

## VII

A letter for Ján Kovac had arrived at the post office. It contained an index card on which a Jerusalem address had been typed in an avant-garde font. Apparently, Rabbi Halberstam wanted the Okopy manuscript sent to a Jewish community outside of Europe. While Marta recuperated in bed, Madison spent a day copying the first thousand lines of the scroll for later study. He could make no sense of it, and he was not satisfied with their general progress. If he had believed in the occult, then he would have considered himself and Marta heroes for having removed one link in the "sacred chain" of holy books from the Nazis' reach. But he put his faith in scientific and political truth, not in magic. Perhaps they had saved the Besht's manuscript from the Germans, but they couldn't read it, and they had learned nothing about the Nazis' schemes. He told Marta that they ought to shift their attention from Hebrew kabbalah to the gentile occult.

Once they had mailed the manuscript to Palestine, they climbed into the BMW and set off toward Vienna.

"What do you expect to find in Austria?" Marta asked, driving with one hand on the wheel. She mainly watched Madison's face, even when the car rounded sharp curves. "You know," she added, "It's not the safest place in the world for you and me."

"You mean, because the Nazis are strong there?"

"That's rather an understatement."

"Fill me in," said Madison. "I only know what I read in the American press, which is very superficial about Europe."

Marta gave a look of disbelief, but she explained: "The Viennese were the first to discover the political potency of anti-Semitism. Around 1900, they formed mass parties dedicated to opposing the Jews. During his years in Vienna, Hitler absorbed their message and even read an anti-Semitic occultist journal, *Ostara*. Since the Great War, there has been a strong revival of right-wing anti-Semitism. The Nazis assassinated the last Austrian Chancellor, little Engelbert Dollfuss, in '34, even though he was basically a fascist himself. Now Kurt Schuschnigg rules by decree; parliament has been dissolved and the constitution is suspended. At first, Schuschnigg tried to imitate Dollfuss' policy of cozying up

to Mussolini. He thought that Italy could protect Austria's independence. But lately Mussolini has decided to play the Führer's adoring little brother -- so he's no use. Besides, plenty of Austrians want to join the Third Reich. A Nazi paramilitary movement rules the streets by night, and the bureaucracy is packed with German nationalists."

"In that case," said Madison, "I'm sure that the Viennese occult societies are being infiltrated by Nazis. I bet they're trying to place their people inside the mystical fraternities of all the European cities. They'll want to control these groups so that they can steal their most precious documents. But, if I were a Nazi, I'd be especially optimistic about Vienna, because I'd have so many resources there. As you say, the Austrian occultists are probably Nazi-sympathizers to start with."

The car was crawling up a hill behind a tractor that belched smoke into the cool, humid air. The forest was thick on both sides of the road.

"So," Marta said, "we should be looking for societies that the Nazis have managed to control from the inside."

"That's right. Of course, we'll have to join ourselves to find out."

Marta thought for a moment, and then said, "I assume that you can't just look up 'secret societies -- occult,' in the phone book. So how do you find them?"

"It isn't easy. And even if you happen to come across one, it may not be worth joining. Some occult fraternities are genuinely old and exclusive. Even if they can't actually work magic, at least they own books and know rituals that are not available in the public library. But for every real occult society, there are twenty sham organizations with similar names and pretensions. Some are just social clubs for matrons who like to watch séances over tea. They hire all sorts of charlatans to entertain themselves; they build nice, spooky lodges; and they hide their activities from outsiders. So, if you manage to discover a secret group called something like the Ancient Hermetic Lodge of the Rosicrucian Illuminati, you can never tell what it's worth."

"The Nazis have a big advantage over us," Marta observed: "they have the manpower to infiltrate every one."

"You're right."

Marta finally passed the tractor and sailed down a long hill, the wind flattening her hair. "If I know you," she said, "you have an idea in mind. Otherwise, you wouldn't be so eager to go to Vienna."

As a matter of fact, Madison was pessimistic about their chances of learning anything there; but he was enjoying himself immensely and he didn't want their adventure to end. So he improvised. "If I had to guess, I'd say that the Nazis are especially interested in the secret, inner-circle Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross: the true Rosicrucians."

"You've used that word before -- and I've heard it elsewhere, of course. But I don't really know what it means."

