

"You wrote the Hitler books?" he asked coolly.

"Translated them."

"So you say," he concluded the interview. Milo was questioned again with exactly the same questions at ten and then twelve o'clock that night. When they were satisfied, he was allowed to go, but not to leave Vienna.

CHAPTER XVIII

It was not with much amusement that Milo encountered Erika the following evening, pacing the street in front of Birgit's apartment. His lack of sleep the night before compounded with jetlag to give him a headache like a seizure. Erika hailed him as he left the grilled portal of Birgit's building and caught up with him. "Have you seen Birgit?" she said, taking him by the forearm.

"Not yet," he said slowly, squinting throbbing eyes that felt twice their natural size.

"Were you expected?"

In spite of the warning from the Vienna constabulary, he had driven directly home and would have gone to bed had his landlady not passed on a message from Birgit saying he should come over that evening. "She wanted to talk to me," he mumbled, and he, of course, had been desperate to talk with her. Reaching into his coat pocket, he withdrew a folded card. "But tacked up at her apartment was this note--to come back later." He glanced down at the card again to verify his slipping certitude: 'Milo, Es tut mir leid--komm morgen-- Birgit'.

He closed his eyes, tender as boils. "Are you all right?" she asked. He shook his head and felt the sidewalk

move slightly under him. "Maybe you got a concussion the other night?" She lifted her hand to his bruised brow and stared clinically into his right eye. "At the rally--"

"Oh, you mean the Konigsplatz--that was nothing," he replied and brushed her hand away like an annoying fly.

"Nothing," she said sympathetically but turned the tone to pure sarcasm, "that's not nothing, my friend, that young man really decked you."

"How would you know?"

"From the balcony--we saw the whole thing. How surprised we were to see you brawling, actually standing up for something--even though it was only until someone knocked you down." She was teasing him again, smiling, but not mocking. "You really should have seen a doctor."

"Just a shiner. It's just that I haven't slept in two days and I have a headache going off like a Chinese New Year. Got any aspirin?"

She didn't have any uncontrolled substances, but she did have a sedative that she insisted he take with some coffee.

"Aren't we nice this evening?" Milo asked a little later of this unwanted companion who had taken his arm and held him back from stepping into the grill of a rattling trolley.

"Their direction on the street is often misleading-- particularly if one forgets that they aren't like cars that will drive around pedestrians, but are more like mini-trains that run over school buses. Don't try to predict the direction of a trolley," she said pedantically. "Just look

down for the tracks." But he wasn't in the mood for advice.

"I'm not the gorgon you think I am," she said and expected him to say "Oh, I never thought you were."

But he didn't say that. He didn't say anything. He thought he was going blind.

"I'm really worried," she confessed confidentially after they had both taken two more pills and a little coffee in a seedy Gasthof. "I haven't seen her in over two days."

"So what's two days? If it's the real thing, my mother used to say, it'll last through summer vacation. Did you two have a little tiff or something?" That was it, he realized. "So, she got away from you?" he said, peering at her through the cobwebs of an easing headache.

"You make it sound like she was my prisoner. I never stopped her in anything she wanted to do. That's not why I'm concerned . . . This is nothing to sneer about," she said finally.

He could no longer control the reflexes of his face, and all sorts of incompatible emotions were bubbling to the surface. "Can't help it. That's just my face."

"I know you resent me."

He couldn't resist a broad grin. Suddenly, he was beginning to feel pretty normal--in fact, he was feeling better than that every second. He was feeling absolutely cocky after the second cup of coffee. "Why Schatzchen--my little treasure--he said, "why ever should I resent you?"

"It's quite obvious, isn't it?--because you lost and I

won." Milo looked away sourly. "Because I was strong and you were weak--but mostly, I'd say, the reason you hate me has nothing to do with Birgit at all. It's because I frighten you," she concluded, leaning forward, her elbows propped upon the table.

"Like hell; I hate you because you used Birgit!"

"And I suppose you didn't?"

"She was with me because she wanted to be. I wasn't paying her rent," Milo said.

"Which is another way of saying you gave her nothing in return."

"You made a whore out of her!" Milo said raising his voice. A couple of surly customers looked over as if they were considering mayhem, but he didn't care. Let them come. With a sweeping gesture, he knocked over a chair at their table. He felt as if his mind were extraneous to his body, somehow hovering above, pulling strings on a weightless puppet.

"Don't be so melodramatic; Bayrischer men don't like to see a lady shouted at," she said, speaking confidentially.

"The truth is she was a whore before I met her. I would have made an Opernsänger of her."

Milo sat back and hissed through his teeth. The two guys at the bar slammed down their foamy beers and looked to be on their way over. He hissed at them as well like a venomous snake. Milo could see the eyes of one of them turn to complete bewilderment. Milo had moved beyond the appearance

of bad manners into madness. "There are a lot of things you don't know," she continued. "Let us take, for instance, how Birgit and I really met? It wasn't at a choir performance. It was in the sex shop district of Frankfurt. Ja. In the redlight district."

"I know, and you were taking auditions for the Salvation Army glee club--you were there saving souls for your feet."

"Think what you want, but that is the truth. So you thought she was an innocent little Jungfrau fresh from the cowparsley fields of Oberammergau?" She sat back in her chair and looked about at the other Gasthof patrons. "You Americans are so easily fooled. You have a such a picture postcard view of reality."

Erika's Aussprache was too steady, her facts too readily at the tip of her tongue to have been improvised. He concluded that she was probably telling the truth. But this didn't taint Birgit, in his opinion, as much as it said something about the world. "But she was never interested in money," he said.

"Of course not; why should she? I gave her all she needed and paid the expenses on her father's maintenance."

"You were a saint, an absolute saint," he chanted.

"You don't know the first thing about me, Herr Marsden, but I know very well about you. You fancy yourself some sort of gypsy scholar--a young Werther. You're just an irresponsible philanderer--and not a very good one at that. A man who behaves as you do would do well to jettison his

conscience. But maybe for once you should feel a little guilty. Maybe I used Birgit sexually, but that didn't hurt her--what hurt her was what you did." She bumped the table, rattling the spoons and saucers as she left.

Milo remained at the table for a few minutes longer, trying to analyze what Erika had said and feeling the gradual return of a hovering sledgehammer. He took a white cloth napkin and rubbed the road dust from his forehead. When the waiter came round again, he threw some money at him and started for the door. But as he walked past the bar, one of the two Germans who had been eavesdropping on the conversation turned about on his stool as if he would say something. But Milo didn't give him the chance. Glaring like a loon, he shouted, "Did you catch her name? No? let me tell you, that was the Witch of Dachau."

Outside, the beads of sweat turned cool in the night air. He imagined all Munich crouching behind curtains. Walking back to Birgit's flat on Goetheplatz, he felt both the joys and teeth of hell.

It was after eleven by the time he finally found the way back to Birgit's apartment. So many of the buildings looked alike to him now and he had tried several. He banged on the door and was about to leave for the second time that evening when he heard what sounded like coughing and retching coming from inside.

The door was locked, but flimsy enough now, he thought, to push in by simply leaning on it. On his first

application, the interior panel of the door splintered like a match box. He fumbled and found the bolt. He stumbled in now to find Erika lying on Birgit's bed, choking on her own vomit. He reached one arm around the front of her shoulders and underneath her chin, while with the other he whacked her repeatedly on the back. Her throat cleared eventually. Getting up from the bed, she hobbled on one shoe into the small adjoining bathroom. She ran some water in the sink and was leaning over the sink, cupping water into the palm of her hand as Milo walked to the doorway and looked in.

On the far side of her, lying in a tub of pink water was Birgit, her head and matted hair dangling over the edge of the porcelain tub. Milo stood there for a moment in complete astonishment--could he be dreaming? This and the death of Schulzinger came together, and he was ready to disbelieve them both. Erika looked up, guiltily, her wet hand over her mouth. Her furtive look confirmed it. His arms flew off in spasms. Without thinking, Milo leaned in and grabbed Erika by the collar of her dress and swung her around backwards and out into the bedroom. She hit the floor and slid off away from him to the nearby wall. Had his primary interest not been to see to Birgit's condition, he thought later, he might have killed her. He steadied himself and sat on the tub beside her. Her tan cheek was pale and cool to the touch. Gently with one thumb he raised one eyelid. Salt had formed in the tear-ducts and the whites of her eye were now a grayish blue. Soaking his sleeves to the elbows, he lifted

Birgit up out of the tepid water and carried her into the bedroom.

"Get off the damned bed!" he shouted at Erika and laid Birgit down on the soiled flowered bedspread. Again he checked her for vital life signs, but he knew even then that it was probably hopeless; her limp body was room temperature. The lacerated skin on her wrists and ankles was milk white and spongy. She had cut her arteries lengthwise with a razor blade. There was no pulse, heartbeat, reflex, nothing. He sat beside her on the bed for several minutes, cradling her, feeling the soft dampness of her body against his, smelling the fragrance of wild flowers in her wet hair, trying to understand why she would have done this. He had never really understood why she did anything, he realized. He covered her with a blanket and called out the window for the police.

There was no need to hurry, Milo told them down below with the stretcher. He was somewhat surprised to see Erika still there, sitting on the floor in a far corner of the bedroom, her shoulders against the wall, silent and motionless, dry-eyed and as pale as Birgit.

CHAPTER XIX

For the second time in two days he was questioned by the police about the death of someone he knew. At first the Munich police inspector took statements from Erika and Milo separately. Then he brought them together and cross-examined them on their previous statements.

"Herr Marsden," he said politely, "you did not mention to me that you had just come back from Vienna where you were questioned, I am informed by Interpol, with regard to the murder of Jacob Schulzinger and another man, a building caretaker."

"I didn't think it was relevant," Milo said, a little surprised at his awareness of the whole business in Vienna. "I thought it might just confuse the issue." Erika looked over at Milo, raised an eyebrow, and twisted a ruby ring on her finger as if she were passing on cryptic signals. "Do you think there's some connection?" Milo retorted, distracted as he was by her behavior.

The inspector smiled and licked the corners of his wiry mustache back. "It is a most unusual coincidence, yes?"

"It's not exactly a routine occurrence for me, either, if that is what you mean," Milo replied. The inspector didn't respond any differently to sarcasm. "I guess I should have

mentioned it," Milo concluded more simply.

"Your cooperation would be most helpful. Fräulein," he said, continuing to act more the majordomo than the Gestapo, "you had been living with the unfortunate young woman shortly before her death. Why did you not mention this?"

She looked puzzled and gave him a nervous twitch of her head as though rousing herself from a reverie. "Fräulein?" he had to ask again.

"You didn't ask," she said. She reached into her purse, withdrew an enamel compact and popped another eggshaped pill.

"Is that why you had a key to her apartment?"

"I never lived on Goethestrasse. But she often stayed with me at the Vierjahreszeiten. I had a key only because we were close friends, and she wanted me to have one."

"I see . . . and did you have an argument with your friend shortly before her death?"

Erika looked at him now with complete astonishment. "Certainly not. Our relations were quite cordial."

"Cordial indeed. Were you two not lovers then as Herr Marsden suggests?"

". . . Yes, of course, that too," she admitted readily. "Listen, Herr Inspector," she said, tucking a dark strand of hair behind her ear, "I am not feeling well--I wish to go."

"Why did you not notify us, yourself, when you discovered the Fräulein's body?" he said ignoring her request.

"I don't remember . . . I don't remember anything right now. I told you I want to go. You figure it out." She

rolled her head backwards over back of the chair and stared at the ceiling. She, obviously, did not intend to cooperate further.

"I see. If you will bear with me just a little longer, I will be through with my questions, Fräulein. Herr Marsden, can you think of anyone who might have wanted to kill the Fräulein?"

"But you said there was a suicide note," Milo said.

"No I didn't," he said matter-of-factly. "How did you know about the suicide note if you did not read it--as your last remark seemed to indicate--and I did not mention it?"

"No, sergeant, you mentioned it--believe me, you mentioned it," Erika droned up at the ceiling.

It had been but a momentary bluff, but it put Milo on to the fact that the inspector considered him a suspect, and now he began to think like a suspect.

"Perhaps you are right," he finally corrected himself. "Still I must consider all possibilities. So, there was no conceivable reason you can think of that someone might have wished to kill Birgit Friedle?"

Milo debated for a moment as to whether he should tell him about the diaries and his new-found suspicions about the National Archives, but the link seemed too tenuous, the idea would appear paranoid, he imagined, to a complete stranger. Besides, he rather doubted there could be any connection between Schulzinger's death and Birgit's suicide. Who knew, besides Erika, that Birgit had given him the diaries? No,

Milo rather readily accepted the suicide explanation. Birgit's cheerfulness and seeming naivete had been a screen, a ploy, and a damned attractive one to someone like himself who had never really understood a woman since his mother died. Birgit was old beyond her years, had been around the same depressing block too many times, saw nothing in her future beyond the same cheap tricks and perverse relationships. She had become depressed and "off-ed" herself.

"Come now, Herr Marsden. Answer me, please."

"But you told me to think about it," he replied irritably. "No, I can think of no reason why anyone would want to kill Birgit Friedle."

"There was a letter addressed to the deceased from you. In it, you told her that you wanted to pay her 10,000 dollars now and would pay her more at later date. Can you tell me why you would be paying such a large amount of money to the young lady?"

Of course, Milo thought, to this cop, I would have had a motive. "Tell me the truth, was Fräulein Friedle blackmailing you?" he asked.

He looked over to Erika who was now as stiff as a statue and no longer making ridiculous facial gestures. "The money came from the royalties on my book. She had helped me with it."

"You mean the Fuehrer Testament?"

"Yes," Milo replied.

"Helped you with it?" he repeated, screwing his index finger in his ear, looking at him as if what he had said had plugged it up. "And what would be the nature of her contribution?"

"She gave them to me originally. She gave me the Hitler diaries," Milo confessed, realizing that in doing so he was forging an obvious, though fallacious, link between Birgit's death and Schulzinger's murder.

"And where did she get them?"

"From her father."

"I see," he said making a note. "And of course, you will not mind if we check this out with him?"

"Sure. But he's dead," Milo added as an afterthought.

He paused to look at him with the sort of expression that seemed to say, 'Now isn't that convenient?'

"He died of natural causes," Milo amended.

"And from whom did he get these diaries?"

"He said--rather he told her," he explained, "he never said a word when I met him--senile by then--but he pulled them from a wrecked aircraft." The inspector smiled again at his alibi, and Milo realized that he was beginning to sound as guilty as hell.

"And for these diaries you paid her money?"

Like the criminal confronted by the smart detective, Milo asked the question that almost always incriminates by its sheer stupidity. "Really, Inspector, I can't see what you are getting at."

"But the diaries have been shown to be a hoax, a swindle, a fraud, haven't they? So didn't you pay all this money for nothing? Certainly, you were just a little upset with her when you heard that the diaries which she had given you were fraudulent?"

"I was upset, yes, but not with her."

"And why is that, bitte?"

"Because I believe she acted with me in this matter in good faith." Milo could see it was time to hit him with the conspiracy theory. "Herr Inspector, perhaps I should tell you, I do not believe the diaries are fraudulent."

"Indeed?"

"And neither did Jacob Schulzinger in Vienna," he added impatiently.

"But he is dead now also?" His tapping his pencil told Milo that he wasn't buying it. Milo expected to spend the foreseeable future in a jail cell, and he wondered for a moment if the city used the same jail cells that the Nazis had used for enemies of the regime. But the next thing he knew, the inspector was standing by the door and thanking them for their time. "Will we be able to reach you at your apartment here in Munich?" Milo nodded. "By the way, this isn't Vienna. If you leave town, you will be arrested."

"Come, you don't seriously think I murdered her, do you?"

"I have as yet no evidence to indicate that. Birgit Friedle died around 9:30. You and your friend were sitting in a Gasthof from nine to almost ten-thirty. That has been

verified. I cannot therefore believe that either one of you was physically involved in her death. You should see her to a taxi; she doesn't look well. Gute Nacht."

As Milo and Erika walked down the long stone and tiled hall from the inspector's office and with the inspector still watching, Erika latched on to his arm and whispered conspiratorially. "You were stupid to try to hide anything from him--you looked so guilty.

"You were real helpful, I noticed."

"I didn't know about Schulzinger being murdered."

"Yeah, some anti-Nazi nut with a knife," he said and momentarily wondered that his last statement didn't sound stranger than it did to him.

"But you said that he still thinks the diaries are authentic?" she asked finally.

"Yes, so?" Milo's shoulders ached from the continued weight of his head. He reached up and carried his head on his shoulders and thought he felt a momentary relief. Outside he glanced up and down the block, trying to get his bearings, searching for a less abrupt way of cutting off the conversation.

"Well, it seems perfectly obvious who was behind the Schulzinger murder," she ventured.

"Good, then the police will have no problem in solving it," he interrupted and started walking off. "Good night, Fräulein."

Milo heard her footsteps echo behind him for about half a

block through the stone neighborhood. Then they stopped. There was a soft thump on the sidewalk. He glanced back and saw her lying motionless, face up, her legs twisted under her, like a broken doll.

She looked up at him through half-closed eyelids and did not respond readily to his questions.

Finally, Milo said, "I'm going, but I'll be right back."

"Nein, nein, bitte . . . please," she responded dully. "I'll be all right--just don't go."

"You're not all right--I'm going to call for an cab." But she clung to his shirt with her left hand and wouldn't let go. Milo paused, crouching over her on the sidewalk, not knowing what to do. He rolled up his coat and put it under her head. Her coordination and balance seemed to return after a few more moments. Finally, she sat up and combed her hair back from her face with her hands. The tip of her nose had been scraped and the left side of her face was smudged with soot from the sidewalk.

"No, I'll be fine, now, would you call a cab--I don't know where my car is exactly."

The streets were deserted at this time of night, and he doubted if they were near a taxi station. There was the police station, but that seemed to involve another unnecessary complication. "Why is it?" he could hear the detective asking, "that the people around you are all dropping like flies?"

"No, I'll take you home. Can you get up? You are okay,

aren't you?"

For several seconds she just stared up at him, studying his face without the least betrayal of self-consciousness. With some help she stood up, stepped back in to one high heel, brushed her grey-blue suit where it was soiled, and walked forward, Milo's arm around her waist. He drove her back to her hotel in Kranz's car, and after leaving the car with a valet, assisted her up to her suite.

"If you will come in for a moment," she said, fumbling for her key. "I don't seem to be able . . ." she said dropping her purse to the ground, spilling the contents over the hall carpet. There in the center was her hotel key, beside it a small empty drug prescription.

"Thalomide? What is Thalomide?" he asked returning to her the purse and opening the door for her.

"It's something I take--it makes things better . . ."

"Is this what we took this evening?"

"Please come in. I have something of yours--something you will need," she said to herself as she staggered off in the direction of her bedroom. Milo turned on a light in the sitting room and noticed the same flower arrangements from his last visit several months ago. The reason, he saw now, was simple. The orchids were silk. The Birds of Paradise, wax. He remembered where the bar was and fixed himself a drink, and noticed that the photo of Birgit and Erika had been removed.

Erika returned about fifteen minutes later, having

changed from her Italian-cut business suit into a quilted house coat. In her hands she carried a large manila envelope addressed to him, inside it, a book of some sort. "You can see, I really had intended to send it to you," she said simply.

"What's this--Birgit's diary?" he said skeptically and slid the contents out into his palm. Then he recognized it immediately. It was one of the Hitler diaries.

"How did you get this?"

"I took it," she said, sinking down in a large leather chair opposite him.

"From the archives?"

"This one, they never saw," she said blandly.

He flipped it open, already familiar with its fountain pen script and the pale green lines. But this one began in January 1945. He knew, of course, that some of the diaries had been lost, but he had not thought that this was the reason he did not have any journal entries after December 23, 1944. Milo had assumed that the disheartened Hitler had not continued his diaries after that point. In his last journal entries of December, he had acknowledged that the Battle of the Bulge had been a disaster and that the war was all but lost. Since he had not continued the December entries, it was natural to conclude that he had not picked up his journal in January--or in other words--the last four months of the war. But this journal was dated from January 3rd on through to April 29, the evening before his suicide in

Berlin.

She made her confession in a monotone. "I knew about the diaries. Birgit couldn't keep anything--wouldn't keep anything from me, nor did I from her, except this. I took one. I took the last one." She was ever calm, always intelligent, even in revenge. She had immediately realized that this volume was the star jewel in the crown, and she had chosen this as a fitting souvenir. "If you are waiting for an apology," she said, her eyelids heavy, her words slightly slurred, "you may be waiting a very long time."

"Why give it to me now?"

She leaned her head back again as she had in the police station. Two things drove her crazy, she said, the trivialities of life and the stupidity of others. "Can't you understand anything? I thought this could help you--you could use this . . . you could prove something with it--God knows you need help!" She leaned her head into the corner of the wingback chair and closed her eyes.

He looked at the volume closely under a table lamp. It was just as the others had been, same markings, though the entries in this were shorter, incomplete in some cases, sloppily scribed, but clearly in the same hand that he had translated all summer. If Schulzinger had been right, if the German National Archives had re-bound the journals so as to make them appear fraudulent, it could be easily enough revealed. He had merely to take this last journal to another science lab and have them do the analysis. But he should

take them to the States where there would be no tampering--no coverup. He read the fifty or so short entries which were sporadically entered. The last entry was dated April 29, 1945:

My head is clear now. It is all so obvious. There are to be no negotiations--no conditions. I have held on . . . delayed as long as possible--Churchill or Roosevelt could have stopped the blood bath, but they cared nothing for how many more will die. Revenge! The total destruction of Germany! That is all they have ever cared about.

Eva now at my side. "At last!" she laughs victoriously and without bitterness. We are to be married after all. Says she'll never let me leave again, Eva at my side, tells me to finish. I only wish . . . I hope that . . .

"Ich hoffe dass." His last words seemed incredibly pathetic to Milo now, coming at the end of his diary as they did--an incomplete sentence from someone who had planned to accomplish so much. And the repetition of the phrase "Eva at my side," rather moved him as well. Suddenly, he felt a wave of pity rush through him, the skin of his arms turned to gooseflesh. He thought he had been touched by an unseen hand. Eva's presence throughout the end was rather like that of a Schutzgeist--a protecting spirit--Frau Schram had said.

Milo closed the book. Whatever drug Erika had given him earlier had cleared up his headache, and he was feeling warm, comfortably corporeal, though incredibly heavy.

Erika was breathing deeply, asleep in the chair, sitting up like an ivory Narcissus, her form reflected in the glass table top between them. It was too late to think any more, he thought. It was almost four-thirty in the morning.

He lifted Erika up and carried her to her bed, thinking how utterly different this had felt from the last time he had held Birgit body's in his arms. He sat beside her for a few moments, too tired to get up, looking into her face, her eyes closed peacefully, and he realized that he felt a growing passion for her completely free of resentment. Perhaps it was the exhaustion or maybe it was due to emotional transference that psychologists say often takes place upon the death of a loved one, but the longer he sat there, the more he felt an irresistible tenderness for Birgit, and Erika and especially Eva Braun. What sort of man had Hitler been to deserve such loyalty? Judging from his earlier entries, Milo did not think that Hitler would have died for her. And yet he must have been moved by her last act of love. Certainly then, he realized what he had had all along, and what he had lost in pursuing the conquest of the world. Someday, he thought, someone will write a drama--or better yet an opera--about Hitler and Eva, something steeped in the tradition of Marlowe's Tamburlane and orchestrated by a Wagnerite.

The anticipated trip back to his apartment seemed interminably hard. What, was he just kidding himself, he thought. Or did he just want to make love to her? He had found a sudden burst of energy when he had thought of putting her on her bed. He unbuttoned the second button on her house coat and placed his hand on her warm throat. There was something more about Erika that drew him. Right or wrong, she was a strong woman. He admired that. Then he remembered that this was approximately where Birgit had sat that one night months ago. He moved his hand to the huge down and satin quilt. He decided to lie down for just a few minutes on the cool bedding. After a moment, he would make the trip back to Residenzstrasse.

CHAPTER XX

He felt the bed lighten, and a shadow moved across the wall. A door shut and unintelligible bits of conversation vibrated through the wall. There was a question tone and an answer tone and another question tone. The cool morning light came in through the blinds like a growing sense of consciousness. Milo rolled away from the light and fought for a little longer the fusing of thought and sensation.

Sometime later there was the gentle pull of another weight on the bed, and he felt her warm skin sidle up behind his; her face brushed the back of his neck, her breath tickled his ear.

"That was the police; they were looking for you," she whispered.

"What?"

"The police are looking for you."

Milo pushed up off one elbow, and turned round. Erika, lay back and pulled the sheet up around her small breasts, tucking the white linen virginally under each arm. Milo's head was lopsided and heavy; he had not remembered taking off his clothes.

"You took advantage of me," she said, accusingly, but with eyes that seemed intent on another outrage.

"Like hell," Milo said, staring back into clear eyes as instinctual as a cat's. "What did you tell them?"

"What could I tell them? I told them I hadn't seen you since last night."

"Have you ever been tempted to tell the truth?" he asked, wondering what the police could possibly want to talk to him about, just basically annoyed with her duplicity in virtually everything. Now the police would be sure he skipped country, an idea that only bothered him because he hadn't.

"Birgit did not commit suicide," she said, sitting up against the padded, fabric headboard. "At least that's what they said."

"What?" he said again but had heard her perfectly well. He didn't know what to say. And she had made the revelation so simply, without the least ripple of emotion.

"Don't look at me like that--I didn't do it," she said defensively.

"What makes them think it was murder?"

"They said something about finding threads in her mouth--they think she was gagged, and her wrists had been taped . . . It's a horrible thought," she continued, without much expression of horror. "You can see now why I was so concerned. I tried to tell you. She told me last week that she thought someone had been following her. But I didn't think anything of that--this is Munich, and besides, she was always saying things like that. She thought every one who saw her either wanted to kill her or make love to her--"

sometimes both."

Milo sat up and kicked his legs over the side of the bed. In front of him on the wall a small watercolor of the Worms Cathedral moved into focus as he tried to decide what of all the things that needed to be done, needed to be done first.

"What are you doing now? Why don't you come over here," she coaxed, dragging a single fingernail down the entire length of his spine.

"I don't understand you. Birgit has been murdered," he said.

"What would you like me to do? Would my screaming from the rooftop, somehow, make her less dead? I can't see what you're getting so upset at me about? You knew already she was dead. Hell, that happened yesterday! If anything, I would think you would be relieved to know that it wasn't suicide--that it wasn't your fault."

Her logic was impeccable and callous. "Excuse me, but it is difficult for me to go from shock into foreplay," he said abruptly, getting up, looking about the room. "What have you done with my clothes? Where are they?"

She threw back her sheet and jumped up, careless of her lean nakedness and with a certain fury building in her movements as she found his clothes hanging in the antique wardrobe and threw them on the floor. In another moment she was gone from the room, her pink feet thundering on the floorboards, her white silk robe billowing over one shoulder behind her like a cape.

What in the hell had happened last night? Then he remembered the argument at the bar and the Hitler diaries, the death of Schulzinger. Kranz's car keys were in his pant-pocket. Then he remembered Erika's confession and her subsequent gift. He had taken off his shoes and laid down beside her; the rest now flashed back at him with all the reality of an erotic film. He dressed and came out of the bedroom making apologies.

"No, you were quite right," she said coolly, hanging up the phone. "Here is the address of my pilot. Seventy-six Bavariaring." She placed the written address into the last Hitler diary, and tossed it to him.

"What do I need this for?"

"He will fly you to Switzerland." Milo still didn't understand. "Wake up! You must get out of Germany. Isn't that clear?"

"But what about the police?"

"You told them everything last night, didn't you? Don't be ridiculous; they came here to arrest you. You said yourself that you thought the National Archives had lied about the diaries. Can't you see they are out to get you?"

"You're saying that the same people behind the National Archives killed Birgit and now, working in concert with the police, are out to get me?"

"Why not? It makes perfect sense. They kill your friend in Vienna. Then Birgit. They think that sooner or later the police are going to conclude that you did it out of anger for

being misled about the diaries. If I hadn't run into you last night and been able to vouchsafe for your whereabouts, you'd probably be in jail right now. That is just a guess, but are you willing to bet your life I'm wrong?" She rubbed her two palms together. "And if the police are in on this, you may not live long enough to prove you aren't guilty."

He knew he was confused, but she seemed able to think straight enough. He opened the diary and glanced down at the address. "Where is Bavariaring?"

"You know the Statue of Bavaria? The woman with the lion?" Milo remembered. On the edge of the old city was a large open field facing an old Greek colonnade and a thirty-foot copper statue of a matronly goddess, her lion sitting at her side like a house cat.

"Where they hold the Oktoberfest?"

"Yes. Bavariaring is the street that runs around it. His name is Jan Eckmann; he will fly you out."

"Just like that?" She looked at him like an idiot. "Even small planes must be subject to some sort of pass control when they come in over the border."

"But you won't be landing at an airport," she said without much patience.

"Oh, so I'm jumping with a parachute?"

"You'll be landing on a small lake. We have a seaplane arranged." That sounded as if it might work. "From there you can catch a bus to Zurich and so forth to America. Do you have your passport?" she asked methodically.

He checked his coat pocket, and pulled it out. "Good," she said and started to hand him the keys to her Mercedes. "Too bad you can't take my car. Eckmann knows it."

"Why not?" he asked and remembered that he had driven her home.

"You had better take a cab--but not in front of the hotel." When she was in her element, he thought, she had a natural ability at foresight and split-second command.

"Erika," Milo said, still wanting to apologize about his earlier tone. He walked up to her--she did not step away--and put his hand on her neck.

"This is hardly the time," she parroted back.

"Yes, well, but about last night--this morning . . ."

"Don't be confused about last night," she said, turning away in her old imperious manner. "You want to make more out of it than it was because you feel guilty or something--well don't, you were merely acting out the drug." He remembered the three Thalomid tablets she had given him. "I wanted you sexually--I can't imagine why--that was all." She opened the door and checked the hall. "It's clear, you should go now--go on."

"Hello, this is the overseas operator; will you accept the charges on a call, originating in Zurich, from Milo?" There was a short pause and the operator began again.

"Operator . . . I'm just a guest . . . Mr. Marsden isn't here right now.

"For God's sake, accept the charges, Angela!" Milo interrupted.

"Just a minute, sir , . . will you accept the charges?"

"Okay, operator," Angela said reluctantly. "Your father isn't here."

"Listen to me, Angela, I have some very important news. Are you listening?"

"Yeah."

"Schulzinger has been murdered."

"We know that," she retorted as if he had told her the day of the week.

"So has the girl who gave me the diaries."

"So?"

"So, I'm going to tell you the reason why all of these people connected with the diaries are getting wasted. Are you listening?"

"Milo, we have our own problems."

"Because the diaries are authentic. They really were written by Hitler."

She thought for a minute. "Milo, how can they be authentic? I've talked to your father, and he says it is absolutely impossible for the diaries to be real."

"Believe me, they're authentic, Angela. I think I have the evidence to prove that, but I can't do that here."

"Oh yeah, why's that?"

"Because I'll get killed here--that's why. I'm flying in tomorrow morning--JFK--eleven o'clock. Tell Dad I need to

have him arrange a press conference for us as soon as possible . . . the more publicity, the better, okay?"

"Gee, I don't know, Milo. Alf said he wouldn't touch this thing again after everything that's happened. He said this whole thing has been like carrying a flag pole in an electrical storm."

"I appreciate the simile, but will you listen? Angela, I have proof--or pretty near proof--I'm almost certain of it."

"Just almost? Milo, obviously you don't understand what's been going on here. Chesapeake House has been boycotted, there's been a strike among the employees--they say they don't know if they could continue to work for a Nazi publisher--at least not at their current salaries, and your father has had to promise the Jewish Action League that he would publish one holocaust and five travel books on Israel just to get them to send the storm troopers home. Now does it sound to you like he's going to want to get mixed up in this thing again?"

"Okay, you just tell him to set up a press conference for me at the airport--he doesn't have to be there, I'll take care of the rest. Will you just tell him?"

"I'll just tell him."

On the flight back to the States, Milo read several international papers. All featured articles dealing to some degree with the Hitler diaries and the effect they were likely to have on the upcoming national elections in Germany.

Dolfuss' National German Party, the NDP, had been having a field day with the discovery of the diaries, and had actually been coming on rather strongly in the polls for a minor national party. All of which wasn't really news to him, as he had gone to their Free Hess Rally during the previous week. Traditionally, they had never polled more than 15% of the vote in any of the West German states, even in Bavaria.

But in the weeks just prior to the announcement by the National Archives, the NDP had been polling well above that figure--30%, maybe 35%, of all the registered voters in Bavaria. In a country where political power is already divided between five major political parties, that wasn't a bad showing. In the last election before Hitler was appointed Chancellor, the Nazi Party had not received 35% of the total German vote. In the past three days, however, the NDP's gaining margin of support had evaporated, and many now predicted that they would lose half of the seats that they currently held in the Bavarian state assembly.

Included in one paper were the remarks of Eugen von Dolfuss, who had harped constantly in recent weeks upon the revelations to be found in the Hitler diaries. "We know our cause is just, we have not lost our faith whatever the determination on these diaries in particular."

Dolfuss has a pleasant surprise in store for him when I land in New York, he thought. Milo put the papers down and tried to think of what he would say at the press conference. It gave him some satisfaction knowing that whoever had tried

to suppress the diaries was about to have it blow up in his face. But mostly, he felt anxiety about the conflict ahead.

Taking off his coat, he noticed a folded card in the side pocket. It was Birgit's note which he had taken from her door the night she had been murdered. He opened it again, studying the features of her writing for any possible clues. Was there any indication that she had written this under duress? Was there any sign that she knew that she was about to die? It seemed an ordinary note, a confident and quick hand. He started to think about what she must have endured before she died. Had they questioned her? Had they tried to get something out of her before they had decided to kill her? He could see her panicking as they filled up the tub, unable to move because of the tape about her hands, unable to scream for help because of the gag in her mouth, watching with large eyes as they placed her in the water and opened her veins. He became angry and sick thinking of it. He put it back in his pocket. He needed to calm himself, to put everything out of his mental reach for a few minutes.

Milo wedged a small airline pillow into the cabin window beside him, leaned over, closed his eyes and thought back on his carefree days in Garmisch, and of the time, later, when he had taken the bus with Birgit up to Konigsee for a picnic, a climb above the lake, and to see the Rhine maiden. He had told her about the mermaid, and she had gone on and on in the bus, telling the plot to the Ring of the Nibelung, dredging up everything she knew about the Rhine maidens, how,

according to legend, they sat upon the rocks combing their hair and protecting the Rhinegold and the secret of the ring.

Later they had taken a rowboat out into the center of the lake to see it, but the day was cloudy and the lake was a dull, flat, almost murky blue. On the plane, he smiled, remembering how disappointed and so serious she had been when she looked down into the water and was unable to see it. Milo was reluctant to give up, and so they had rowed a bit, chasing geese with bits of bread and cheese in Birgit's outstretched hands. Finally, the sun broke through the patchy cloud cover, and while they looked on, rays of light searched the depth, and lit upon the mermaid who glowed and shimmered with a green, otherworldly light. "Dort ist sie! Dort ist sie!" she said. "Ah, ein Rheinmädchen zu sein!"

CHAPTER XXI

On his arrival at Kennedy, Milo was escorted by an airport official through customs and directly into the VIP lounge where a press conference had been arranged. The room smelled of courtesy coffee and stale doughnuts. Folding chairs had been brought in for the thirty or forty press representatives, and he was grateful to see a large collapsible table supporting a small rostrum and PA hookup.

As he came in, his clothes somewhat shabbier from three or four days of continuous wearing, his face haggard and unshaven, the press seemed rather unimpressed and only begrudgingly moved away from the coffee dispensers and found seats. In the back, he could now see airport security and state troopers; the latter, by regulation over six-three in height, all looked rather sinister slouching against a rear wall in their jackboots, riding pants, and tinted aviator glasses.

"If you will all sit down, I will make a statement," he said several times before the PA kicked in and any kind of order could be established. "I have just returned from Germany where I received information that may completely reverse public opinion on the recent evaluation of the National Archive in Bonn." This perked them up a bit. This

was an interesting twist. They had been expecting the usual denial or mea culpa that generally follows in the aftermath of a hoax. The photographers reached for their cameras and began to rapidly focus their lenses on the diary he had propped up on the podium.

"Gentlemen, I give you the last and never before seen Hitler Diary." Everyone was a bit stunned; then pandemonium broke loose as reporters realized there was a story here and jumped up and tried to out shout the others posing questions.

"I am fully aware that the West German National Archives have declared these diaries to be fraudulent. I am here to tell you that that's not the case, and I believe that an honest examination of this last diary--which is clearly a twin to the other diaries--will show that this diary is not only authentic, but that the West German Archives were wrong in their assessment."

"Who do you intend to get to verify this diary?" a reporter yelled.

"The Smithsonian."

"Are you saying then that the West Germans were mistaken or lying in their recent findings?"

"I don't think there is any room for mistake," he answered, thinking, yes, I'll look ridiculous if I'm wrong, if this last volume is bogus as well.

"But why should the West German Archives lie?" the same reporter asked.

"Why indeed, unless there is a conspiracy to discredit

and suppress these diaries--a conspiracy which began with deception on the part of the German Archives and has included the murders of three people at least."

Several reporters made a quick exit; several other bystanders filtered into the lounge attracted by the commotion. "Let me get this straight," a reporter said, holding forth a mike from a tape recorder. "You've accused the Germans of being a party to fraud and murder then, Mr. Marsden?"

He nodded affirmatively. "Then is it safe to say you intend to fight extradition back to West Germany?" asked a grinning reporter standing next to one of the state troopers.

"Extradition?"

"You didn't know that the West German Government has requested your return in connection to a murder of a girl in Munich?"