Madison had been hoping she'd ask. He was about to adopt his professorial voice to tell her all that he knew, but he became self-conscious when he noticed that she had settled into her seat with a smile on her lips. He decided to be as brief and casual as he could manage.

"Well," he began, "around 1614, a series of books appeared simultaneously in several languages and several countries. They were anonymous texts, but they appeared to be the manifestos of a secret international organization called the Most Laudable Order of the Rosy Cross. One of the books was a history of the order so far. It explained that there had once lived a German monk called Christian Rosenkreutz, or Rosy Cross. This very pious friar had started out on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but he became ill at Damascus. There he was cured by wise men from Arabia, who also taught him magical arts derived from all the civilizations of the Near East. Rosenkreutz stayed in the Orient, acquiring holy knowledge that could bring peace and wisdom to all. According to the Rosicrucians, he was also initiated into ancient oriental societies. Some say that his Order of the Rosy Cross was just a European branch of the Great White Lodge, founded by Pharaoh Thutmose III of Egypt around 1489 BC.

"At last, Rosenkreutz returned to Europe, but no one seemed ready to receive his learning. Only a few humble followers grasped the value of his arts. They formed a fraternity of chaste and penniless monks -- just four at the beginning -- who secretly compiled a dictionary of Adam's language and translated other holy books from Eastern tongues."

"You don't have to tell me," said Marta: "we're after that dictionary."

"Maybe." Madison hadn't concentrated on the Rosicrucians until now, so he hadn't considered the value of their library.

Marta asked, "What happened to Mr. Rosy Cross and his magic book?"

"He died, actually. But his followers persisted, trying to live by his holy example. They were a completely secret order, whose very name was never spoken to outsiders. The world seemed unprepared for their learning, so they kept it to themselves for a century or so. Then, around 1600, a Rosicrucian novice who happened to have architectural skills offered to redecorate the Order's chapter house. In one room, there was a huge stone memorial tablet engraved with all the members' names. The novice thought that this tablet should be moved to a different spot. With great effort, the brothers pulled it down, whereupon they saw a secret door with the inscription, 'After 120 years I shall open.'"

"They opened the door --," Marta prompted him, for he had stopped to recall the rest of the story.

"They opened it, yes, and found a seven-sided vault. Each side was five feet wide and eight feet high. Hanging from the ceiling was a strangely luminous triangle; there was a similar one on the floor. In the middle of the vault sat a round altar with a brass cover. Each wall bore a Latin inscription over a door. Behind the doors were the secret possessions of the Order: dictionaries and other books, bells, looking-glasses, chemical equipment, and 'wonderful artificial songs.' These may have wind-up instruments of some kind, designed to produce *mantras* of oriental origin.

"The brothers had expected to find the tomb of their beloved founder, but it was nowhere to be seen --"

"Inside the altar," Marta suggested.

"Exactly. They raised the brass plate and discovered Christian Rosenkreutz himself, perfectly preserved and clutching a book known only as *T*. Some say that the monks raised him from the dead using the chemicals and spells in the room; others believe that his body remained lifeless. All agree, however, that the brothers now published their secret history and basic doctrines for the world to read. In their manifestos, they invited the wise men of Europe to join their order. Within a few years, there were actual

Rosicrucian societies in Central Europe, France, and Britain. They still flourish. In fact, the Rosicrucians of North America act just like the Elks or Rotarians: they have a nice big building in Washington and chapters all across the country. Although they use some fancy words in their ceremonies, they're basically mundane and bourgeois. So here's the problem: anyone can gather a few friends and declare that he's the Grand Poo-Bah of the True and Original Order of the Rosy Cross. Groups like this merge and grow, and soon they claim exotic pasts. Meanwhile, if there were a *real* order -- one that actually possessed Rosenkreutz' books and body -- we might not know about it."

Marta swerved the car off the main highway and started driving rapidly along an unpaved forest road. "What are you doing?" Madison asked.

"Just habit. A grey Ford has been two or three cars behind us since Banská Štiavnica. I want to see if we're being followed."

They jolted past a farmhouse, and Marta stopped on a little stone bridge. A narrow brook ran underneath, making the only sound beneath the coniferous canopy. After a minute or two she pointed at her mirror. "There he is."

"Shall we confront him?" Madison asked.

"No. I actually think there several men in the car. I'll just lose them."