So Erika was right, he thought. The police in Munich had intended to arrest him. Walking up to the podium now was a plainclothes policeman, his badge dangling in one hand, a warrant for his arrest in the other. Before the TV cameras and the photographers, he was placed under arrest. The press conference was over.

For the following three days Milo was treated like a Nazi war criminal. Having a Jewish population second only to the state of Israel, New York State was somewhat overzealous in the matter of his arraignment and prosecution in their demand

that he not be eligible for bail.

"The primary issue to be discovered today," said his attorney, a woman whom his father had proudly labeled 'a real bargain,' "is criminal jurisdiction and priority of criminal charges pending against you."

"What she means," his father interrupted, leaning over the docket.

"I know what she means. The judge needs to decide whether to try me here for fraud or to turn me over to the West Germans to face murder charges--is that it?"

His lawyer closed her compact and turned her most pleasant judicial manner on him. "That would be essentially correct. A lot, of course, depends on the DA. If he wants to try this one in New York, he'll press for an injunction against the extradition until the matter here can be tried." The bailiff stepped into the courtroom from the judge's chambers, and Milo noticed his counsel's breasts heave as she took a deep breath and the pink makeup ring on her collar. "Cheer up," she said, getting to her feet, "and smile . . . you aren't guilty--till they say you're guilty."

Why was it, Milo thought, that his fate seemed constantly in the hands of a woman? The Greeks had sensed this, which is why they paid such inordinate attention to Athena. Athena Parthenos--the Virgin, Athena Sophia--the wise one, and Nike Athena--goddess of martial victory. Any moment now the judge would enter and his plea of not guilty would be entered officially--assuming that the DA made the least motion to try

the case. Inasmuch as Milo had jumped jurisdiction twice--once in Vienna and then in Munich--he could not hope to make bail. His attorney had explained all this a few minutes before in the holding cell in the downtown Hall of Justice. "If they send me back to Germany, I'm a dead man," he said.

"Oh, I wouldn't think so," she replied. "There's no capital punishment in the Federal Republic." He realized at that point that she didn't appreciate the position he was in. She accepted the fact that he was guilty at least of fraud. But did she believe him capable of murder as well? "I've represented all sorts of people," she had said when they were first introduced, and by "all sorts" Milo got the feeling that he was to infer rapists, murderers, bank robbers, and men delinquent in their alimony payments.

"I didn't kill that girl or Schulzinger--the last diary can prove that."

"Ahem," she interrupted. "But the issue here isn't murder or the authenticity of this diary but simply the diaries which were sent to Bonn, the ones which were published. Now we can have some of our own experts look at those" She paused a moment to look up and smile at the District Attorney who had just entered to their right. Milo had thought she was flirting, but in fact she was only smiling at seeing her opposition and realizing that she was about to make Swiss cheese of his opening motion.

"Having our experts look at the diaries in Germany probably won't do any good," Milo said. "Not since they've

been tampered with. No, the issue is this last diary, and we've got to get this to some experts."

"I will tell you just once more, the diary you brought back is not the issue, Mr. Marsden."

This was a big case, he thought. There were media everywhere. Why in the hell couldn't I have gotten a better lawyer than this? He thought in such cases, great criminal lawyers were supposed to step forward. But no one had stepped forward to defend the purveyor of phony Nazi documents. Alf liked her though. "You ever win an argument against a women in or out of court?" he asked Milo. And Milo was not completely without friends, he learned. The Knights of Deutschland, headquartered in Orange County, wired a pledge of support and \$108 dollars towards his defense.

They all stood as the judge posted himself next to an American flag, and across the aisle, the prosecutor passed a note to Milo's table. "That chicken shit," she whispered as she read it. "He's changed his mind. He doesn't want to try the case."

"What?" Milo asked in terror.

The bailiff read the charges pending while the judge took a minute to review the paperwork.

"Why not?"

"Doesn't say," she said glaring at him like a chicken hawk. She tore the note up into little pieces and sprinkled it in the ash tray. "I'll tell you what it is; he's afraid he'll lose."

Was she overestimating her abilities, he thought, or was there something he wasn't seeing?

"I thought you said it was open and shut." Alf said behind them.

"How would your client like to plead, Ms. Lucetti?" the judge asked, adjusting his gown.

Milo grabbed her arm as she stood up, and she asked for a momentary delay of procedure.

"Don't touch me like that in court."

"If I plead not guilty, he'll have me extradited?"

"Looks like," she said, leaning over the table, smiling sideways at the judge.

"And if I plead guilty?"

"I would think that little shit would want to try the case, of course. The free publicity, getting a conviction for the community, no risk."

"So if I admit to the charges? Could I still get a trial?"

"Just sentencing--and even then, the judge will probably have your sentence suspended for extradition."

He still believed that the one last diary could clear him, but the first problem was staying in the States long enough to prove it. The second was getting the diary, which was in the possession of the court as a possible piece of evidence, to a trustworthy lab.

"You really do want a trial, huh?" she asked coolly. Milo nodded like a dashboard ornament. "All right, you'll

plead not guilty by reason of insanity--you ought to be able to handle that."

She and the prosecutor approached the bench. They talked like friends at a country club for a couple of minutes, and it was fixed. He would plead not guilty by reason of insanity, Ms. Lucetti would get to make her defense, the DA would take credit for having wrung a confession and had only to prove that he wasn't mad, though it would hurt no one's career if he was unable to prove that.

"How do you think the world is going to end--give me a description?" asked Dr. Siegal, a chubby fellow who looked more like a baker in a white lab coat than a psychiatrist. Still, he seemed a good man with a genuineness that was positively Roman. When Milo was told that he was going to be taken to Bellevue for psychiatric examination, he imagined grim hospital cells with slobbering lunatics in trusses, husky armed nurses, and shrieks in the early wee hours. But the eleventh floor of Bellevue was pleasant enough after lock-up. There was colorful wall paper and shag carpeting in the lounges where the patients watched color TV and argued about soap operas.

Milo shared a room with a former M.D. from Utica who chose to spend his recreational time rocking on his bed, humming like a generator or pulling unseen lint balls from his clothes. When he found what he thought was a particularly interesting one, he would roll it between his

palms and raising his nasal pitch declare, "Uh huh, so what sort of little bugger have we here?"

"Why is that?" Milo asked the good analyst. "Have you noticed his fixation with fur balls?"

"Oh that? Dr. Philbrook imagines that mud wasps are building a nest in him."

He didn't seem to mind their talking about him. He was busy pinching his tongue, trying to get hold of it as one would a trout at the end of a line. "He doesn't seem to mind too much," Milo observed.

"Mind? I'm not sure he hears anything. But getting back to the question, Mr. Marsden." Milo had neglected to answer. "The end of the world . . ."

"Oh," he said, trying to picture something--thinking first of the world as a beehive thrown over the balcony of the eleventh floor and shattering in a gooey mess on the sidewalk. But he realized that that might seem a veiled threat to Dr. Philbrook, to say nothing of his bees. He conjured up eventually something he had seen on a PBS broadcast of Götterdämmerung. "I suppose there will be some mountains coming down, and fire--lots of fire. People screaming, only not all of them; some would be playing violins."

Milo didn't turn around, but he could hear the doctor scribbling notes. "That is very interesting, very interesting indeed, and I was wondering about something else the other day. Tell me what you think, will you? Do you

think some people are born to jump from high places?"

"I don't understand what you mean."

"Oh, sure you do; think about it"

"If you mean, do I think some people were born under evil planets, fated for destruction as it were--fated to leap from the very pinnacles of the temple--" Milo could hear more scribbling--"of course, everyone believes that."

This was about the fiftieth question of this sort that he had endured since he had been placed there, and today he was getting a little impatient. Alf was due for a visit a few minutes earlier, and he wanted to hear if there was any news from the people at the Smithsonian. Even so, he had been warned by his attorney, in the event that the last diary was bogus, he should be looking to make his best defense. "Maybe you should play up the wacky thing a bit. Everybody's a little nuts--think obsessive."

"Listen Doctor, let me level with you."

"Oh please do," he said leaning forward.

"I told you yesterday that I had received the diaries from an angel. I don't think you believed me. Actually, that was a lie."

He cleared his throat. "I must confess, I had my doubts, Mr. Marsden."

"Call me Milo. I told you that because I'm trying to beat this fraud rap on the ol' non compos mentis--you know it and now I know you know it. Putting me in observation was actually my idea--a ploy. I'm wasting your time and mine.

How could I possibly fool you--a doctor of insanity? Tell me, Doctor, have you read the diaries?"

He shook his head. "I have a copy, but . . ."

Milo sat up and turned around to him. "The truth is those diaries really were written by Adolf Hitler."

Milo had said something significant and Siegal turned on the tape recorder and asked him to repeat it. "But you confessed to the police that you had written them yourself that winter you spent in--where was it? Garmisch? You lied in your confession?"

"No."

"But you just said . . ." he followed up quickly.

"I know what I just said, I'm not stupid. The point is this: the diaries purport to be the writing of Adolf Hitler. And I have confessed to writing them. Now Doctor Siegal, I am going to tell you something that only a sophisticated man of science could understand. There is no conflict here. The truth is, I was Adolf Hitler. Surely an intelligent man like you understands the necessity of reincarnation? It wasn't until I was in Garmisch that I realized that, but since then, it has come to me clearly and has been validated to me in a thousand ways." Doctor Siegal turned off the tape recorder and told him he had other patients to see.

But Dr. Siegal returned a couple of hours later to further satisfy his curiosity. "So, you really were Hitler, huh?"

"Absolutely. I remember it all as if it were yesterday."

"You'll forgive my skepticism, Milo."

"Yeah, well . . ." Milo said.

"You knew there was a Soviet autopsy report finally published in '68 on the body they found outside the bunker?" Milo told him he hadn't seen it. "It's pretty interesting. I'm writing a book now on monarchism--you know the term?"

"Something to do with kings and queens?"

"No, people with one testicle. I have a theory that these individuals--although not physically handicapped--are emotionally troubled by fears of inadequacy. If you don't mind my asking . . . do you have two testicles?"

"Last time I looked."

"Yes, well, Hitler apparently didn't--or so the autopsy report found. Do you remember that?"

"Are you saying I only had one testicle?"

"The Soviet doctors said . . ."

Milo couldn't help smiling at the preposterousness of the doctor's concern. Then he was reminded of a movie he had seen where some crazy Nazi geneticists had tried to recreate the Fuehrer from some sperm samples. He was tempted to tell him of a plan to have his body regenerated from a testicle taken from his corpse and implanted in someone else.

"You're smiling, Milo. Is this thought funny to you? Amusing?"

"Oh Doctor, there are so many false conceptions going around about my death. Take, for instance, the business about my having shot myself. Absolute nonsense."

"Oh?" Siegal interrupted.

"Nonsense. I'll admit that there is something a bit more noble about my having shot myself, but the fact of the matter is, I asked Eva to do it."

This was one aspect of Hans' testimony that Milo had taken quite seriously and researched--while he was still able to do so freely--quite thoroughly. Practically everyone who had later given testimony about the suicides in the bunker had told a slightly different story. He didn't believe that they were lying, but under stress, witnesses give varied testimonies. Some had said that they distinctly remembered the smell of gunfire when they entered the Fuehrer's private quarters. Others, like Hans, had definitely smelled the tincture of cyanide lingering on Hitler's body. Several said that when they entered, Hitler was sitting opposite Eva on the couch, their two guns on the table before them, Hitler's head tilted to one side, his hands in his lap. Unless someone had done some straightening up, Hitler clearly had not shot himself and then placed the gun on the table. No, contrary to popular opinion, Milo had concluded that Hitler had ultimately leaned on Eva for one last horrible act. Hans had said that he had worried about the reliability of the poison. He had tried out some of the cyanide capsules on his dogs. He had been afraid that the poison would not be strong enough, that he might merely be incapacitated by it and then later revived by the Russians. He had trusted Eva with the onerous task of giving him absolutely certainty. She had

fired the shot heard by all in the bunker. Then she had ended her own life with cyanide sometime during those ten fateful minutes while all the staff waited.

"That's pretty interesting, Milo," Dr. Siegal said cautiously.

"If you don't believe me, just check it out."

The subject didn't come up again, but Siegal was strangely deferential to him after that, addressing Milo always by his surname, and he only remembered having two sessions with him after that during which the doctor read passages to him from the diaries and asked him to explain them.

In the pre-trial hearing he testified that Milo was, in his professional opinion, incompetent to stand trial--"Milo Marsden is an individual whose ostensible genteel manners screen a dementia and philosophy so twisted and insidiously clever as to be dangerous to any naive individual." The fact that Milo had been certified insane, however, did not prevent his release when the last diary found its way to the Smithsonian and the examination concluded. A beamish Alf came with Angela to break the good news.

"Hey, how ya doin', buddy boy?" he asked and threw him the front page of the Daily News. HITLER DIARY AUTHENTIC!, it read in two lines of two-inch caps. Below it was a split picture of his arrest at Kennedy and some spokesman at the Smithsonian pointing to some photo blow-ups of binding fibers. "So what do you think of that?" he asked, taking a

seat across the table from him. Behind Alf stood Milo's precious Angela, licking her teeth, peeking over a fist full of long-stemmed yellow roses, coyly nibbling on the petals with glossy lips. His revulsion at seeing her thus--so fresh and crisp and pretty as any mom in an L.L. Bean Catalog--was matched only by his fear of sitting in the same room with her. He knew now he had not been stupid--that had been permissible to him--no, he knew now he had merely been weak. His friend Carlyle had himself understood Milo's sense of disgust at the male condition of dependence on the female: "If it were not for sex, we could hunt them, ja?"

"Those for me?" Milo asked. Angela nodded meekly and smiled shyly.

"Perhaps I should leave you two alone?" Alf asked generously.

"You leave her here and I'll kill her," Milo said matter-of-factly.

"What did you say?" Alf asked.

"You heard me. Get her out of here."

Angela dropped the bouquet in the basket by the door and left, saying only "You see?" as she left.

"So what does my lawyer say?" Milo asked, feeling satisfied with the effect of his last remark.

"She says the DA will ask that the charges against you be dropped to offering a false confession. Like hell, I told her to tell the DA. If he thinks he can make this stick--he's an even bigger fool than we took him for. We'll have

you out of here in hours."

By this time Milo had been in jail or in Bellevue for three weeks. In lock-up he had gone to bed more than once hearing some inmate whispering through the dark, "You're a dead sucker now." And at Bellevue he had put up with friendlies who vomit on you as a joke. But through all that, he thought of Birgit and wondered how imperceptible her death would be in Munich. Would she be missed? He wondered who was living now in her apartment. And had someone come to claim her possessions? Erika would never bother. Perhaps a girlfriend would be wearing his BC sweatshirt now, or her chunky landlady who would tell her future tenants about the little girl who studied music and was murdered by her American boyfriend. He wanted something of Birgit's now. A memento. And he remembered Schulzinger sitting across that small kitchen table from him, stirring his tea and looking out through a broken window with puffy eyes that had felt and seen real deprivation. "It's God's great lesson and warning to us all," he had said. "Reject evil, but hate nothing . . . for man inevitably becomes what he hates."

"And guess what?" Alf asked with enthusiasm.

"You're selling the book again?"

"You betcha. We had to get rid of a number of volumes, but thank God I didn't have the entire batch shredded."

"You had some of them destroyed?"

"Only about half," he laughed slyly. "Hey, the Jewish Action League thinks they were all incinerated. We'll make

everything back, though. The saved volumes are considered collector's items."

The charges were dropped that afternoon, but Milo remained in custody another day while the State Department decided whether to honor the request of the West German Government for extradition. The matter was finally settled when the embarrassed German authorities withdrew their request. Milo demanded an advance on the second edition and flew to Washington.

CHAPTER XXII

Always a connoisseur of monument architecture, Milo walked the Washington Mall shortly before his meeting at the Smithsonian, thinking how unique Washington architecture was compared to the palaces of government in Europe. He realized, of course, that many of the European buildings of parliament were fashioned after the Gothic model, popular towards the end of the last century as in the British Houses of Parliament. And there is very little Gothic revival in Washington, he noted; nevertheless, he sensed a totally different attitude at work in the Greek revival buildings all over Europe. He sensed somehow that theirs were somehow heavy, antique-laden mausoleums. But in Washington, even the official mausoleums--such as the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials--shunned the weepy, or morbid aggrandizement. More than this, these buildings somehow managed to preserve a pristine and elegant exuberance without resorting to either the trendy or baroque.

The contrast to this is the Smithsonian complex with its red brick, romanesque bell-towers, its castellated roof lines, its spiderwebs in stone. Having followed several false hunches, Milo found the central administrative foyer where he presented his credentials and was shown into the

office of the Director of Exhibits.

Allen Sloan Chandler reminded him of a professor he had had at William and Mary, the quintessential American gentleman, scholar, and naturalist. The sort of fellow who wears knit ties and tweed jackets, and has pictures of waterfowl or cantering horses hanging on his office walls. He introduced Milo to a comfortable chair and took his place behind a Chippendale writing desk.

"We were surprised to have you here so soon after your release," he said.

"There were some questions about the diaries."

"Yes, of course," Chandler said and pressed an intercom. "Carolyn, please bring in the Hitler document. No doubt you've read what we released to the press?"

"Yes. But I have a few more questions."

"Fire away," he said, plucking the quill from his ornamental inkwell and leaning back in his chair.

"You only verified the binding of the diaries?"

"And the other aspects such as paper, glue, ink--many of the same tests conducted at the German National Archives. We don't have any Hitler experts on staff as such, though it would not be impossible to have one here, should we receive an endowment to justify it," he added, hinting at a donation.

"Well that's an idea--I'll give it some consideration," Milo said, but the main question he had was why the Smithsonian thought their own results were different.

"Different from the German Archives?"

"Yes."

He brushed his lips with the quill pen and blew into the feather while he considered. "It would be very easy just to say that we looked at different documents."

"In which case, you would really only be interested in this last diary--the others being such obvious forgeries."

He smiled at Milo's little trap. "Now, I didn't say that. Listen, we haven't seen these other diaries of yours. But on the basis of our tests, there is no room for doubt about this one--the journal we have fits within the general process and description of journals and ledgers produced in the forties in Europe. Now that is not to say, conclusively, that the book was made in the forties--it could have been put together last week. It is merely to say that the procedures used in the manufacture of this volume are consistent with what it purports to be--a war period document."

"No polyester fibers?"

"Not one."

There was a soft knock at his door and his secretary entered carrying the journal Milo had received from Erika. "So how could the National Archives in Germany have been wrong?"

He waited until his secretary had closed the door behind her. "I suppose I could conjecture on that like anyone else if I wanted to."

"That's what I came here for."

"Well, unofficially, it seems to be reasonable to assume

that whoever put this volume together put the others together as well--they are the same, you say?"

"Identical--to look at them."

He returned the quill to its inkwell and leaned forward over the diary. "Then something out of the ordinary is going on in Deutschland."

"Like what?"

"Who knows? They're are having an election next week. Perhaps someone feels these diaries possess some sort of geopolitical clout. It's no secret that Central Europe--Germany and Austria--has been slipping for some time into a cosier relationship with the Eastern Block," he continued with words as carefully ordered as a row of dominos. "You know, of course, Mr. Marsden, that if you do suspect that your other diaries have been tampered with, you'd be a fool to leave them where the German Government could get to them and do perhaps other mischief. The Smithsonian, on the other hand," he began again, pushing the diary towards him.

Milo told him he would think about it. In picking up the journal, he noticed that the leather spine had been surgically sliced the length of the binding.

"We intended, of course, to repair the volume like new."

"I expected as much, but I'll have it repaired later," Milo said backing towards the door.

"By the way," he interrupted, and Milo could see that he sincerely hated to let the diary leave the Smithsonian. "We had the note inside analyzed as well."

"Note?" Milo asked and instantly remembered the address given him by Erika before he left Munich. He opened the journal to where it was and took it out.

"We found it to be from your typical garden variety gummed notepad--not authentic to the period of the diary."

"Yes, I know," Milo said, glancing down. "This was simply an address that I used to" Milo stopped mid-sentence confused by something that struck him as both extremely familiar and irregular.

"Something amiss, Mr. Marsden?"

Erika had written Bavariaring in a hand that jarred with something he had seen previously. He checked his pockets quickly, finding nothing, and then once more. In the outside chest pocket he found Birgit's last note which he had found tacked to her door. How had she signed it? The B in Birgit's signature was identical to the B in Erika's Bavariaring address. There was no mistaking the stylized calligraphy in both.

He wasn't sure what would be accomplished by returning to Munich, but Milo knew that he would learn nothing by remaining in Washington. Moreover, he felt safer on the move and with no one aware of his exact whereabouts. In Brussels he rented a car. On the itinerary he listed his destination as Paris, but he crossed the German border outside Aachen and drove directly to Munich. For the entire journey, he considered possible strategies that he should employ for

getting the truth from Erika. If he confronted her directly, he suspected she would only lie and kick him out, or worse. Then where would he be? On the other hand, he could lie to her. He could invite her to help him solve some elaborate conspiracy which he did not believe but one that did not involve her. Maybe then, in leading him astray, as she most certainly would, she might inadvertently drop some clue. At least he would know, by her help, where not to look. One of the ironies of all this was that in all the time he had spent in New York with the defense and prosecution, he had never once even alluded to her or her involvement. He knew she was the only person who could corroborate his testimony, that he had in fact received the diaries from Birgit. But he had not wanted to involve her for fear of endangering her life as well.

Ludwigstrasse was beginning to fill up with students from the university. And on many of the street corners, there were also political activists, busy handing out leaflets under street lamps decorated with the gold, red, and black tricolors, a reminder that Germany was on the eve of a national election. At a stop light on the corner of Ludwig and Schellingstrasse, he noticed a large group attracted to a Green Party booth where two army reservists were in a shouting contest with the three or four Green Party volunteers. It was difficult to tell which side was holding its own in the debates, but every few seconds some of the spectators would applaud their support for some point that

had been made. As he pulled away from the light, three Munich policemen arrived, and tried to calm the flaring tempers.

His first stop was the Vierjahreszeiten Hotel where he was told that Erika was no longer a guest of the hotel. Was there a forwarding address? No. Milo then decided after some deliberation to call Professor Kranz. This was another person whom he had not wanted further involved in this business, but over the phone, he might be able to provide some information which would prove helpful.

"Professor, I'm back in Munich."

"Oh, I was just thinking of you--where exactly are you?"

"I'm calling from the Vierjahreszeiten."

"What are you doing there?"

"Trying to get hold of someone."

"I see," he said slowly. "I did not expect to see you in Germany again so soon. Y'know, I do not think it entirely safe for you now."

"I'm not too worried; you're the only person who knows where I am."

"Even so," he said soberly.

"Professor, I haven't as yet told anyone, but I think I know who killed the girl."

There was a pause. He cleared his voice, and Milo wondered if it were safe to be talking on the phone.

"Professor, are you alone--can you talk?"

"That's just it," he said, "Perhaps we could get together

to talk about it?"

"Can you meet me in the lobby here?"

"No, let me think. I know, how about that place where we ran into each other that one afternoon--you remember, when you were distraught about your wife and I was on my way to the opera?" Milo realized that he meant the Hofgarten but had not wanted to say it over the line.

"Fine."

"Say 9:30?" he concluded. Milo agreed and ordered some dinner in the hotel.

The leaves in the Hofgarten had turned, and many of them were strewn on the pebbled walks that lead off at right angles and diagonals from an open air palladium in the center. There was a chill in the evening air; even so, there was a full house sipping coffee at the outdoor cafe just inside the gate. But out on the walks, there were scarcely more than half a dozen couples, strolling about paths ponderously, not looking at the garden so much as the footpaths or the clear evening sky. He was surprised not to find Professor Kranz among these. Kranz was late, and Milo was on the verge of calling again when he heard a sharp whistle. Turning about, he saw Herr Kranz standing alone in the shadows at the far edge where the Hofgarten ends and the open field and construction area around the still ruined National Army Museum begins. The interior of the baroque building was clearly still gutted, the windows either broken or boarded up, and there were, in fact, small trees and

bushes growing high up on the roof next to a partially reconstructed dome.

Upon seeing him from a distance, Kranz, dressed in a felt hat and a long black top coat, waved him over. As he closed the distance between, Kranz turned away as if he were watching something on the depressed field behind him.

Milo clapped a palm on the back of his shoulder and told him that he had all but given up. "Been here long?"

"Few minutes," Kranz whispered and pointed with his cane at some rabbits feeding on the lawn. "Rabbits--do you see them--they only come out at night. It's not safe for them during the day anymore."

"Not safe?" Milo asked, noticing a few rabbits running for the cover of some old hedges at the sound of their voices.

"Yes, they destroy them. Have to because they multiply and leave their burrows everywhere."

It seemed a bit excessive to him.

"But they undermine the reconstruction," Kranz said simply, "ruin the ground. Pity, ja?"

Milo agreed without much sympathy and saw that Kranz had a different cane with him on this evening. He wondered then if he had broken the other on the Konigsplatz.

"So, my friend, what is this confidence of yours?" he asked, staring off at the building, looking almost totally uninterested.

"There is a woman named Erika Sigmund. She was Birgit's

patron, and it was this woman who gave me the last Hitler diary."

"And you suspect her of murder?" he asked slowly.

"On the night that Birgit was murdered, there was a note left on the door telling me to come back on the following day. And just after that, I ran into Erika on the street. Erika claimed to be on her way up even as I was leaving and pretended not to know whether Birgit was home or not."

"That is not much evidence, my friend."

"But she, not Birgit, wrote the note on the door," Milo said emphatically.

"I see . . ." he said quietly. "That would seem to link her with the murder--wouldn't it? But what evidence do you have that she wrote the note?"

"I have another sample of her handwriting--it matches perfectly."

"That's not real evidence," he said critically. "The police will just laugh at that."

He was absolutely right, Milo thought. "Not only that," he added, "if I turn this over to the police, they may still arrest me and try me for Birgit's murder. For all I know, I may still be wanted by the police here."

Kranz smiled at the idea for some reason; perhaps because the idea of Milo as a wanted man seemed rather incongruent with his personality.

"Come, let us walk about a bit," he said, "and you can tell me then what you intend to do with this new information

now."

There was a series of short steps from the edge of the Hofgarten that led down to an open field directly before the museum. Dug into the center of this field is a curious monument. It looks like a large marble box, approximately the size of a trolley car. The first time Milo had seen it, he had dismissed it as a subway or U-bahn entrance. What it was, curiously enough, was a small tomb to the unknown German soldier. The museum had not been restored all these years, but a tomb had been constructed on--or rather planted in the lawn before it like a marble gift box.

"I don't really know what to do," Milo confessed. "Erika Sigismund has pretty well disappeared, and I haven't a clue as to her whereabouts."

"Ah, well," the professor interjected and quickened his steps down. "Perhaps there is nothing you can do but go home again--do you know this place?" he asked.

"Not really," he said, though he had been down in it once and read an inscription upon the walls about the 22,000 Germans who had fallen defending Munich. "Why is it here of all places?" Milo asked.

"Why?" he asked and indicated with his cane that they should go in. "It was here that so many fell, I suppose. The museum here, they say, was the center of the defense for the city. You know, the city did not surrender; its defenders held on, until well after the death of the Fuehrer."

They stepped inside and surprised two derelicts who were sharing some wine by candlelight and had, judging by their bedrolls, staked out the place for that evening's campsite. One old man had been caught in the act of skinning a grey rabbit, and Milo concluded from the pile of wood scraps and newspapers in the corner that he had intended to cook it there. Milo forced a smile and said good evening to them, which they sullenly returned. Professor Kranz, less congenially, stepped around Milo and walking directly up to them demanded to know what these two bums were doing there.

"Who are you--the police?" the old one answered back sarcastically, fingering with his bloody thumb the sharp edge of his pocket knife.

"Get out of here," Kranz commanded intolerantly. When they didn't move, Kranz lunged forward towards the one who had answered and poked him rather savagely in the stomach with the tip of his cane. "Get out of here, you swineshit!"

For a moment, it looked as if the old fellow of approximately the same age as Kranz might fight, but his companion, a younger man, apologized quickly in Italian and started picking up their sacks of bread and wine. "Scusi, scusi," he said and led his stunned friend by the arm through a second exit just opposite them.

Kranz picked up a beer bottle they had neglected and threw it up the stairway after them. "What did they think this was, stupid good-for-nothings!"

In the center of the small tomb was a slightly larger-

than-life bronze of a soldier at rest, his hands crossed on his chest, the rifle, lying at his side, testifying, Milo supposed, to the fact that he had never surrendered. "I suppose you think I acted a little silly just now," he said finally, placing his palms on the catafalque, having regained his composure. "Ah, but look, I am not the only one who remembers." He bent down and picked up a bouquet of dried flowers on the floor at his feet and placed it on the soldier's chest.

"You come here very often?" Milo asked, feeling just a tremor of something tickle the hairs on his neck.

"Here? I like to look in on it, to see that this memorial is being properly respected." Kranz cleared his throat, and Milo thought he detected a little sentimentality welling up in his expression. "After all, I fought beside men like this," he said tapping the hollow bronze sculpture, making it resonate almost like a bell. "A man can make no finer gesture than to fall in the defense of his family and his city, and it is the artist's responsibility to ennoble this through a suitable gesture of his own--not bury it in the ground like this stone matchbox. Look at this!" He pointed to an inscription on the wall beside Milo and lit a cigarette lighter so that Milo might better read it. "To the twenty thousand sons of Munich who fell in the defense of their city, 30 April 1945. Does this look to you a suitable reminder? Better than nothing, yes, but . . . Ah well," he concluded, summing the room up with his eyes, letting the

lighter go out, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori . . . But let us talk of more pressing matters. Tell me what you intend to do? You know that you must think about yourself," he continued, brushing some tiny flower petals from his coat and pointing the way back out. "You are not safe here anymore."

"But why would anyone want to kill me--why kill any of us connected with the diaries?"

"But they have, yes? Perhaps this woman--who did you say she was?" he asked absent-mindedly.

"Erika Sigmund."

"Yes, well perhaps she is afraid that you will link her with the murders. May I speculate?"

"Yes, of course," Milo said, happy for any ideas.

"This woman is undoubtedly in East Germany. You'll never get her out. The whole thing has the stench of a Russian or East German plot."

Milo was totally confused now.

"Well, you see, she was probably an agent of the East Germans. Obviously, her friends are merely cleaning up the mess she made of the whole thing. Take my word for it, she's run across the border into East Germany."

"I must admit, I'm pretty much at a dead end," Milo said.

"There, you see," Kranz said smiling and pointed again with his cane that they should go.

"I have no real evidence--she must know that," Milo continued, walking up the steps. "And only one real clue as

to her possible whereabouts."

"And what is that?" he spoke up behind him, jarred somewhat by the last statement. "You said you were at a dead end."

"I was, but I just remembered; maybe it's nothing, but on the other hand it may be quite enough. One night in her apartment, I saw a photo of Birgit and Erika standing before a yacht called the Flying Dutchman . . ."

Milo had just stepped out of the tomb into the fresh air when he felt a hand on the collar of his shirt give him a violent yank backwards. Then he felt a sharp stabbing pain in his left arm.

"Kranz!" He yelled out as he tripped and rolled as best he could down the few stairs leading back into the monument. He had wanted to warn him. He knew now that someone had attacked him--he remembered the old Italian and his skinning knife. At the bottom, he struck his head against the stone bier set in the middle.

"Milo, Milo?" he heard Kranz call with a reassuring calm. For a space of time that it took Kranz to descend the dozen steps, Milo was too disoriented to respond. Then he beheld Professor Kranz coming down the stairs towards him, a methodical but unconcerned look on his face and with what looked to be the long blade of glistening steel extending from Kranz's cane handle.

"Ah," Milo whispered with some relief. "You've taken his knife away." Milo's palms found the cold marble floor and he

began to prop himself up against the stone bier.

Without the least hesitation or indecision, Kranz leaned towards him, his legs straddling Milo's, one hand on Milo's head, lifting it by the hair while the other prepared to cut his throat. "Herr Marsden, my sincerest apologies," he said shaking his head sympathically.

Milo's sense of balance returned, and he realized now that he had not seen the Italian strike because there had been no Italian waiting to strike as he emerged from the tomb. He jacked his right leg up with everything he had left. Milo's shin struck Kranz squarely in the seat of his pants and shoved him forcefully into the stone pediment. He gave out a grunt and hit the stone bier behind him. Then, sinking first on to one knee which came down upon Milo's abdomen, Kranz fell onto the floor beside him. To prevent his head from slamming into the bier, Kranz had thrown his hands forward and dropped the knife by Milo's side. Milo fumbled for it in the semi-darkness and turning back to meet Kranz, found him getting to his knees to meet him head on. Milo remembered what strong forearms Kranz had, and coupled with his considerable weight over Milo's, Milo had no doubt that in a wrestling contest, Kranz would come out on top. For an instant, their eyes met, and Kranz saw that Milo had the knife in hand. Kranz weighed the odds instantaneously and committed himself. With one hand he grabbed at Milo's knife hand, with the other he took Milo by the throat. Milo parried Kranz's grip on his hand to the inside and drove the

knife deeply into Kranz's barrel chest. Kranz stiffened, stood erect on his knees, and took one long deep breath. Then he nodded to Milo as though he acknowledged now his mistake, as though Milo should and would understand later the necessity of the attempt, and fell against the funeral bier.

When Milo had regained his senses more completely, he examined Kranz's wound. The blood pulsed through it for a minute or more as his heart weakened and then stopped.

"You know, Sir, I think that if you would find Erika Sigmund, you would have the answer to your questions," Milo said irritably to the same inspector who had questioned Erika and Milo previously about the death of Birgit.

Once again, he sat passively behind his desk, this time holding between his two index fingers the blood-stained dagger, enclosed in a large plastic bag. "So where did you say you got this dagger?" he asked again with a voice that never tired of trying new intonations. "You know, it is a very old dagger, almost an antique." Milo did not bother to repeat his previous answers. "I am sorry, Herr Marsden, but I still cannot believe that a sixty-year-old professor of art would lure you into the Hofgarten to kill you."

"Then you must believe that I first stabbed myself in the bicep, killed Kranz, and then called the police so as to insure my being caught?"

"I have seen many ugly things during my career in this city. So I am sure you can appreciate it when I say that I

wish you had never come to Germany, Herr Marsden. You have made things very difficult for all of us." A second interrogator entered carrying a long teletype printout.

"Ja, ja," the second said, handing it to the inspector. He skimmed it quickly, finding the item which was of particular interest to him and read that carefully.

"And so?" Milo asked.

"Fortunately for you, Herr Marsden, it appears that your Professor Klaus Kranz was brought before an Allied and, later, a German tribunal on war crimes charges. He was cleared on account of insufficient evidence. It was alleged that he was a member of KRIPO--SS police This allegation would tend to support your assertion about the dagger."

Milo relaxed in his chair. "And what have you found out about Erika Sigmund?" Milo demanded.

"The National Bureau has no record of birth, education or income tax returns for an Erika Sigmund--at least not one who fits our description. There are seventeen Erika Sigmunds in West Germany today. Fourteen are under the age of twenty, one is an invalid in a hospital in Koln, and the other two are over sixty according to our records." He paused a minute and checked a list of deceased and missing Erika Sigmunds. "This might be of interest to you. It seems there was an Erika Sigmund who disappeared at the end of the war--but she'd be about sixty today. This one, in fact, worked in the chancellery as a secretary to Joseph Goebbels.

She is listed as missing after 1945. This isn't the woman we know . . . but it is an interesting coincidence, yes?"

"Are you going to keep me here indefinitely?"

He looked at his fellow interrogator who shook his head. "Der Minister hat gesagt"--the minister has said, he added with a certain frustration.

"Apparently, no one may raise his hand against you-- at least not for the moment. We are having an election day tomorrow and the West German Government does not want to deal right now with the problems and embarrassment that your arrest right now would create. For that reason alone, you may go. After the election, however . . ."

Milo got to his feet and put on his coat. "You know, inspector, what I have told you is the truth."

"Herr Marsden," he said, raising the dagger, his index finger for demonstration on the tip of the pointed blade, "in spite of your denials, I can't help thinking that we are this close to the Fourth Reich--no small thanks to you."

'Don't be absurd,' Milo wanted to say.

CHAPTER XXIII

In Mittenwald, the tricolors which were draped here and there from balconies were red, white and black--the colors of the old Kaiser, the colors of Nazi Germany, today the colors of the National German Party--the NDP.

As he drove up to the Schrams' cottage, they were just getting out of their VW, having just come back--he assumed from the party badges on their lapels--from voting. Friendly as ever, they walked down to the curb and invited him in. Was it safe? he wondered and walked in with them. Both Hans and Theresa Schram were ebullient. The exit polls they had participated in showed a landslide victory--at least in Mittenwald--for the NDP. Hans and Milo sat down in the sun-drenched living room while Frau Schram prepared some coffee.

"Herr Kranz ist tot," Milo interjected after a few pleasantries.

"Ja--Theresa," he asked and called to his wife. "Klaus ist verstorben."

"Ach nein . . . ja?" she said, carrying a tray into the room and placing it before them on the small coffee table. She looked more surprised than distressed by the news. She pulled some sheer drapes in the den to cut down on the glare, sat neatly on the edge of the sofa, and poured coffee for the

three of them. "Hier, bitte" she said, handing him a coffee cup.

"Were you close with Herr Kranz?" Milo asked, slowly stirring the coffee, trying to sniff it without being too obvious.

"Close? Well, he was very kind."

"Sympathisch," Theresa added.

"Ja," Hans said, searching for other words to describe him. "He was a gentleman. He often sent us tickets to the opera."

"That's right," Milo said. "He was on the board for the opera." Birgit had won a scholarship to the opera company, he remembered now.

"How did it happen?" Theresa asked, sipping her coffee.

The coffee was all right, he concluded, and took a sip before he realized that any poison might just as easily have been placed in the cup. He felt a little sick and put the cup down.