She jammed the accelerator to the floor and Madison's head flew back as they roared uphill. Then she spun the wheel and stepped on the brakes so that they turned 180 degrees and stopped. The Ford was chugging up the hill behind them, but Marta accelerated again and they passed it at high speed. It had Austrian plates and carried five men in fedoras.

When they returned to the main road, Marta drove toward Banská Štiavnica instead of Vienna, but she made the first turn and led them along back roads in the general direction of Bratislava. "We may not have as much trouble locating Nazis as we thought," she said.

Bratislava, the Slovak provincial capital, was an old German town on the Danube -- formerly called Pressburg. Below an unattractive castle was an ancient quarter of crooked streets and high-pitched roofs. As they drove through it, Marta said, "I'm worried about the border crossing to Austria. I'd like to go

separately to reduce our chances of being recognized. Why don't you drive up the Czechoslovak side of the Danube as far as Zohor; you can cross there. Angern, on the Austrian side, is a sleepy little town with unprofessional guards. I'll take the train -- not the main Bratislava-Vienna line, but a circuitous route. Park the car unobtrusively in Vienna, and meet me at the Heiligenstadt Station at 11:30 tonight. Just walk through the main concourse, and I'll spot you. Don't appear to recognize me. Heiligenstadt is a workers' district -- very Red; there are places where we can stay safely."

She stopped the car near a bakery and got out.

"Don't you want to drive to the Bratislava train station?" Madison asked.

"Too dangerous. I'll walk." She tossed him the keys, tied a scarf around her head, picked up her bag, and vanished into an alley.

Madison drove to Zohor immediately: he wanted to get the crossing over with quickly. On the Austrian side, guards with German shepherds and submachine guns paced nervously. They seemed especially interested in Madison's car, even when he was still the last on line to cross. They made him climb out so that they could search his vehicle thoroughly. They also scrutinized his South African passport and asked him where he had acquired a BMW with Czech plates.

"I bought it in Prague," he said. "Jolly good deal, it was. Perfect for touring. I'd expected to have to rough it on the train."

He spoke to a tall officer with a grim expression; other men surrounded him, pointing the barrels of their automatic weapons toward the tarmac. Madison tried to preserve his pleasant expression, even though he was sweating and close to panic.

"What business have you in Austria?" said the officer.

"Actually, I'm heading further South, to Milan. I'm looking for investment opportunities. That chap Mussolini's really got his country humming along."

"You passed through Italy a month ago. Why didn't you stop then?"

"I was initially more interested in Czech manufacturing. It didn't work out."

Madison waited while soldiers made several telephone calls from a nearby booth. He had parked away from the road, and the

soldiers made him nervous by abruptly stomping their boots behind him. It was a chilly day, and their breath turned steamy. At last, the officer returned and said, "Welcome to the Republic of Austria. You have a passage visa: two days. After that, you'll be a criminal alien."

Madison drove away with his heart pounding. Traffic was heavy, so he couldn't tell if he was being followed. He turned onto side streets as soon as the Vienna Wood gave way to workers' housing and manufacturing plants. Then he drove rather aimlessly through the northern districts of the city -- crossing the Danube several times, stopping now and then to sit in his car, backtracking, and circling grimy blocks. He decided that a foreign-registered sports car would only attract attention in these proletarian neighborhoods, so he found a more affluent district west of the Franz-Josef Station and parked on a side street. He changed money at a local bank and then spent the rest of the afternoon in a coffee shop that carried over 200 international periodicals, listed in a catalogue for the convenience of its patrons. Waiters in tails fawned over their regular customers, who seemed to entertain, negotiate, conspire, study, complete paperwork, write novels, and practically *live* in the café. In the evening, Madison lingered over dinner at a simple restaurant and then rode trams and buses to various districts, trying to look like a commuter. He was struck by the number of loiterers and homeless men he saw; there were human bundles on every street corner. Of course, things had not be so different in San Francisco a year before.

At 11:31, Madison disembarked from a suburban train at Heiligenstadt. He briskly crossed the concourse of the station, a newspaper under his arm. There was no sign of Marta. His pulse quickening, he considered whether she would want him to stay. He decided to return at midnight. Because the railroad tracks were elevated, the station had been built several stories above street level. Madison walked down flights of covered steps to the street and waited, intensely worried, at a tram stop. He let the first tram pass. Across the road, he noticed a familiar figure in a raincoat with a scarf around her head. Although he recognized her easily, she had the look of a tired Central European factory girl.