"Yes, how did it happen?" asked Hans.

"He asked me to meet him last night in the Hofgarten. When we were alone, he pulled a knife and tried to kill me." They both looked at Milo as though he were crazy to make such a joke. He had to reassure them. "I stabbed him."

"I cannot believe such a thing!" Hans interrupted, getting to his feet.

"Please sit down, Herr Schram." Milo asked, half demanded, quietly. "Now, Herr Schram, Frau Schram, I have

come here because someone must know enough to help me figure this thing out. Please--help me."

"How we can help you?" he said, still irritated.

Milo explained what he knew. Klaus Kranz was SS or secret police during the war. After the war he taught art at the university and sat on the board of directors of the Munich State Opera Company. Birgit Friedle studied opera and had a contract with the Munich Opera Company. Did Kranz know Birgit Friedle--if so, how exactly? Through a woman named Erika Sigmund?

When Frau Schram heard the last name, she whispered it and interrupted. "Ein Moment," she said. "During the war-- at the end," she said, looking at Hans, "she worked in the bunker, she was a secretary to Goebbels and then, like myself, to the Fuehrer."

Milo knew they were not talking about the same woman, but he realized that there must be a connection.

"I never saw her again after the war, wasn't she with us, Hans, when we broke out?" He nodded his head slowly.

"The Erika Sigmund I am talking is about thirty-two."

"Oh, then is not the same," she said, retreating back on the sofa.

"What else can you tell me?" Milo asked, grasping at anything.

"I didn't know her well," Theresa continued. "She was a bit mysterious--or tried to be. She called herself Erika von Sigmund, as if she were nobility, but the word was that she

was common as the rest of us, and only worked in the Propagandaministerium because of . . . because Goebbels had a weakness for whores. Though that part was not gossip but fact."

"You think she had an affair with Goebbels?"

"Of course, she couldn't type or take dictation. She was not even a pretty girl, but she would do things that a decent girl wouldn't. In fact," she said, suddenly remembering an episode, "I caught the two of them together once, quite by mistake, but nonetheless, there they were right in his office, lying on a leather couch right under the portrait of the Fuehrer. They had not even bothered to take their clothes off--him with his pants down, his skinny and warped little legs--her with her dress up around her neck!"

"And she worked for the Fuehrer, you said?"

Theresa rolled her eyes as though this were but a tip of an iceberg. "Magda became--always was--suspicious. So, Erika was transferred to the Bunker where she tried shamelessly to become the favorite of Bormann and even later the Fuehrer, but I am sure there was nothing improper in her relationship to the Fuehrer." Herr Schram winked privately at Milo and said he scarcely remembered her at all.

"But surely, Hans. She was with us when we escaped," Theresa said again.

"Nein," he said emphatically. "There were three woman in our group--you, the cook and her daughter. Three."

"No, there were four. I saw the second group leave, she

was not there with them. She must have been with us." Hans continued to shake his head. "Well then she was with the first group," Frau Schram unwillingly conceded.

"But if she had been in the first group," Milo returned, "then whom would she have been with?"

"Bormann, Bergdorf, Axmann, most of the SS guard," he said, counting on his fingers.

"And the diaries. Who would have had the diaries?" Milo asked. "Who would have been the most likely candidate to have taken the diaries out?"

"Well that's easy. The diaries were flown out of Berlin with the other papers and personal belongings of the Fuehrer on the sixteenth of April."

"But the last diary is dated April 30th?" Milo said.

"Oh well, then . . ." he conceded.

"So, who in the bunker could have taken the diary out?"

". . . Bormann, Axmann, Bergdorf," Hans conjectured.

"Assuming the diaries are authentic," interjected Frau Schram. "I never saw the Fuehrer write into such a book--and neither did any of the others I've talked to."

"But just let us suppose," Milo said, "that Erika Sigmund did have the diaries when she escaped with the first break-out group. And let's also suppose that years later she marries and has a daughter, who is named after herself, and this woman is the Erika Sigmund whom I know and who gave the diaries to Birgit Friedle to give to me."

"But why should she use her mother's maiden name?" Frau

Schram asked, too practical to be anything but annoyed with Milo's wild speculation.

"Why?" Milo thought for a moment. "Because she couldn't use her father's name. Because her father was Axmann, or Bergdorf, or even Bormann--you said she worked for Bormann."

"Axmann served his time, and Bergdorf was never convicted of war crimes," Hans contributed.

"Then because her father was Martin Bormann?"

"Even so," Frau Schram said, "why give these diaries to this friend of yours, unless, of course, Bormann is still alive?" she asked and realized that she had answered her own question.

That seemed to answer all of the necessary questions, Milo thought. Everything was neatly tied up. He had only to find Martin Bormann to prove his thesis, and he had a pretty good idea where to begin the search. "There is one last question, if I might ask? What do you know of the Fliegende Hollander?"

"The opera?" asked Hans a bit puzzled. "Not much. It's about a sailor, isn't it?" he said, and looked to his wife.

"Yes, a captain who is damned to sail the world in a Geistschiff--a phantom ship," she finished. "I never saw it, but I have heard it on gramophone."

"And what exactly happened to Bormann's wife?" Milo asked. Neither Hans nor Theresa had the slightest idea.

"Bormann was one we knew hardly at all."

On the way out to his car, Hans took his elbow and made a

small confession. "This Erika von Sigmund--I hesitated to say this before. She," Hans said and tilted his head back toward the house, "she didn't like Erika. Women are funny about other women--for instance, saying she wasn't attractive. Perhaps to another woman, no, but us, in the guard, we all knew who she was. She knew what her body was for, we used to say, and the word was it was not just Goebbels and Bormann who had her--the Fuehrer," he said simply, and nodded. "And that is why Eva Braun and Magda hated her, not, as my wife says, because she was carrying on with Magda's husband--Magda could care less--but because she was a threat."

"Any chance that Hitler might have had a daughter?" Milo asked finally, though the idea had only briefly entertained him earlier.

Hans smiled vaguely. "Hitler was a man like the rest of us. Perhaps, maybe--but I think not. If he had taken up with this Sigmund before the end, then why did he marry Eva? A man--especially one who is about to die, one who is shortly about to meet his god--does not love one woman and marry another. Would he? Would you?"

Milo had to agree that the Hitler-Braun marriage was nothing more than a sentimental gesture, and he too doubted the possibility of Hitler being so duplicitous.

"These stories get started and it would not have been hard for the Fuehrer if that was what he had wanted." He patted Milo confidentially on the back. "Between us, yes?"

he asked, opening the car door for him. "Even my wife would have been his lover; she worshipped the Fuehrer--all the women in the bunker did."

Looking more regal than radical, Eugen Dolfuss, in a televised speech from Starnberg, accepted the nod of his party to become Minister of Bavaria.

Meanwhile in the States, the Hitler diaries were once again a best-seller, though the book was obviously more talked about than read. A final edition, including the last Hitler diary, had been promised by the ad department, but Milo had not decided what should be done with the last volume. Hitler deserved his rightful place in history, but it seemed rather obvious to Milo that the diaries were being used to enhance the position of neo-fascists who seemed clearly more in the tradition of the bad Nazis, the Striechers and Himmlers, than the "good" Nazis, the Speers, the Rommels. Milo tried to explain his reservations to Alf from the French Rivera.

"You yourself proved that they're authentic."

"Yeah, but you should see the sort of effect they're having here in Germany--all over Europe, in fact."

"You should see the effect they're having over here," he replied greedily.

"Listen Dad, someone torched a synagogue in Berchtesgaden last night--and in France, Jewish cemeteries are being vandalized. Quite frankly, everyone knows that the NDP is run by a clique of old General Staff officers with dubious

backgrounds." Milo could hear his father's blood pressure rising with the volume in his voice.

"Now don't give me this," he retorted impatiently.

"You're not going to talk me into suppressing this historical document. This isn't the Soviet Union, y'know? Yes, I'll agree with you, it's terrible, but we aren't responsible for all the anti-Semitism in the world; we may not even be responsible for any of it. It's been going on for two thousand years! Besides, we have a larger responsibility to people everywhere and for all times." Alf's brain was racheting up; he was remembering bits and pieces of rhetoric his own staff had cooked up for future publicity statements.

"Dad, will you get your fists out of the money bags for a minute and think about what I'm telling you?"

"First you tell me they're authentic--then you tell me not to publish them--who do you think you are, the guardian of history? All you did was have someone give them to you."

It was useless trying to argue with him, Milo realized. He was a man committed to a cause.

CHAPTER XXIV

The port authority in Monaco told Milo what he would hear again and again all over the Mediterranean: the Fliegende Hollander, or the Flying Dutchman, was a very popular name for private sailing craft.

"But this isn't a sailboat," he explained. "It's more of a yacht--a steamship yacht."

"Well, that narrows it a bit--maybe down to twenty or thirty ships." The clerk could only guess. "You can check our register." There were three. Two were sail, the third a conventional diesel, but it was only registered at fifty-seven feet. Milo went down to look at it anyway. It was not the ship he had seen in the photo, and it was clear that what he was looking for was a good deal larger. This ship had at least three decks. What he was looking for, someone suggested from his description, was a 300-foot mini-liner. So how many of those might there be? In commercial use? Plenty. Private use? Not many.

From Monaco he went to Marseilles, then on to Nice, Cannes, Naples, Venice, Genoa and finally Brindisi. In Brindisi he had not expected to stumble upon any information. Brindisi is primarily a shipping port and the central docking area for a majority of the cruise ships to the Greek Islands.

Purchasing a cruise ticket to Athens, he was just coming out of the booking office and had stepped off the curb to cross the street when he was almost run over by a steel-blue Mercedes with German plates and stickers. Admittedly, there are a great many grey-blue Mercedes cruising about Europe with German plates, but he decided to act upon a hunch that this was Erika's car. He gave his first class ticket to a shabby tourist with an oversized backpack and hired a cab.

"Y'see, only biga botza," Milo's cabby said as they drove up and down the rotting wharves. He was about to conclude that he had followed a bad hunch when he saw the Mercedes parked 150 yards up ahead. "Pull over here," he told the driver, not wishing to get too close. There it was, the Fliegende Hollander, sandwiched between a cargo ship and a reminder of Mussolini's Armada which had survived by never venturing from port. The ship posted no colors, but at the gangway were two sailors, dressed in white uniforms with black piping and carrying sidearms.

Milo's courage increased a bit, and he ventured back and forth several times, taking in the entire length of the luxury yacht, though 'yacht' hardly seemed the appropriate word.

"Bitte, wie spat ist es?" he asked of one of the two sailors, pointing to his watch.

"Es ist zehn Minuten vor vier," he shot back in regimented German.

So he was German? Milo asked. And was Milo German? the

sailor asked. No, American. If he were American, how had he thought to address them in German, the more suspicious of the two asked? The name of the ship--German, yes? Were all the crew German? No, some were Austrian and Czech, Milo was told. And who owned this magnificent old ship?

"Since you are so curious, I think you should talk to the captain," said the second seaman, a burly fellow who took him securely by the arm. "This way, mein Herr." When he began to object, he felt the other seaman's revolver in the small of his back.

But upon seeing him walking up the gangway with the two sailors, Milo's cabby, still waiting and afraid that he would go aboard without paying the fare, sped his cab up to within ten or twelve feet of the gangway and honked obnoxiously.

"Hey, you, Ameracan!" he shouted angrily, "You forgeta pay!" He made a strong-arm fist at them, and the German sailors, not understanding his pigeon English, thought it was intended at them. The first let go of Milo's arm, and he walked down the gangway as quickly as dignity would permit and got into the cab.

"You save-ah my life-ah!" he told him and gave him 20,000 lire.

As there was no American Consulate in Brindisi, Milo went to the local city police, located on the three floors above a Campenelli bike shop.

"You are probably going to think that I am crazy," he

told their only federal police inspector, "but I believe there is a boat in the harbor sheltering a Nazi war criminal."

"That may be, Signor, but there is no law in Italy against being a Nazi," he explained casually.

"You must be kidding?" The man shook his head and shuffled some papers on his desk.

"Of course, we will extradite for prosecution, but you would need to be a foreign government, wouldn't you?" Milo could see that he was talking to the new class of police bureaucrat. Intelligent, university trained, sharply dressed, completely acclimated to red tape, and, incidentally, a communist by political affiliation as demonstrated by an Italian party button in his lapel.

"But this man has already been prosecuted," Milo stammered. "I'm not talking about just some Gestapo captain, I'm talking about Martin Bormann!"

"Martin Bormann?" he said, raising his eyebrows, looking up at him as though Milo were more interesting than his last statement. "You have seen Martin Bormann in Brindisi?"

"Not exactly," Milo had to concede. The inspector smiled and sharpened a pencil until it was a perfect needlepoint and returned it to a cup full of other perfect pencils. "But I know he's here." Milo told him who he was; the bureaucrat had heard of the Hitler diaries and even recalled Milo's name. The more Milo talked, the more credibility he gained for his story. Finally he made a series of phone calls to

the Justice Ministry in Rome.

Milo did not understand Italian, but he could tell from the shortness of the conversations that he was getting nowhere.

"Signor Marsden," he concluded, "There is unfortunately nothing we can do. If you had a picture, or even a witness who could verify the presence of Martin Bormann on this ship, then maybe the Ministry of Justice would allow us to make a search of the vessel, but . . ."

"I cannot believe that Martin Bormann can be sitting in your harbor and no one can do anything about it."

"They cannot believe that Martin Bormann can be sitting in our harbor." Milo shook his head in disgust and turned back towards the door. "But wait," he called after him, "I did not say that no one could do anything; I am merely telling you that the Italian Government is unwilling to act without more evidence. Here," he said, scribbling a number on the back of a police envelope. "This, perhaps, is the solution."

Milo took the number and asked him what it was.

"It is the number in Rome for the Soviet Embassy. They will listen to you. They are always interested in war criminals."

"I know, that's why they put so many in the Politburo," Milo replied.

If the inspector was offended, he didn't show it, he merely shrugged his shoulders and returned to his papers.

"I thought you wanted help."

"You know their number," Milo said irritably; "you talk to them." He tossed the envelope back on his desk and walked out.

Milo didn't know what he was going to do about his suspicions, but he had no intention of calling on the Soviet ambassador. Whoever benefited from a pact with the Soviets? He wandered the streets of Brindisi for several hours, weighing the options left open to him. Quite obviously he could get on the Fliegende Hollander, but, then, could he get off? Finally, it occurred to him that he might get Erika off easily enough. He checked into the Hotel Lucina and addressed a note to her on the desk stationery. It was short, cordial, and did not even hint at anything more than his desire to take advantage of a coincidental meeting in Brindisi. He told her where he was and invited her to meet him for lunch the following day. She would probably see through it and guess that he was on to her. But on the other hand, he had acted rather stupidly in the past, and, he thought, she just might take the note at face value, not believing him capable of finding her out. For five thousand lire he was able to enlist the help of a little Italian boy who had been panhandling the tourists in front of the hotel. From a discreet distance, Milo watched as he handed over the letter to a seaman on duty.

He slept poorly that evening. There was a certain

indefinable excitement in the idea of meeting with Erika again. He wanted to think that it was due to all of the cloak and dagger business he was involved in, but that was not the idea that kept crowding into his mind. In fact, there was no one real idea at all. There was only the image of Erika as he had last seen her.

She looked on without expression as he descended in the gilded-cage elevator that dropped through the ceiling into the hotel lobby. She had been sitting on a couch, wearing sandals, culottes, and a sweatshirt from the ill-fated Munich Olympics. "What a pleasure to see you again," he said, taking her hand warmly and kissing her cheek, gently tilted in that expectation.

"And to see you," she said with a faint smile and calm manner. "Shall we take drinks on the patio?"

They walked out of the lobby and found a place along the raised balustrade that ran half the length of the old hotel and separated the hotel proper from the busy street and sidewalk. "So, tell me, what have you been doing lately?" she asked with moderate interest.

Milo took a deep breath and wondered if he were up to pulling the whole business off. Erika's eyes were sparkling and relaxed. She was perfectly at home with the rendezvous-- she would see through him, he thought before answering. "Not a great deal. You heard about the book, I assume. Since then, I've just been traveling a bit."

She laughed as though he had said something irresistibly

charming. "We have a saying in Germany, 'Too much modesty is pride.' You are really too, too modest, Milo."

"I don't know what you mean," he said easily enough.

"Yes, but I have also heard about your recent adventures in Munich. Word is you've killed a Nazi, and in the Soldier's Crypt no less."

"Oh . . . that was an accident."

"There you go--you see, Hochmut--pride. It was no easy thing, I'm sure, slaying a 65-year-old artist." Milo could see now that her smile had been in anticipation of the fun she would have needling him. Her laughter was a mockery. "We sent flowers as soon as we heard. We know what's been going on."

"I know what's been going on as well," he said. "I know that you killed Schulzinger and Birgit. I know!" Her lack of visual response undercut the emphasis of his small speech.

"You know all that? And you still wanted to have lunch with me? How flattering. But I must confess, I could not have possibly done all those things. Kill Schulzinger--myself?"

"You had someone do it for you."

"And Birgit? Now that's vicious. I loved Birgit, you should know that."

"But you forged a note?"

She looked somewhat surprised. "I am glad to see, from

from time to time, that I underestimate you. I did not overestimate you, did I, when I assumed that you did not just run into me in Brindisi?" Milo nodded and snapped his fingers at a red-vested waiter for another drink. "So you found me and want me to confirm your suspicions. And if I do, what will you do then? Revenge? Well, do what you must, but just don't make a scene in the restaurant."

The idea of revenge had not occurred to him. Neither had he considered justice. "I just want to know what the truth is."

"I suppose I could bow this once to your intellectual curiosity."

"Who killed Schulzinger?"

"You wouldn't know him--one of our friends in Vienna."

"And Birgit?"

This question was unlike the other. It was more difficult for her to continue her uninterested pose. "Klaus Kranz."

"Kranz? Why?"

"It wasn't my idea. I suspected it might happen from the way she was acting, but . . . I felt really very bad about it--you saw me."

"You seem to have recovered."

"I understand necessity."

"Necessity? You must be mad."

She slouched down in her chair and looked about impatiently before she answered. "Look, the world does not turn on love, my lieber Mann. People do many nice things in the name of love--they write poems and songs, visit their in-laws and send chocolates, but love doesn't run governments, start or end wars, feed the masses, or build the race. You've studied history, you should realize that. What is needed is sacrifice--not sentimentality, duty--not moral dilettantism."

"Yes, go to it," he agreed sarcastically, "build the Herrenvolk with the sacrifice of others."

"Yes, the master-race since you use the word. And why not? Is there anyone you know who is going to do anything better with his life? Believe me, I would die for it. Now if I would sacrifice my life for the movement, why then should I refuse the sacrifice of others? That they did not intend to die for the movement makes no difference. Everyone must die, and most die as they live, for nothing beyond the limitations of their own selfish lives. I loved Birgit, and so it was my sacrifice as well as hers . . ."

What could Milo say? It was clear that he was talking to an ideologue. He had met fanatics of this ilk in college--wonderful, charming, humble and well-behaved Chinese exchange students who would kill for Mao. Birgit had not been murdered, according to the morality of the new order, but utilized, and Erika was not a criminal, but a soldier in a war that had never ended. A confusing sense of sadness and

frustration came over him as she went on. Even a criminal will eventually listen to good sense. Finally, he had to interrupt. "Erika, why don't you shut up--your words make me sick!"

"But you know I'm right," she said confidently.

"What in the hell are you talking about? The past? That's lost. People are just people, and if they want to live as long and selfishly as they can, who can blame them? Death is final and all death is meaningless."

"You are just a whining egotist. But that is neither here nor there. The fact is you are wrong. Yes, the past is lost, but the future is yet to be won--or lost. The war continues--just because you cannot see it . . ."

"What war?"

"The war between the Russians and the Germans--it never ended. Have you never seen the black Obelisk in Munich? Fifty thousand Bavarians went with Napoleon to Moscow. And why? Because the people from the Steppes have always been our enemy. We know it, and they know it. If they can, they will destroy Germany." Milo could not help staring at her intensity. She read the look well enough, and it infuriated her and even further inflated her argument. "What, are you blind? Half of Germany is already in slavery, and the other half is in danger of the same fate. We will not stand by and see Germany become another Poland."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about 80 armored Soviet divisions over-

running all of West Germany in forty-eight hours. No warning, no buildup, just a breakthrough at the Fulda Pass and race to the Rhine. I'm talking about the greatest military camp in the history of the world poised 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on the East German and Czech borders. And when the offensive comes, and it surely must unless we do something, NATO will not stop them, and certainly not the Americans or their so-called nuclear umbrella--that is a farce!"

"How's that?" Milo had to ask. He was perfectly aware of the United States' pledge to NATO security, the nuclear umbrella.

"Be realistic. Having lost the coming conventional war in Europe, do you really think the Americans will escalate to offensive nuclear weapons? American missiles will never leave their silos to defend Europe."

He shook his head, but in his mind he understood very well what she was saying. She wasn't the first to make this argument. Many in Europe had considered the possibilities, and that was why, in part, many European governments were seeking stronger economic and diplomatic ties with the East. She could sense this as she pushed her arguments forward. "Now let's be honest. Birgit was a lovely girl, but she was involved in the ultimate fate of Germany, and she threatened to bring all our plans to ruin. She tipped her hand--she was going to tell you everything. In a way, we might very well say that you killed her. But really, why not get above the

level of petty sexual relationships? What is one, two, three, four, a dozen, a hundred lives balanced against the fate of eighty million Germans?"

"You intend to kill others?"

"Others will die no doubt. They will have to. That is Realpolitik"

"You intend to kill me, don't you?" he asked, looking around the patio, wondering which of the guests of the hotel was waiting for the signal.

"There's no one here, if that's what you are wondering about," she said reading his mind. "But you might live just a little longer if you return to America, stop digging around after us, stop getting in the way. You said yourself you aren't interested in revenge." She set her drink down and pulled a bill from her purse and stuffed it in her glass. "Before I leave I will tell you something that will amuse you, Mr. Marsden. I am just as human as you are, but I don't make it a cause celebre--and I don't let it interfere with what I must do. I have not been immune to your prep-school manners and charm; I have even found you suitable,"--a word that confused him in this context while she continued--"but I am not Birgit. If you get in our way, if you do not stop, I will kill you myself. Do you understand?" she said, rising to her feet.

"I understand you perfectly well, Erika von Sigmund?"

"You know my mother's name," she said coolly.

"And your father's," he said, bluffing, but it had its

effect, and her face turned hard and menacing, as though she were contemplating murder then and there.

"Yes, who was that, pray tell?"

"Who else?" he said easily. "The highest ranking Nazi still at large in the world today: the man behind the diaries, I mean, of course, Martin Bormann." Her face relaxed, she laughed heartily, covered her mouth with her left hand and tried to compose herself.

"I am really delighted that you really don't know who you are dealing with. So be it, it is better you do not."

"Axmann then," Milo guessed again.

"You know, I have always been concerned," she said, "I have always worried that it might be obvious. Milo, my love, look at this face? Isn't it obvious who I am?" she bantered. He couldn't think to answer, he was so taken with the expression on her face--haughty and serious. He looked down at the mint leaf in the bottom of his drink and finished the last half swallow. "But really, I must go now. It has been charming seeing you again, but I must get back. We are sailing, Papa and a few friends. Auf Wiedersehen."

Milo watched her walk away in her measured and confident pace, descending the mezzanine steps leading to the lobby, he imagined her walking through the glass doors, and then saw her standing momentarily, trying to hail a cab. But who was she if not Bormann's daughter? Who did she look so very much like that she had thought it would be obvious? He found it hard to imagine. Perhaps to an old German who had known all

the leading Nazis by their faces . . . sure. But there was something to her face. The first day in the Englischer she had reminded him of a person or a type--perhaps an archetype, he thought. But it was not to Bormann's or Goering's or Goebbel's or even Hess's face that she bore the slightest resemblance. Then he had an uneasy moment of confusion and certainty. Could this really be Hitler's child? He had never considered it seriously. Then who was the "Papa" who awaited her? Hitler was dead. But he had seen that face before, everyone had seen it, standing in the rear-seats of Mercedes Benz convertibles and in the reviewing stands on the Zeppelin fields of Nuremburg. Hers was indeed the young, feminine imprint of Adolf Hitler.

Was this a ridiculous idea? Yes, but he could not doubt the final recognition in his mind. He ran through the patio and down through the lobby after her. A cab was just pulling away, and she was sitting back in the seat as he sidled up beside the car, his one hand on the door handle.

"Erika!" he shouted through the open window, "The man in the boat, Papa--Hitler, ja?"

She leaned forward and told the driver to stop. "If you will get in, I will tell you the truth!" she said, leaning out the window.

'Yes,' he thought, 'she would love to have me in the cab now that I know the truth.' He waved the cabby on. As Milo backstepped towards the hotel, she turned in her seat and watched him through the rear window. He smiled; she looked

concerned. For once he felt, if not superior, at least on equal footing with her, and he rather wondered if the fatal drive with her would not have had a certain recompense.

CHAPTER XXV

Inspector Beltrametti watched with a pair of binoculars as Milo walked the last couple of hundred yards to the Fliegende Hollander. Milo was in high spirits, almost a cocky mood, and he waved familiarly to the several seamen casting off as he approached the gangway.

One of them recognized him from the day before, waved back, smiled and took the catch off his duty pistol.

"Nehmen Sie mich zu Ihre Fuehrer," Milo said casually, a phrase that can be translated two ways, the silliest being, "Take me to your leader."

He asked Milo to place his hands upon his head and frisked him thoroughly. As they walked up the plank, he once again felt the muzzle of the sidearm in the small of his back. Up on the first deck, he noted the highly polished brass handles and railing. The ship was older, but luxury vintage in every detail.

The officer of the deck met them as they boarded and asked a few rapid questions of the seaman before turning his attention upon Milo. "I am the first officer, whom did you wish to speak to?" he said politely but with authority.

"Adolf Hitler."

He gazed at him for a moment until they were interrupted

by one of the seamen asking permission to castoff. "Ja
naturlich," he replied. "Excuse me for asking, mein Herr,
but who are you?"

"My name is Milo Marsden. The Fuehrer is on board?"

"I know of you. We were not expecting another visit from
you, Herr Marsden. You will please follow me." He turned,
and Milo followed him down the varnished wood deck and down a
circular stairway below and into a small octagonal parlor.
"You are to wait here--that is not a request. Please take a
seat." He left directly, leaving behind the seaman, still
armed with the drawn automatic. Milo felt the deck below
move ever so slightly and heard the propeller engage and
slowly churn them away from shore.

"I have never met the Fuehrer," he said, hoping to get
confirmation of what he planned to prove. The seaman looked
at him with curiosity. "You can imagine what a big day this
is for me." Milo grinned and started to stand up, but the
seaman motioned him back down with his pistol. In the center
of the room was a round mahogany table inlaid with a map of
the world. Overhead, a paddle fan spun quietly. "Yup, Alles
ist erste Klasse," he said as he waited.

In a few minutes the Italian Coast Guard would be
bringing the ship under tow. Beltrametti would be leading
the party under the pretext of looking for him, and he hoped
by then, of course, to have either seen the Fuehrer or, at
least, confirmed his presence. But as time passed, he began
to worry that he would be kept in isolation until the ship

had been brought under. He could hear the sea beating against the hull, the engine humming at full speed, the nautical bells sounding the quarter hours. He began to wonder, 'Where in the hell is Beltrametti and the Italian cavalry? Adolf Hitler is on this ship, isn't he?'

After about an hour, he heard a key in the cabin door to his left, and Erika stepped in, looking even more annoyed than when he had last seen her. 'Yes, yes,' he said to himself, 'the Italian Navy is in pursuit, they must be, and she knows why.'

"You are such a stupid man," she said, waving the armed escort away.

"Aber, meine Fuehrerin" he politely stammered.

"That is quite all right. This man is completely harmless--Go on, I will see to him." He holstered his gun, bowed and left through the outside portal.

Milo smirked stupidly at seeing her again and said, "He called you meine Fuehrerin."

"I told you to stay away," she said with disgust.

"It's hard; you should be flattered."

She slapped his face, like an expert, and he consciously checked his instinctive response to cover the stung cheek with his hand. Instead, he smiled again. "Unless you wish to die right here, now, follow me." She stormed through the door by which she had come and led him down another hall, this one considerably more luxurious and wider than the other. A Persian rug on the floor and small curious oils,

mostly Flemish, hung at precise intervals along the corridor. She opened a door to a small cabin, and he entered. Without a single word, she closed the door behind him and locked it. Her footsteps echoed as she walked briskly down the hall and slammed still another door. He did not see her again till after the sun had set through his small porthole and he had given up the idea of rescue.

They sailed due south from Brindisi, skirting the coast of Italy at several points, but by late afternoon, the gold and olive landscapes and white breakers had fallen away, and they were plowing through open sea. His cabin was small, but, otherwise, guest class. He had a marble sink, a toilet, a small writing desk, and a bookcase loaded with the plays of Schiller, Schlegel's translations of Shakespeare, and the speeches of the Fuehrer. Beside his bunk there was also a bookstand full of old and current pornography from France and the United States. It was hard to appreciate the full gravity of the situation. Finally, there was a gentle rap at the door.

"Milo? Milo, are you there?" a familiar voice whispered through the door vents of the door.

"Carlyle?" Milo was astonished. "Carlyle, is that you?"

"Hey, mate," he returned in a natural voice. "I understand you've stowed away with us for this cruise."

"Carlyle, what in the hell are you doing here?--can you open the door?"

"Sorry, mate, no key, but I'm sure we'll have you out of there after a bit."

"What are you doing here?"

"Oh, well, that's a story. You know I was on my way to Australia and was most of the way across the United States when I met this old guy who completely changed my life. You know, I don't think I've ever been so happy."

"Yes, but . . ." Milo said but Carlyle talked through his interruption. "There I was in Salt Lake City, touring the place they call Temple Square--you really ought to see it, Milo, it's a beautiful spot and has some of the most interesting churches I've ever seen. Naja, I met this fellow there, a pencil manufacturer from Baltimore and we started talking religion . . ."

"You met a Mormon," Milo said, wondering what this had to do with his presence on the Fuehrer's steamer.

"Mormon? No, actually, he was a Jehovah's Witness, a tourist like myself. We got talking about Religion and God, the hereafter, the whole purpose of history, and I suddenly began to realize that I was at long last talking to someone who knew why I had the feelings and temptations that I had and why I was unable to come to grips with them."

He heard a latch door down the hall and Carlyle broke off his story. "What's happening, Carlyle? Hey, is Hitler on board?" There were more footsteps in the hall and Carlyle said, "Good evening, fair sister."

Erika unlocked the door and stepped in. Behind her,

Carlyle leaned his head in. Milo recognized the threadbare Hawaiian shirt and the leather sandals. He swept his long hair back out of his eyes and smiled. Erika had changed her clothes and was now dressed in a lime-colored evening dress--something expensive and modestly seductive, with a straight neckline and a long skirt which tapered to her knees. Underneath, she wore white silk stockings which glistened on her slender legs. "This is for you," she said, tossing a black tie at him. "Try to put it on without choking yourself."

"Oh, are we dining out?"

She turned around to Carlyle in the hall and gave him a simple command which he readily obeyed. "Rudi, get dressed." He winked at Milo and trotted on down the hall, his sandals slapping against his heels as he ran. "We are dining with some of Papa's guests."

"I see you've met Carlyle?" Milo said.

"There is no such person named Carlyle. You were talking to my brother--my half-brother," she corrected herself, "Rudolf. Well, do you want to go to dinner or would you rather take a meal in here--the choice is yours?"

He rolled down his shirt sleeves and buttoned his collar. "Say, maybe you could give me a pointer or two. Do we gosestep into the dining parlor or what?"

"No," she said with a vague smile, "imagine yourself swimming with sharks and act accordingly." Milo put on the tie, and she took his arm and led him out of the cabin to the

main dining room above deck.

He was a little disappointed at not meeting the Fuehrer. "Where's Papa?" he asked, but received no answer. "Hitler is on board, isn't he?" Milo had given some thought to the idea that afternoon while he waited in his cabin. No one had yet confirmed his suspicions. And it was difficult now to imagine how Hitler could have cheated death with all of the evidence to the contrary. Unless one was willing to believe that the entire bunker staff (including Hans and Theresa Schram) had lied, unless one could further explain how, with Soviet troops swarming over every block of the city, Hitler had managed to escape Berlin, it was pretty hard to believe.

The others were waiting for them as they entered the stateroom; three formally dressed men were grouped about Carlyle: Dr. Gunter Frank, MD; Captain Walter Henkel, commander of the ship; and Artur Axmann, former Jugendfuehrer.

Like a debutante, Erika led him into the center of the group and introduced him to the other guests. "Don't you see, we are all just pawns in God's hands? And you and Papa did no more than God intended--after all, everything eventually plays into his hands--right?" There was an uncomfortable pause as the three others searched for a suitable response to Carlyle's glib sermon.

"Yes, Rudi, there certainly would be no state of Israel today," Dr. Frank said after a moment, "if it were not for us."

"Yes, quite right," Axmann concurred.

Seeing that they were now all assembled, Carlyle made the formal announcement. "Gentlemen, the Fuehrer regrets that he is not feeling up to eating with us but he sends his apologies and bids us go ahead. Shall we eat?" Carlyle-Rudi then directed them to their seats and rolled his eyes comically at Milo as he took a seat next to Erika.

The dinner was to last all evening. Periodically Dr. Frank or Axmann would ask Carlyle a question, and the others felt obliged to pause from eating while Carlyle explained and digressed. "What did Rudolf think about the recent election in Germany?"

"Well, you know I've always felt--as has father--that deep red is the best color for political posters." In fact, he had a theory of color. "The Green Party will never win because flat green makes people want to vomit." Besides that, he continued, the name of the party was all wrong. Names and titles are very important. Napoleon, for instance, should never have given up the title of First Counsul-- Beethoven had destroyed his Eroica dedication to Napoleon when Napoleon had taken to himself the title of Imperator. Yet all this is beside the point, because Carlyle didn't believe in political parties anymore. "There's only one party worth belonging to, gentlemen--God's party. All this other stuff, nationalities, politics, blood lines, races, they're outmoded concepts. I've told Papa that," he said simply, "but he insists on clinging to the old ideas. But

mark me, the world is changing, the world is being prepared for the Coming of our Lord."

The moment was punctuated by the entrance of a steward with a large silver tray, a lightly braised pig on a bed of parsley. All present, save Rudi, smiled or grunted approvingly.

"Oh God, not pig? Must we eat pig?" Rudi complained.

"You never used to object to ham," Erika answered quietly.

"Papa wouldn't tolerate it. He misses a dinner and suddenly you all revert to carnivores. I'm sorry, but I just can't stand the look of it. It looks so much like a roasted baby!"

"Oh Rudi," Erika said as though he were a noisy pet, "be still." He was easily deflated, and they continued their dinner for several minutes in peace, Erika comfortably tolerating the others, Dr Frank staring across the table at Milo, and then, from time to time, sneaking a glance at Erika.

"Marsden, you say," Dr. Frank said finally, abruptly, somewhat suspiciously. "What is that? German?"

"It's a Boston name," Milo said facetiously.

"Boston, gut," he said nodding his head in approval.

"And your mother--what was her name?"

"Wie-sen-thal" he said lying, articulating precisely for greatest effect.

"Wiesenthal?" he asked himself. "Wiesenthal?" He

mumbled something to Captain Henkel beside him. Milo smiled and Erika jabbed Milo under the table with her fork. The Doctor still looked alarmed by his joke.

"He is telling a joke," Carlyle interjected. "Milo is no more Jewish than I am." But the doctor did not seem satisfied until Carlyle added, "You know, Milo and I go back quite a ways. As a matter of fact, Milo would never have become involved with the Hitler diaries were it not for me, what with my talking of Klaus Kranz and my recommendation that he go to Munich." Carlyle sighed sympathetically and continued, "Milo is my own personal guest."

Even so, Dr. Frank, who with his short grey crew cut had a head that looked like an ostrich, continued to stare at Milo. "Frank, that's German isn't it?" Milo asked.

He wiped his long thin mouth and said simply "Natürlich."

"And you are a doctor--where have you practiced?"

"Here and there," he said evasively.

"Doctor Frank was at Belsen," Carlyle explained in a very understated manner, "but he does not like to talk about it much."

"Well," Milo said, looking about at his fellow dinner companions, "if any of us become ill, we will certainly know who to turn to." Erika smirked sardonically. "It's just a pity that the Fuehrer couldn't join us tonight--Gentlemen, a toast to the Fuehrer, Adolf Hilter." Even Erika seemed pleased with the gesture. They all responded genuinely.

"Here, here," Axmann said, raising his glass high. After

several more toasts Axmann and Captain Henkel laughed comfortably, and Erika sat back in her chair a bit more relaxed. Carlyle produced a camera and insisted on a gregarious round of photos.

There was too much food and too much drink. By eleven everyone's face was flushed pink, and Milo thought they all looked at him rather benignly now. Did they consider him one of them or not? Finally Milo asked, "I understand that the diaries were written some time after the end of the war." Several of his dinner companions nodded in agreement. "But how did the Fuehrer escape?"

"That was easy. Seaplane," Axmann replied and looked up from his pastry proudly. "Admiral Doenitz had mentioned to me that he had a few Junkers in Kiel which had been fitted with pontoons for sea duty. Knowing the area around the Havel River, I felt certain that a successful pickup could be made in that sector of Berlin after dark. It was an easy matter as no one expected a seaplane landing," he finished, folding his napkin and placing it beside his plate.

Milo remembered now how Erika had gotten him out of Munich and directly to a Swiss lake south of Basel. Indeed, it was so simple. "But how did you get everyone to agree on the suicide story?"