Madison read the sign above him, made a show of realizing that he was at the wrong tram stop, and crossed the street to join

Marta. She stared primly at the ground, but he couldn't suppress a grin. When a northbound tram arrived, she boarded without looking at Madison. He followed her and opened his newspaper. She got off two steps later, using the driver's door. Madison exited at the back. They found themselves alone on a grimy, ill-lit, industrial road in North Vienna.

Marta said, "You didn't have any trouble at Angern?"

"Not much. How about you?"

"It was a bit sticky. I had to get off a train through the WC window and walk the rest of the way. Still, we'll be all right now."

"Where to?"

"There are rooms near the Karl Marx Apartments that are leased to small businesses; most are vacant. This afternoon, I got one for us."

"You have contacts around here?" Madison asked. They were walking under yellow street lamps past a long brick wall. Spray-painted swastikas alternated with the hammer-and-sickle.

"Former enemies, really. The Social Democrats ran Vienna after the War. We considered them contemptible rivals, because they believed that socialism could coexist with parliamentary democracy. According to the Kremlin line, they were Wall Street stooges. Still, they built nice new flats for thousands of workers. The central government tried to ban them, but they holed up here in Heiligenstadt until the police actually shelled the Karl-Marx-Hof in nineteen thirty-four. Then there was outright civil war. In the end, the socialist leaders were arrested and parliament was dissolved. We were happy about this at the time. We always knew that we could rely on fascists to destroy our rivals on the left. But now that my orthodoxy is crumbling, I'm beginning to respect these *Schutzbund* people. I know who the survivors are, because they're on the NKVD's hit list. I contacted a cell this afternoon. They spend most of their time trying to get leftists, Jews, and artists out of Austria. They know what they're doing: survival under these circumstances makes people tough."

"Why did they trust you?"

"I gave them information that was useful to them."

She led Madison down a side street, across a deserted lot, and up cement steps to a loading dock. She opened a padlock with a key from her purse. Together, they lifted the garage-style door



high enough to slip inside. Marta produced a flashlight and led them across a room full of cardboard boxes to a door marked 7A. Using a second key, she admitted them to a dusty room containing only a bare bulb. A small window revealed a brick wall five feet away. Marta said, "I picked this place because it reminded me so strongly of the Ritz-Carlton."

They slept on their coats. In the morning, stiff and grumpy, they washed in a decrepit, dirty bathroom. The sky was leaden and scraps of newspaper blew in the wind. Over coffee at a local café, Marta described a plan that she had devised the day before. Madison offered a few refinements, and then they set to work.

They found a shop full of bric-à-brac near the Heiligenstadt station, and hunted through piles of junk until Marta discovered an old piece of wood, six-feet long and ornamented with crude lathe-work. It appeared to be an architectural detail of uncertain style. "This will do," she said.

"It'll look even better with this," said Madison, holding up a tarnished brass star with a rusty hook on the back.

In a stationer's shop, they bought fine paint brushes, black ink, and plain rolled paper. Back in their room, they copied hieroglyphs from the Alamut photographs onto the pole. They attached the star to one end. Once the ink was dry, they used this strange-looking object to beat empty cardboard boxes, until the row of figures was covered with dust. The whole process was rather amusing, and their morning sullenness vanished. They wrapped their creation neatly in white paper and rode the tram to the City Center, alighting on the great avenue that encircled medieval Vienna.

This was the Ringstrasse. They walked along its broad sidewalks, beneath bare tree branches and iron lamps. The boulevard turned gently at each block, revealing new vistas. Vienna University, on their right, was housed in one huge, imitation-Renaissance building, its architecture signifying the revival of learning. Next came the Town Hall, built in medieval style to evoke the independence of the old German city states. There was even a knight in copper armor on top. Right next door was the Austrian parliament building: a Greek temple representing the virtues of Athenian democracy. A gigantic statue of Pallas Athena stood in front to make the reference unmistakable.

Madison said, "These buildings were designed in the seventies, I believe. I guess their architects were the first in history who could build in all these styles. Their imitations were really quite skillful. But they had no aesthetic of their own."

"Why not, do you think?"