"Oh, there was no agreement on that, the suicide was merely eine kleine Kunst." Milo stumbled on the word Kunst. 'Art?' he thought and remembered a secondary now somewhat archaic meaning--'trick.' "A sort of magic trick, a sleight-

of-hand as it were," Axmann continued and glanced at Erika for permission to continue. "What was his name? Karl? Years before we had found a fellow who looked remarkably like the Fuehrer, though two inches shorter. We kept him in a Schloss near Berlin. Now and then we'd pull him out to take the Fuehrer's place--on certain occasions that did not require more than the presence of the Fuehrer--band box duty, we called it."

"Yes, his was quite a remarkable likeness until he opened his mouth," Dr. Frank added. "Terrible overbite--buck teeth."

"And you simply shot him?" Milo asked Axmann.

"Poor fellow, he was a dead man either way. No one with his face would have been safe anywhere after the war. Someone had given him a cyanide capsule. But lest you think this was all my doing--some credit must go to the good doctor who recommended we shoot him in the face to keep anyone from looking too closely."

"And to destroy the dental work?" Milo asked.

"Partially. Though we didn't really need to destroy the dental records. You see, the so-called Fuehrer's dentist in Berlin worked on Karl's not the Fuehrer's teeth. The dentist didn't know that of course, but the recovery of his dental records by the Russians was all we needed to cover our tracks." And the shoes on the floor, the coat on the couch, the changing of the SS guard, Milo thought, everything that seemed so peculiar to Herr Schram that last evening in the bunker was now explained. By the end, the bunker staff knew

very well the Fuehrer's smoking jacket. Yet, an ill-fitting coat or shoes on the Fuehrer would have been a dead giveaway.

"It went off perfectly or nearly. Except for the Fegelein business," Axmann continued, referring to Eva's brother-in-law. "Fegelein was talking as though he were on to it. He had learned from some of his contacts in the SS that Hitler's double had been brought to Berlin, and had kept asking questions about it. I pretended that I didn't know, of course, when, in fact, it had been my idea to begin with. He didn't actually say that he suspected what we had in mind, but he kept asking, 'What's the Fuehrer's double doing in Berlin?' He was no fool, that Fegelein."

"Most ingenious," Milo concluded agreeably, but inside an anger was tightening his chest and he felt a bit like overturning the table. Of all of Hitler's crimes, this seemed the most vile--to betray the woman who had returned to die and for no other reason than simply to share his fate. Obviously the marriage had simply been more theater--another piece of evidence that would point to Hitler's suicide. "And whom," Milo said full voiced, letting his voice betray his anger and disgust, "whom did you get to double for the Fuehrer's devoted bride; whose body filled in for the Fuehrer's most loyal, most beloved Eva?" Milo gestured ridiculously with his fork, pointing it at the three men. They were insulted. He was no longer one of them. "Well? Now wait a minute, you gentlemen can't tell me that the Fuehrer would stoop so low as to make sure his escape by

killing the woman who had adored him and shared his bed?"

Milo was not surprised to see that he had touched a sensitive nerve. Erika turned a diffident eye upon him. He put the fork down. She placed her silverware crosswise on her plate and covered both ceremoniously with her napkin. Captain Henkel, the majordomo of the group, immediately stood, as did the others, and pulled out her chair. Nodding a polite acknowledgment to the others, she walked from the room followed by a cabinboy who held the door.

"Your impertinence was only amusing at first," Captain Henkel said, the next to leave.

"Did you enjoy your last meal?" Axmann inquired snidely as he rubbed by Milo. After a few moments, all had departed, save Carlyle. The two ate their rice pudding, and he walked Milo back to his cabin.

"I don't think I'd worry too much about that," he said just before saying good night.

"You mean being killed?"

"Oh, you'll be all right." He gave Milo a chummy punch in the arm. "As a matter of fact, the way I understand it," he said, "you're practically family--if you get my drift."

Milo didn't get the drift. Even so, Milo went into his cabin feeling considerably better, a little proud of himself perhaps.

For the remainder of the evening he wrote between the lines of Schiller's plays. He began by saying that he had translated the Hitler diaries, seen them through publication

and later discovered Hitler floating around, thirty years later, in a yacht. "If anyone reads this, would they please notify my father in New York," he asked, and finished with his address and phone number. Milo closed the book and put it back on the bookshelf, noticing a cockroach slither into a crack in the shelf and disappear. Like a note in a bottle, there was no telling when or if at some future time, some curio-shop bargain hunter or perhaps some student of German literature would come across the auctioned volume and, in reading it, make a discovery more significant than the one Milo had been believed to have made: no, the Hitler diaries had not been authentic; but yes, they had been written by Hitler.

The idea that the future world would be a Nazi-dominated sphere from one pole to the other only briefly crossed his mind. Once, certainly, that had been a possibility. But no longer. Even if Bavaria did appoint Dolfuss minister, he had a long road to consolidating power in Bonn. And even if West Germany did, once again, become fascist, what was West Germany, a country roughly the same geographical size as the state of Oregon, against the entire Soviet Empire? In his past political statements, Dolfuss had said that he would demand the removal of all foreign troops from West German soil. But what did he think was holding the Russians back? Because of the recent election he would soon be Minister of Bavaria, but did he still really intend to push for Germany's withdrawal from NATO? If that wasn't a clear invitation to

the Bolsheviks--what was? Either that was all just rhetoric, or Dolfuss was a fool.

Around 12:30, he undressed for bed, suspecting that the book in which he should have recorded his last observations should probably have been the pornography beside the bed. Who reads Schiller anyway? Once again, there was a tap at the door, and Erika entered, leaving a guard at attention in the hall.

"Ah, just seeing if you were still here," she said quite seriously.

"Still in the flesh," Milo said for lack of a catchy come-back.

She gave him a long hard look like 'What am I going to do with you?' "We do have a problem," she said finally.

"Don't worry, I'm sure there's a final solution."

"I have been talking with Papa. You can relax, you'll be safe enough for a few days." Milo shrugged his shoulders and turned down the covers on the bunk.

"Just, just kill the lights on the way out," he requested, settling down, dismissing her with his inattention.

"You don't look very relieved," she observed.

"Well, when you're all prepared to die for the movement," he said sarcastically, "it is a little annoying to be put off another day."

She closed the door by leaning back on it. "Perhaps you have been looking for martyrdom." The possibility of a

suicidal maniac searching for a butcher intrigued her.

"You got it," Milo retorted, hitting the pillow a couple of times and laying back on the heavily starched pillowcase.

"I don't believe you. I haven't believed a word you've said since you came on board. You had better tell me the truth," she demanded.

In a bored tone Milo yawned and told her about the Italian police inspector with the clever plan.

She laughed out, "The Italian Police? You gave your life over to them?" Milo couldn't help smiling a little himself. The whole thing was begining to take on the aspect of a black, but comic, light opera.

She had suspected all this. "If it will make you feel any better, I understand from the captain that an Italian frigate did follow us out of the bay, but we were really much too fast for it, and at the three-mile limit--in international waters--it is an act of piracy to stop a vessel."

Milo turned off the nightstand lamp beside him and pulled the covers up.

"You still surprise me," she said. The moonlight through the cabin porthole illuminated her dress, made it glow and float in the air, and although her face was in the dark, he could see that she was still smiling. Satisfied or curious, he couldn't tell which, and then he realized that she wanted to make love to him.

He thought he understood then what it was she admired.

Her Nazi mentality admired the elan with which he positioned himself on the gallows. What she didn't understand was that he was careless with fatigue--tired of everything mixed up with this business: the cleverness he had practiced which had led to such stupidity, the betrayals he had committed in trying to protect others. Simply enough, he had come to realize that his fastidious scruples and values meant nothing in a world where there is either no relation, or an inverse relation between intention and results. Yes, he supposed, in a way he had been moving towards the suicidal act.

But the matter was now beyond him. They had taken his fate out of his hands when he walked up the boarding plank. It had occurred to him to 'lift' a steak knife at dinner--something that he might use to defend himself later. But such heroics seemed beyond him, out of character now and futile. It began with seeing old Jacob Schulzinger slumped over in his chair and continued with the image he had of Birgit leaning out of a blood-dimmed bath. Finally, all this made his own death not more real and threatening, but less.

CHAPTER XXVI

"No apology is necessary, my friend," said Axmann genially as he stood to welcome Milo to the breakfast nook that had been set on one of the lower decks that faced off the stern of the ship.

"That is good, as I did not intend to make any," Milo said, and took a seat next to Erika.

Axmann, unlike the previous night, seemed generous and in high spirits. "As the Fuehrer himself said of you this morning, this young man of Erika's is no flatterer--the Fuehrer hates sycophants."

Milo was surprised to hear that he had been a subject of conversation with the Fuehrer, and pulled himself up to the linen-spread table. A steward placed a large pastry before him. "You Nazis have made it very difficult for us to flatter you," he responded. But Axmann's ego was indeflatable.

"Mind you, you mustn't judge an entire play on the basis of the last scene. You know," he continued, relaxing back in his deck chair, waxing philosophical and gesturing to the sea as though it were an audience, "when I was growing up in Freiburg, there was a certain pastor who had quite a reputation for good deeds and sacrifice. He was retired when

he began to dodder, but he still tried to keep his hands active in the community by giving Bible lessons to young ladies from one of the private schools. He was an example to the community--a real pillar of the Church," he continued with a mischievous smirk. "Then one day, I read in the paper how he was arrested for molesting one of the girls in his charge. You cannot imagine the public outrage. The townsfolk were in arms and for dumping him in the river. I don't know what became of him--perhaps he took his life, but this is not the point. Here was a man who for seventy years behaved himself admirably, and, but for one moment at the end, would have been remembered as a saint. Yes, well, now you must see my point? The Fuehrer did not always behave himself as well as one would like, perhaps, but who does? Besides, in many cases he was not able to do as he would have liked: he was stuck with a choice between two evils. And when one must chose the lesser of two evils, what do you do?" He paused and looked towards Erika for agreement.

Erika applied jelly to the back of a croissant and answered, "Whenever I must choose between evils, Herr Axmann, I always try to pick the one I haven't tried yet."

Perhaps Herr Axmann realized that neither of them had been taking one word of his seriously. He cleared his throat and finished. "Well, I venture to say most of us in the same position would have behaved a good deal worse. People who make their gods out of men have no right to judge them."

Milo could see why Axmann had been so successful at

manipulating the young minds in Nazi Germany given over to his charge. When he wanted to be, he could appear rather avuncular. He was the sort who would, if you would let him, drag all problems of truth and ethics down to the level of friendship, loyalty or false analogy. If he puts his friendly palm on top of my shoulder, I'll knock him down, Milo thought as he stood to leave.

"Yes, I completely understand," Milo agreed affably, "and I am understandably grateful that I have been granted one more day to live."

Axmann brushed pastry crumbs from his pants, unperturbed by Milo's last remark. "What do you mean--another day to live? Let me assure you that we have no intention of killing you. I was talking with the Fuehrer this morning on this matter. No, you are going to be set free in Alexandria--after a suitable time has elapsed, of course, for us to get the Fuehrer safely secreted away. Isn't that right?" he said to Erika for substantiation.

"No, Milo," she said flatly, "the truth is we are going to kill you--he's only saying that because he thinks that if you think you are going to live you will behave better and be less likely to do anything desperate."

Axmann shrugged his shoulders as if to say 'so what?'. "You know what they say, 'Jeder Tag ist ein kleines Leben'--Every day is a little life," he finished, reaching across the deck table for Erika's hand, which he kissed in old-world fashion and strolled on down the deck whistling an old

folk melody. His fat ass, Milo noted, swung left and then right with each stride.

The steward brought him a two-minute egg and Erika sipped her tea and stared off over the foamy wake receding behind them. "Are we going to Alexandria then?" Milo asked indifferently.

"After Crete."

"Why Alexandria?"

"Always asking questions. You're just digging yourself in deeper and deeper, mein Freund."

"Come on, you can trust me," Milo cracked.

"Papa always spends the winters outside Alexandria--at Seraglio."

"Seraglio?"

"Our estate. What did you think, that he's been floating around in a boat since 1945?"

It was interesting to think of Hitler in Egypt all these years, and he wondered why no one had considered the idea. Those who have argued for Hitler's escape have always suspected that he went to Argentina or Paraguay. But Egypt was perfect, what with both King Farouk's and Nasser's hatred of the British and the Jews. Milo wondered how influential the Fuehrer had been in determining Egyptian foreign policy towards Israel, and he realized that it was not only the NDP's colors but the Egyptian flag--also red, white and black--that flapped above them from the standard.

While he ate his breakfast, she continued to stare off

into the blue horizon. Finally her cup, which she had been cradling in her hands, was empty and she returned it to the table. "What were you thinking?" Milo asked.

"I was wondering how much longer Papa would live and what would happen to the party afterwards."

"Are you concerned?"

"Of course, you've seen the idiots and parasites he has about him," she said, as if Papa were a notable contrast to the others.

"And what does Papa have to say about that?"

"He knows what they are, but he still talks about Rudi as if he will come around to his senses--but we both know Rudi's brain is completely addled. Dolfuss is loyal, but I must write his speeches. So ultimately, Father says, I am the only one who can lead the movement. It's his desire that I take over one day."

"Sounds like a good job," Milo reasoned and tried to picture her as a head of state.

"And what were you thinking?" she said, returning the question politely.

"I was wondering if you would like to go for a dunk," he answered and gestured at the wide pale ocean which showed no horizon for the morning haze.

After breakfast, Erika took him on a tour of the ship. The Fliegende Hollander, he learned, had a sister ship. Both had been launched the same year, the one going to the

Fuehrer, the other to the wastrel King Farouk of Egypt. Hitler had paid the expenses for both, though both had been ordered from Swedish shipyards by the late Egyptian monarch.

The Fuehrer had not liked the Pan-American Art Deco interior, and so he had had all the living quarters and staterooms redone, according to his more traditional tastes, which included heavy overstuffed furniture, red Italian marble veneers, and hardwood wainscoting throughout. The ship averaged 30 knots per hour, which was not bad, Erika said, as heavy a vessel as it was. The bulkheads had all been reinforced, and two inches of steel armor had been fitted over the exterior.

Two areas of the ship were of particular oddness. The first was the sick bay in which Dr. Frank worked his wonders on the aging Fuehrer.

"What are these?" Milo asked opening a huge refrigerated locker filled with easily a hundred dangling bags of plasma.

"That's one of the doctor's pet theories. He thinks aging happens first in the blood. So, he has the Fuehrer's blood transfused every couple of weeks or so. I suppose he's a quack, ja?"

"Oh, I don't know, we have a similar idea about automobiles," he said, squeezing one packet of thick cherry red fluid. "Does Papa want to live forever?"

"Doesn't everyone?"

"I'd be content to see Tuesday." Milo closed the refrigerated locker. "Which reminds me, what's keeping me

alive anyway?" He had been wondering why he hadn't been given a coup de grace.

She ignored his question, taking him by the arm and leading him from the sick bay out on to the windy deck. "Well," she said. "Would you like to see the ship's cannon?"

"The ship has a cannon?"

"A regular howitzer. We keep it below deck for emergencies."

"I'd rather you answered my question. When do I get my bullet in the back of the neck?"

She let go his arm and leaned forward over the deck railing where the sea wind blew her hair across her cheeks and eyes. "You might well have been dead for a day now." Milo thought of last night's dinner, the conversation after with Rudi on the deck at midnight, the pleasant breakfast this morning, the whole string of a hundred or so little events and tried to imagine them taking place without him after his death. "You're alive right now only because that was what I wanted," she said, swaying back and forth over the railing. "That's all there is to it."

"But what's it to you?" Milo said, suspicious of her generosity.

She stuttered as though it were a deep confession of guilt, "Well, I'm trying to be kind if you must know. Is that so hard to understand?"

He couldn't help laughing a bit and musing, "So, you're going to keep me alive for two, what, three days awaiting

execution so you can be kind?" He didn't buy it. He walked a few feet down the deck and turned back. "It reminds me of a story from Auschwitz about how the children, just as they went into the showers with their mothers, were given a sweet."

Her neck reddened with anger. "Okay, I guess I don't do it very well," she shouted back through the wind. Milo walked back down the deck shaking his head until he was spotted by a seaman who intercepted him and showed him to his cabin.

CHAPTER XXVII

Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell
To the sides of the pit.
They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee,
And consider thee, saying,
"Is this the man that made the earth to tremble,
That did shake kingdoms,
That made the world as a wilderness
And destroyed the cities thereof?"

-- Isaiah

For the next two days Milo remained in his cabin and had no visitors except for a ship's steward, who brought his dinners on a tray, and Carlyle.

"And how is the Fuehrer this morning or this afternoon, or this evening?" he asked each time the steward came in. And each time his response was the same: "The Fuehrer is enjoying the best of health."

He was pretty old, Milo kept thinking, and if he did die right about now, maybe But the Fuehrer was probably in the best of health, as they said. His death was too much of a long shot to hope for. He also thought about possible escape routes off the ship. In the late afternoon of the

second day the ship stopped dead in the water and weighed anchor. Off in the distance, perhaps ten miles away, was an island. Crete. With a steak knife he might kill a couple of guards, slash his way up to upper deck, steal a life boat and get away. Erika had said, "A person who is willing to die for a cause, is always willing to kill for it." But Milo wasn't at all sure he was that committed to any idea.

Carlyle, who was committed to many ideas, listened to his various plans. "No, that would never work," Carlyle assured him in his doubts, and sat on the edge of the desk opposite his bed. "Too many guards; besides, the situation is not that serious."

"But they're going to kill me, Rudi," Milo reminded him.

"What does Erika know? I've been talking with Papa. I told him I thought all this killing had gone just about far enough, and he nodded. Really, he nodded. I think that I just about have him converted."

"Converted? To letting me go?"

"To Jesus, Milo."

"Adolf Hitler is going to convert to Jehovah Witnessing?" Milo asked incredulously. He began to laugh when he thought of the idea of someone answering his front door and finding Adolf Hitler standing there holding a Bible in one hand and the Watchtower in the other.

Rudi was hurt by Milo's last comment and folded his arms. "Jesus died for all men, for all sins, and for Papa too."

"The man who is responsible for the deaths of twenty,

thirty, what? Forty million people?"

"I wouldn't put the figure quite that high."

"Let's not quibble over millions; the greatest murderer of all times is going to toss me into the Mediterranean with a ship's anchor unless you convert him to Jesus, and you say not to worry? Listen, Carlyle or Rudi or whatever your real name is, it's all well and fine that you've found Christ, but you're not like your father. Let's face it, if there was a Christ, your father is the anti-Christ!"

"You really believe that, Milo?"

Milo shook his head and gazed out his porthole at the meaningless roll of the expansive ocean.

"Believing is a waste of time as far as I'm concerned. I just know what can I know and leave believing to dreamers. But in my opinion, your papa was the monster from the abyss." Carlyle was suddenly on the verge of tears. "Sorry, buddy. I . . . I, quite frankly, don't know--my mother raised me Unitarian," he confessed distractedly.

"What do they believe?"

"Anything or nothing . . . I don't know."