"Because they knew too much history. For the first time, they saw all the forms of the past for what they were -- the arbitrary choices of various cultures. Not believing in any universal standards of beauty, they couldn't create new styles for their age. They could *only* imitate, and their reproductions had an air of inauthenticity. They were a bit like that man we met in Istanbul: Nathan. Speaking all languages, they were at home in none. They could have pretended that one architectural language was true, just as the Greeks believed that their orders were natural and universal. But then they would have had to forget history. Once the tower of Babel falls, you can't easily put it up again."

"Besides," Marta said, "these buildings are supposed to suggest power, aren't they, but all the real influence is long gone. Parliament, for example, has been shut down for years. And I doubt that much real learning goes on inside the University."

Madison located their car, parked near the Franz-Josef Station, and Marta sadly drove it away to exchange it for cash and a more anonymous vehicle. Meanwhile, Madison walked to Mariahilferstrasse, just outside the Ring, where he found an elegant men's shop and had a new suit tailored for him. There were fewer panhandlers on this street than elsewhere in Vienna, but many of the businesses were boarded up. In the old city, just off the Danube canal, he located a number of fine book and antique shops, including a firm that specialized in near-eastern treasures. This, he understood, was the shop that often supplied Sigmund Freud with his beloved Egyptian and Mesopotamian statuettes. Madison examined the shop from several angles: it stood in the middle of a narrow, curved, and bustling street. He memorized the address and layout, then met Marta at a coffeehouse near the Cathedral. The pole that they had created stood next to her, looking just like a gift-wrapped fishing rod. She described her new vehicle, a rusty Citroen delivery truck. They confirmed the details of their plan and parted once more.

Madison walked to the antique shop, carrying the pole.

Inside, the carpet was thick and dark; low lights illuminated a few choice objects. A young blond woman sat behind a marble-topped receptionist's desk, watching him over her glasses. Madison rested his package against a chair and browsed casually. After five minutes, he cleared his throat and asked, in his best German, "May I speak to Herr Pitzker?"

"I'll see if he's available," said the receptionist. In due course, the proprietor emerged from the back room. He was an older man with half-moon glasses and a silent step.

"Grüss Gott," said Madison, using the Austrian greeting. "Herr Pitzker, I like this Cycladic figurine very much, but -- if you'll pardon me -- I doubt the provenance. With such a flat nose and those almond eyes, it must be Cypriot."

"I'm grateful for the suggestion," said Pitzker, "but rather eminent authorities have declared this piece to be Cretan."

"Ah, then I'm wrong," said Madison. "I have no real expertise in the field. But I recommend that you examine a good catalogue raisonné of the Louvre's collection. In the Chambéry Collection, there are three Cypriot figurines that could have been made by the very same hand."

"Much obliged." Pitzker gave a smart bow of assent.

Madison said, "I am Doctor-Professor Thor Admundsen, from the United States. I am returning from the Orient, and would like to sell a valuable collection of Islamic arcana. Are you interested?"

"Quite possibly."

"Let me show you a sample," said Madison. "There are five others just like it." He unwrapped the pole, watching Pitzker's nonplussed expression. "It's not fit for your window," Madison conceded, smiling. "It isn't exactly art. But people who know about such things will find it startlingly interesting."

"Pardon me. By 'such things,' you mean --?"

"Objects currently prized by *German* buyers, shall we say?"

"Ja, ja, sicher." Pitzger understood.

"I should like to ask a million schillings each for these objects," said Madison. "If that's too much, I can take them to Berlin. But if you mark them up 50 percent, you'll sell them in a week."

"I don't know --"

"How about this. I'm touring the district, indulging an old fancy for rococo churches. I will leave this sample here for ten days. Talk to your contacts. They can take it away and give it a thorough examination. When I return, we'll discuss a price."

"Very well, Herr Doctor-Professor. But in the meantime, we can reach you at --?"

"Nowhere, I'm afraid. I shall be wandering in the *Wald*."

On his way out, Madison noticed an old Citroen truck parked across the street. Someone had written "J.C. Hunrath, plumbers" on the side. He tried not to show any interest in it, but hurried away to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, where he spent the afternoon standing on feeble heating grates, looking at old masters that were stacked four-high on the damask walls.

A little after six, he met Marta at a large and elegant coffee shop on the Ring. Gentlemen in evening clothes read newspapers and fine ladies chatted at small tables, papier-maché fruit piled on their hats. Over *sachertorte* and coffee, Marta told Madison that she had been able to see inside the antique shop very clearly. She had bought a toy telescope and used it to peer through a hole in the side of her truck. Pitzker had left the shop at closing time, leaving their pole behind. Until then, no customers had spoken to the proprietor or looked at anything but Cycladic figurines and Egyptian papyri.

"He was probably on the phone," said Madison, trying to be optimistic. "It may take him a few days to contact the right people."

"I thought about watching the store tonight," said Marta, "but the truck would attract attention, and our chances of seeing anything are slim. Let's go back tomorrow; you can help me instead of amusing yourself with Rembrandts. I have neck strain from staring through that bloody telescope."

Madison produced a piece of engraved paper from his jacket pocket. "Meanwhile," he said, "I've found something for us to do this evening."

He had torn a flyer off a kiosk. It said:

The Vienna Society for Spiritual Research  
announces a public lecture  
"Jews and the Occult Germanic Destiny"  
followed by theosophical investigations  
tonight, eight o'clock

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at Sterngasse 8 bis

"This looks like promising," said Madison.

"Almost too promising," Marta observed, but she agreed to attend.

Sterngasse was a short and narrow street. As they entered it, Madison muttered, "This was the old ghetto. The Jews were expelled in the fifteenth century -- all but the hundreds of men and women who were burned at the stake."

The Vienna Society for Spiritual Research was identified only by its initials, engraved on a brass plaque beside a narrow door. Madison rang the bell, and a butler admitted them to a narrow anteroom. After he had taken their coats, they climbed a carpeted staircase that was lined with occult woodcuts and strange talismans. On the landing, rows of chairs faced a murky room. This turned out to be a main parlor, full of Victorian sofas, motley overstuffed armchairs, and piano benches, all arranged in rough rows before a table that was covered in maroon felt. Astrolabes, crystal spheres, and Indian statuettes filled glass cabinets along one wall. The wallpaper was heavy and dark; bookcases held ancient volumes. There was a faint smell of incense.

Madison and Marta chose an inconspicuous place to sit. The room quickly filled with ladies in floppy hats and men in tails. Three men entered through a door at the front and took their places at the table. The first one, an old gentleman with a forked beard and pince-nez, banged a gavel and said, "I call to order the 149th meeting of the Vienna Society for Spiritual Research. This evening, we are most honored to welcome a colleague from Saint Petersburg, the esteemed Baron von Bladensburg, author of *Race Destiny and the Twilight of Christendom*. We have admired the Baron's learning; now we may benefit from his personal aura as well."

As von Bladensburg walked to the lectern, Marta whispered in Madison's ear, "He's a Royalist exile, of German stock; close to the Romanov court. Horribly right-wing, a real sadist."

The speaker was bald; he had shiny skin and several dueling scars. He shuffled papers, and then spoke in accented German: "Good ladies and gentlemen of Vienna, patriots; I am grateful for the invitation to speak before you tonight. My friends, I want you

to cast your minds back a long time, perhaps three millennia. In those days, as you know, all of Europe was blanketed with virgin forests. From Bonn to Moscow, the earth belonged to hunters: to the wolf, the falcon, the bear -- and man.

"The last creature was noblest of all: tall and fair, strong and merry. Some argue about his race: was he Aryan or Slav? I am both, so I don't much care." There was polite laughter, which the Baron stopped with a scowl. "We know what he *wasn't*, this noble forester. And we know how he lived: in harmony with nature; free; worshipping the spirits of the earth and sky; knowing their names intuitively and conversing with them as a proud son would speak to his father. He had no possessions that he cared for; knew nothing about money. All he wanted was good hunting, fine fellowship, and a hero's death. For wisdom, he turned to the elders of his tribe, druids or shamans who knew the names and special virtues of every plant and beast."

The Baron looked up from his papers and scanned the audience. "Far away," he said, "another race envied these proud hunters. Born in meager soil, ugly and avaricious, these people couldn't survive in a forest or work their will on nature. But they coveted the beauty of the northern folk -- coveted their women, too. Although they were misformed and feeble, they had a certain cunning."

Madison examined his neighbors, who were watching with rapt attention and nodding automatically at many of the Baron's points. Bladensburg continued: "In their secret council, the Senhedrin, these half-men formed a demonic plot. Throughout the whole world they would disperse themselves, breeding when they could with nobler folk. They could make no sense of the woodsmen's runes, because nature was a mystery to them. But they invented a new system of writing that could efficiently express any human thought. Thus the first alphabets were born -- the Hebrew and Phoenician -- from which all modern systems are derived.