"Come, they must believe in something."

Milo remembered the only three doctrines that all Unitarians assent to: the Universality of God, the Brotherhood of Man, and the Neighborhood of Boston.

That evening he heard a launch from the island arrive and watched as it departed shortly thereafter. There was the

sound of music, and occasionally, he'd hear conversations going by in the hall. About 11:30 the music stopped, the launch from the island reappeared and left. Someone unlocked the door, and Erika came in and shut the door, which was locked behind her.

"Your constantly asking about the health of the Fuehrer has not been appreciated."

"I don't suppose he ever asks about me?"

She held her hands behind her back and walked about the small cabin. On Milo's desk were a few copies of the Watchtower which Rudi had left for his improvement. She paged through a couple and then threw the bunch out through the open port window. "I told you not to follow me--I warned you!" She didn't look at him. Milo lay back on the bed and closed his eyes. The chiffon material from her evening gown rustled as she moved about the room.

Then it occurred to him that she had a more specific reason for her visit than this. "Is it to be now?" he asked, opening his eyes, staring blankly up at the ceiling above his bunk. "Well?" he asked again.

"You aren't really afraid, are you?" she asked and sat beside him on the bunk. "It's only fear that makes death ugly."

"I can't really say that it comes as a big surprise, but there is a certain dread." He felt stupid trying to describe to her his mental state.

"I have never been a sentimental person," she confessed.

"I know."

She picked up his hand. Then she reached over and put her other hand over his heart. "Your hand is as cool as mine, your heart beats as calmly as if you were asleep . . . Remember Milo, in Brindisi I told you then that I was not immune to your charm--do you remember?"

Milo didn't remember much from the conversation in Brindisi, he said. He had been too nervous and confused.

"You didn't show it," she said. "At least not as you did when we first met. Surely you remember the day in the Englischer Garten? I had decided about you then. Klaus had said you were perfect for bringing the diaries out. I had my doubts. I didn't think you would be strong or determined enough to face all the opposition. Kranz had not underestimated you--except at the end."

And she continued to reminisce for a few minutes, but he continued to think about the first thing she had mentioned, that first day in the Englischer, which reminded him of the days he had spent there that summer when the sun had been streaming down like a warm bath. Everything doused in light, the grass dry and matted, the leaves floating overhead, glowing green over shadowy walks. That image of the park, the children playing, the old women talking about their grandchildren, the old men about their youth, and the lovers exchanging intimacies under the giant chestnut trees, all of those things he remembered vividly.

There was nothing in particular that he felt he had left

to do, nothing now to experience that he hadn't experienced, no place he wanted to search out. But there was a desire to recapture all the details. He had discovered himself in Munich. Then he toured it, putting the streets together as he took an imaginary walk down to Marienplatz and from there to the banks of the Isar to see the Deutsche Museum sitting on an isle in the middle like a boat. Every possible memory of Munich he tried to re-envision until he felt Erika leaning forward over his chest and her lips on his.

"I am sorry," she whispered. "I have tried to think of everything. But what is there to do? What would you have done if we set you free in Alexandria?"

"Oh, you know. Gone to the police--gone to the papers. Painted swastikas on the hubcaps of Papa's car," he said, opening his eyes.

"It's not just for Papa--he can't live much longer anyway. But the party. Dolfuss is here, and he, too, says you must go."

"What's Dolfuss doing here?"

"Politics, you know."

"They worked it out very well between the two of them, didn't they?" Erika nodded in agreement. "And the diaries that went to the National Archives, they were intentionally bound improperly to discredit the West German Government--or was that an oversight?"

"Nothing was overlooked. Nothing was unplanned, except Birgit's unreliability and that last night in my apartment."

"Between the two of them, they'll destroy Germany--you know that?"

"They will save Germany."

"By booting the American troops out, by withdrawing from NATO?" he asked mockishly. "You might as well invite the Russians in?"

"Exactly," she said. Milo sat up on his elbows and looked her straight in the eye. "Germany is the key to the balance of power. As it goes, so goes Europe. The Russians know this. The Russians will give us East Germany if we join the bloc, and once we have united with Eastern Germany, we will be the strongest power in the Soviet bloc. Ja? Think of that. Then it will be an easy thing, Papa says, to detach Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary from Russian leadership when the time comes to break out. They all hate the Russians, you know that. And only a unified Germany would be strong enough to lead Eastern Europe out of Soviet domination. It's a perfect plan really. And, in the meantime, Germany will have picked up the Netherlands and Denmark as well."

"What? You must be crazy! The Russians will see through it in a minute." She shook her head. "You think the East Germans are going to allow themselves to become part of your scheme, you expect they will work for you?"

"Many already do."

"You'll start the end of the world! Erika, you've got to listen . . ." Milo started to plead with her, but she placed

her fingers on his lips and shushed him.

"I don't know why you're so worried. Whatever happens, you won't be there to see it." She had been testing him one last time, trying to make him see reason--to gain his assent for the bigger picture. Obviously, he never would come around, she thought. Her shoes fell to the floor, and she lifted her legs up beside his and lay down at his side. She unbuttoned his shirt and passed her hand over his chest.

"I have talked to my father; you will be allowed the dignity of taking your own life," she whispered.

"How?" he asked, hoping they might be foolish enough to give him a gun.

"Poison."

"When?"

"Between now and tomorrow After breakfast, if you wish. It will be easy, nothing more than a falling off to sleep."

At last it was settled. He felt relieved knowing that all the arrangements had been made and agreed upon. "Milo Marsden, I will miss you--you believe that now, don't you?" He wanted to believe her. She kissed him, and he was angry at himself again. Why did he feel such a sudden warmth for her? Someone told him, once, that as a species becomes extinct, it often has sudden urges. But he thought now that he was merely acknowledging a desire that he had always felt for her. There was a shared honesty and respect between them. Unlike the last time they had made love in her Munich

suite, this time she was soft and yielding, and she paid him all the deference of a sacred offering. As for him, realizing that these were his last moments made every sensation and moment exquisite.

"What will Papa say if you get pregnant?" Milo asked later, considering the ironies of the event.

She smiled at him like a cat, and he understood now her sudden sentimentality--indeed, and the cordiality of monsters like Dr. Frank and Axmann towards him. And this had been what Rudi had been referring to in his jokes about becoming one of the family.

Milo sat up beside her and rubbed her flat belly like a genie's lamp. She stopped the motion of his palm with her hands, then brought it to her lips and kissed it. Milo thought for a moment that she might break down--her eyes looked so unnaturally full and shiny.

A little after four in the morning, the two were startled from their sleep by the sound of an explosion which practically shook their bunk and pelted the decks above them with bullets of water. She scrambled to dress over a rocking floor while Milo looked to see if there was anything to be seen from the cabin port. Nothing. The ship's bell was ringing non-stop, and they made their way up, hand in hand, to the captain's deck.

Sitting in the water at about four hundred yards from them was the glistening black hull of a submarine. In the

predawn light, Milo could see men running about on the sub's wet deck, manning a cannon and launching two small motorboats full of men. From its sharp bow-like hull, he judged it to be a old diesel submarine.

On their own decks, half-dressed sailors were running up and down, some with automatic rifles, most just looking for their stations. The submarine let go another round from her cannon and another warning shot exploded about twenty yards from the bow, soaking the decks. Momentarily Axmann and Eugen Dolfuss, both in bathrobes, arrived on deck and shared a pair of binoculars.

"What do you think? Russian?" Dolfuss asked Axmann.

"Or Israeli . . ." A possibility that Milo wished Dr. Frank had been there to appreciate.

The two launches were now nearing their decks, and from the first boat came a voice, via bull horn, speaking in Slavic-German. "Attention, captain and crew of the Fliegende Hollander, we are coming aboard. If you resist, there will be unnecessary bloodshed. Please prepare to receive our search party. We promise no harm will come to any members of the crew. Attention, captain and crew of the Fliegende Hollander . . ."

The voice from the launch identified the sub as a Russian or Soviet Bloc vessel. Milo thought immediately of how Beltrametti had offered to call the Soviet Embassy in Rome. "What will they do--the crew?" Milo asked Erika.

"They will fight, of course."

"Fräulein Hitler," the tall, grey-templed Eugen Dolfuss said to Erika, "Don't you think it would be best if you were to go below deck?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Eugen--if we are torpedoed, that would be the worst place to be," she said insultingly. He bowed ceremoniously and returned to Axmann's side. The crew on the deck now appeared to be preparing to receive the Russian intruders. The launch step-ladder was lowered over the side and a white flag was raised overhead on the bridge. In each of the approaching boats were ten or twelve men, all dressed in black gear, most with guns across their laps or slung over their shoulders. They cut their outboard motors and coasted to the side of the ship.

Milo could have shouted out a warning, but he wasn't sure that the captain hadn't decided on surrender. At any moment he rather hoped to hear the captain make an announcement to the crew to that effect. Then, out of side cabins seamen appeared on deck armed with uzzi machine guns and opened up on the Russian boarding party. Milo and the other guests watched like spectators as the crew leaned over the lower decks and emptied their cartridges into the surprised and almost helpless Russian crew. A few Russians managed to return a few rounds up into the air before being cut down, shoulder to shoulder with frantically wounded and screaming comrades. The launches sank with the dead and wounded crewman.

At approximately the same instant, The Flying Dutchman's

cannon below deck fired its first volley through a raised gun-slat. The recoil shook their deck, but the shell landed harmlessly in the water thirty yards from the sub's conning tower. Milo could hear profanity from decks below as the second volley also went wild. The ship's engine cut in, the anchor chain rattled as they lifted anchor. After a slight pause, the ship began to move forward.

On the deck of the Russian sub, the crew evacuated the deck as its gun crew let go several final rounds. Each landed within seconds of each other, and slammed uselessly into the side of the steel-plated gun boat. From below deck, the ship's cannon vomited again and again, with the results that two more shots exploded wide of the black hull; and now the sub, as well, was getting underway, slinking forward into the water. Then, a third round was fired, and this one scored a direct hit on the sub's conning tower, bursting it into flame just seconds before it disappeared into the black swirling waves. The German crew gave out a shout of triumph, though they did not really know how badly the sub had been hit. Milo heard latches turning behind him and pivoted around. The door into the bridge flew open and Rudi came on deck with a Mauser pistol in his belt and a camera on a sling round his neck.

"Hey, Milo, you want to go down and look at the damage?" Rudi's eyes sparkled with pure excitement, but Milo's focus shifted to the open portal, and he was scarcely able to answer. Through the open hatch, he saw into the bridge

illuminated now only by the ship's control panel. Behind a crewman at the wheel stood Captain Henkel and standing on this side of him, the Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler. His profile was half caught in shadow, half outlined in green, instrument light. He was a frail man now, his formerly corpulent frame now lost in someone else's top coat, but he was still unmistakably the man Milo had seen in the newsreels. He strained and could almost overhear him saying something to Henkel who consequently snapped to attention. Then he turned his back to Milo and lifted a palsied hand with which he patted Henkel's shoulder.

The ship leaned starboard, and the open hatch slammed shut. For the next several minutes the ship would weave hard left and then hard right. Typical anti-submarine tactics, the captain told them moments later when he emerged from the bridge. The Fuehrer was satisfied that the threat had been eliminated, he continued, and has retired to his cabin. Axmann and Dolfuss gave Captain Henkel a hearty congratulations. But it was a half-hearted exultation on Henkel's part, and Milo thought his eyes were full of anxiety as he looked upon Erika. Later he would remember that last non-verbal communication between the two, and he was sure that it was the signal of impending doom for the guests and crew of the Fliegende Hollander. "Fräulein, your father requests your presence. Directly," he emphasized.

"Directly I will go," she answered simply, but showed little intention of leaving Milo's side just then.

"Ja, ja, the Russians," Dolfuss said loitering about on deck, not willing to go below just yet, willing to talk with anyone who wished to talk about what they had just seen. "I guess we gave them something to chew on, ja?" Milo could see now that Erika had been right, Dolfuss was nothing more than an actor. On his own, without a set stage, he was full of nothing but the most pedestrian of observations and responses.

While the ship was cutting through the water at full speed, crew members on lower decks were beginning to relax and laugh with one another, unaware that they were still two hundred miles from a safe port. Also unaware of this, Milo realized only that he had lost his last chance of rescue.

"Don't be too disappointed--the Russians would have slaughtered you with the rest of us," she replied, reading his mind and in answer to his thoughts. Erika and Milo were still on deck when Axmann and Dolfuss gave up looking for periscopes and went back to their compartments below deck, taking their leave of Erika and Milo as they did, but only choosing to acknowledge her. The two stood alone together for several more minutes, looking out over the waves, which were no longer oily black but shimmering blue. The temperature on deck had dropped as the ship reached full speed, and Milo was beginning to shiver.

"In a few minutes it will be daybreak . . ." she said at last and took a deep breath. "You know that Kranz had his good points, too. He used to say, 'History is not really

what you think, but what you remember.' Milo, I want you to remember something. I want you to believe me when I tell you something."

"Is it important that I believe anything right now?"

She too was chilled in the morning air, he thought. She was shaking; only her pale hands riveted to the rail were still. "I'm not a cold-blooded monster without emotions, but I've always been taught to contain them, to control them, to do what was necessary. I knew that Kranz was going to kill Birgit, of course, but I did not know what it would be like until I saw her . . . I wish now that I hadn't--I think now I shall always be able to see her as I remember her now. Milo," she whispered haltingly, "you understand, don't you? You really do?"

He nodded as though he did, as though it was as important to him as it was to her to hear her last confession. "Come, there are a few hours left before . . . Let's go below," Milo said, and pulled her until she leaned against him.

"No. I must join father . . . Milo, now is the time."

Her body beneath her robe was warm, her neck and face damp with seaspray. "Milo, did you hear me?" she said and gently, but firmly, pushed herself back from him. Milo knotted his bathrobe and stalled a moment. He wanted to tell her that he wasn't afraid--that he dreaded only being alone when it happened. He wanted her there holding his hand or lying on him as he passed into endless sleep, but clearly, that would be difficult for her. He turned back towards his

cabin.

"No, Milo," she said urgently, grabbing his sleeve.

"Here, now!."

"Now? What?"

"Jump!"

"Jump?" he asked and scanned the flat horizon. "And drown?"

"And swim."

"They'll just come after me--gun me down in the water," he said.

"Not with that sub around! Hurry!" Milo heard the crew working all about, but there was no one on the captain's deck. He saw now that she was giving him a slim chance. Milo did not kiss her goodbye. What he was thinking, as rapidly as his mind would work, was that she was right. When he returned to the cabin, it would all be over. If he jumped, there was at least some chance. Without another second's hesitation, he kicked one leg over the side of the ship and then, squeezing her hand once, let go and plunged the twenty feet or so down into the cold water. He tried for as long as he could to keep from rising, to avoid the churning propellers that hummed overhead.

He swam through the choppy waves away from the ship. Milo had heard of sailors being sucked into the propellers, and so he beat at the sea until the churning of the engines was well beyond him and fading. Finally, he stopped slapping the wake and floated. From the crest of one wave to the

next, he could see the Fliegende Hollander steaming two hundred, three hundred, four hundred yards away. He saw that it was not turning about, only erratically changing course, and he fancied that he could see her still standing at the rail, watching him watching her. The sun would be up in a few minutes, and perhaps, he would be able to sight land from his position in the water. It had been clearly visible from his window below deck the day before, he remembered, and if it were not too far

Then he heard a deafening explosion, and again a second. From the direction of his last sighting of the ship, a ball of fire curled up over the waves for a stunning moment lighting the sky above like a false dawn. The ship had not been sunk so much as it had been exploded into flaming shreds. The submarine had settled its score with the Fliegende Hollander, he thought. Anyone below deck had to be dead.

EPILOGUE

Just as every conviction begins as a whim, so does every emancipator serve his apprenticeship as a crank. A fanatic is a great leader who is just entering the room.

--Heywood Broun

He has been living here in Munich for five years now, and though he has long since moved from Residenzstrasse to a more fashionable address on Prinzregentenstrasse, he still spends many of his free afternoons walking about the narrow streets and courtyards of the Altstadt--the Old City. And curiously enough, he never loses his interest in this city or its people.

As to some of its former citizens, there is little doubt that Erika and "Papa" perished that evening. From what he was able to learn, theirs were not among the bodies which turned up on the beaches of Crete in the following days. But there were few bodies recovered from the wreck of the Fliegende Hollander.

For some months he entertained the hope that somehow she had survived. But after all the clever scenarios, he still had the testimony of his own eyes to overcome. He had heard

the explosion which burst the steel seams of the ship, and he had seen the inferno settle on to the ocean like confetti. He told all this to the press, later, and his fantastic claims made their way into a few German and English tabloids, side by side with feature stories about rapists from outer space and suppressed wonder drugs. For this last contribution to history, Milo Marsden was heralded in an editorial in Der Spiegel as the "literary heir apparent to Baron Munchhausen."

But what convinces him as much as the testimony of his own eyes is the fact that in the three years that he has been in Munich, he has seen nothing of Erika. Had she survived, she would most certainly have returned to Munich, where he would have seen her, frequenting the beer gardens beneath the Chinese Tower in the Englischer or sipping coffee in one of the sidewalk cafes of Leopoldstrasse.

Munich has been given various titles, "The Movement City," "The Secret Capital," even the "Weisswurst Metropolis," but along with these other titles it is also called "The City One Returns To."

Milo, of course, did not swim the 100 or so miles to Crete, but was lucky enough--as he has always been--in this case to have jumped ship in a major sea lane. In almost the first light of morning, he was spotted by a Colombian freighter making its way to Cyprus. Eugen Dolfuss was, apparently, not as fortunate. Although his body was not found, he was given a state funeral in Germany, and scarcely

was the plaque placed on his ancestral home in his native Wuppertal, than the party he had led for twenty years and symbolized for ten broke up due to political infighting. The coalition with the Christian Democrats did not survive the Dolfuss disappearance, and in the one national election since, the National German Party suffered singular defeats in both Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein, the two former bastions of support. The reason for this is simple enough. Many Germans are willing to romanticize some parts of their Nazi past--restoration has begun on the Zeppelin stands in Nuremburg--but few Germans really want to go back to those days.

As to the Fuehrer Testament, it has been much qualified, but, as yet, not totally discredited. Even so, Jacob Levi Schulzinger's recorded assessment seems to have settled on what has been called of late the "so-what testament": Hitler was a man so entirely dishonest as to have been incapable even of admitting the truth to his diary.

On his last skiing weekend in Garmisch, Milo thought of Carlyle, and he went back to the American service base cafeteria and asked ol' Josef to let him go down into the cellar. Josef was sorry, but not surprised to hear that Carlyle was dead. "Always running away from the kitchen, no sense of commitment that one." Milo told him he wanted to check on the painting of the soldier swigging beer with the devil. Josef shook his head, but insisted on taking him down himself. Again there was nothing to see, as he had assured

him before.

"Are you sure that it was ever really a devil here?" Milo finally asked him.

"Oh ja," he said, as though it were an image that both bemused and haunted him. "And still is for those who remember, who have seen it."

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