"Even more potent was their method of exchange. Everything, they decided, had a price, so any object could be traded for any other. Not only goods, but also land, labor, art, and knowledge could be bought and sold. Even money had a price: interest. The woodfolk had understood the unique character of every creature, but the Semitic traders exchanged goods casually.

They even bought and sold sex, those pimps. In this way, they achieved astounding wealth and planted the seeds of avarice among nobler folk. Soon the rune-language was forgotten; blond men lived unnaturally in cities, writing letters and counting money.

“So now there were two systems of value in the world. The strong and beautiful still personified the clean virtues of sword and forest; and the weak loved cunning and wealth. But how humiliating, these weaklings thought, to be called vile! They coveted the name ‘good,’ which had always belonged to warriors and hunters. In their *Senhedrin*, they hatched a second plot. One Jew, a lowly carpenter, would be declared the noblest man of all -- a veritable god. He would preach that the meek might inherit the earth; that it was best to turn the other cheek and to love one’s enemy. In his religion, virile masters were really slaves; and natural slaves were masters in the life beyond.

“Well, you know the rest of the story. This slavish religion infected the whole Roman empire, rotting it to death. The Jews seized the opportunity to establish themselves throughout the ancient wooded heartland of Europe. They still dwelled in their natural habitat: foul tenements, neglected and cheap. Imagine this very district before it was sanitized -- beak-nosed men skulking in corners; lewd girls, hungry for Christian flesh. In the counting houses, piles of money; in the cellars, unspeakable rituals performed by warped, resentful minds. And every day, secret letters would travel from one ghetto to another, saying, ‘Shift a little capital from here to there; it’s time for a war. Or, bring down that prince, we don’t like his gentile good looks.’

“If their greed and power-lust had known limits, these strangers would have been content with the wealth that they had amassed by 1900. Who else could begin a world war by sending a few secret signals from bank to bank? But it was not in their nature to be satisfied. For a third time, their *Senhedrin* met, and now they devised the wickedest plot of all. Down with the Christian religion, they thought; it’s done its job, but it still gives these gentiles too much power. Let’s have a new faith that exalts the weak and catapults *us* to the top. We already run Europe; let us take the reins openly.”

Bladensburg stopped and surveyed his listeners, moving methodically from face to face. “Thus,” he said, “was Bolshevism

born. Can anyone doubt that this gutter movement was the Senhedrin's work? Wasn't Marx a Jew? And Lenin? When our beloved Tsaritsa was murdered, her Bolshevik killer was yet another Jew; but on the walls they found her secret emblem, the last rune of the primeval woodsmen. And what sign was that?"

From the back of the room, several people muttered, "The swastika."

"What?" said Bladensburg, cupping his hand behind his ear.

"The swastika!"

Marta whispered, "Oh, this is complete rubbish." But Bladensburg said, "Now I hear you, yes: the swastika. And so, thanks to the martyred Tsaritsa, we have recovered the greatest of the ancients' runes. A new age is born; the final confrontation between the good and the vile is about to begin. I have no doubt that the German *Volk*, arm in arm with their free Slav brothers, are prepared to cleanse themselves. Am I right, my friends?"

Muttered "yes's" grew gradually louder as clapping began. The applause was long and ardent. When the unsmiling von Bladensburg finally took his seat, the chairman banged his gavel and said, "Thank you, thank you, Baron. Now we grasp fully the reason for your high scholarly reputation. Ladies and gentlemen, please reserve your questions for the end of the program. First, it is my honor to welcome Doktor Karl-Ernst Neckerman, who will perform a theosophical mystery. As always, please remain absolutely silent."

The man to the chairman's left now stood, bowed, and lit several black candles. He placed a silk scarf over a crystal ball and incanted some phrases in a low tone. He sprinkled shavings on the candle wicks, which flared bright purple. Then he lifted the silk, looked at the ball, and scowled.

The audience seemed disturbed; people shifted in their chairs. Dr. Neckerman, looking uncomfortable, repeated his ritual. As he examined the ball for a second time, he said, "I just don't understand. Nothing is working."

Baron von Bladensburg abruptly stood up and barked: "No surprise! No surprise! I smell something rotten in this room."

Members of the audience looked around with nervous expressions on their faces. Von Bladensburg said, "Yes, it is unmistakable. But how can it have happened? There is -- in this



very chamber, among clean folk -- *a Jew.*"

Everyone shuddered, including Madison. Bladensburg scanned the room, scrutinizing each face in turn. Fascinated, Madison noticed that the Baron seemed to avoid him and Marta. At last, Bladensburg's eyes stopped at Madison. His face registered horror and he raised a trembling finger. "There he is -- the rat!"

As if on cue, the candles flamed high and yellow. Madison focused on Bladensburg's unblinking eyes as time seemed to stop. There *was* a distinctly foul smell in the room, and several people sniffed audibly. The crystal ball cracked with an audible snap, and Madison's chair lurched backward and shook. He clutched the armrests, not daring to breathe. Everyone stared at him.

"I'm not -- I'm not Jewish," Madison said.

"Yes, you are: Jew-spawn and Jew-bred," said Bladensburg.

"So what if he is?" said Marta. "Let's go."

Weak-kneed, Madison stood up and began to walk through the audience to the door. Near the back, his eye stopped on a familiar face, the only one that was not contorted with hate. It was a middle-aged man with his hair in a ponytail. The Graf von Sanktus-Germanus flashed a triumphant smile and lifted his gold-topped cane. "Adieu," he said.

Madison and Marta hurried to the bottom of the stairs and found their coats; then they stepped outside into the cold, starry night. The cobbled street was deserted, a steep and narrow space between cramped buildings. Not remembering exactly where they were, they hastened uphill, huddled and quiet. After a block, Marta slowed down.

Madison said, "What?"

She pointed at a pair of men who had emerged from the shadows. One carried a tire-iron; another a chain. Madison turned around to see three more men following them. They were similarly equipped and wore swastika armbands over their coats. Marta whispered: "These men belong to SS Regiment number 89, the underground Viennese Nazis. I can't believe they parade their regalia so openly."

The youth with the chain swung it in a slow circle and said, "So, look who's come back to the ghetto. Forgot something?"

Marta and Madison pressed against the wall, nearly encircled by men. In the distance, Madison noticed a car marked

“Polizei,” with two officers lounging nearby. They seemed to expect a good show.

When Marta pulled a small knife out of her purse, the SS leader snorted. He and his companions wore heavy boots, long leather coats, brown shirts, and very short hair. One wiped a kitchen knife on his sleeve, grinning. The youth next to him pulled his coat back to reveal a Luger.

The circle tightened. Marta edged her way toward a municipal garbage can. She pulled it out of its wire cage and made as if to throw it at the SS leader, but instead she heaved it backwards -- without looking -- through a shop window. “Follow me,” she said, as the glass shattered.

They jumped through the hole into black space. As Madison stumbled deeper into the shop, he encountered layers of loose textiles. He started as he bumped into something solid and round, but it was just a bale of fabric that fell to its side as he pushed it away.

“Keep going,” said Marta, invisible to his left. Behind, he heard shouting and stomping. He had become entangled in wool. While he tried to kick the textiles off his legs, he climbed over a stack of samples. Something was burning. He turned around and saw that Marta was lighting edges of cloth with a match. Intense yellow flames illuminated her.

He kept moving, hoping that the store had a back door. The smoke was thick and stung his eyes. He staggered to the back wall and felt his way across it. No door. He moved in the opposite direction, crashing into a chair. Finally, he located a doorframe with his fingers. He turned around to see high flames, but Marta had vanished. He twisted the handle and pushed, to no effect. He stepped back and kicked. Although his foot went numb from the contact, the door didn’t budge. Nearby, a display of calico draperies ignited and toppled majestically toward him. He dodged it, not sure whether his clothes had caught on fire, and kicked again. This time, the door splintered. He rammed his shoulder at it and stepped through.

Marta was right behind him. They stood in a narrow passageway with stairs at one end. Coughing, they ran up several flights past unmarked doors. On the fourth floor, the stairs ended and they found themselves in a blind corridor.

“That way to the roof,” said Marta, pointing at a door in the ceiling. She gestured for Madison to bend down so that she could climb on his shoulders. When he stood up, she reached the door and pushed. Cold air blew on Madison’s face as smoke appeared in the hallway.

Marta scrambled onto the roof and vanished for a moment, then reappeared with a long pine board. She stretched down and held it as steady as she could while Madison climbed, grasping the board between his knees. He caught the edge of the ceiling, let the wood drop, and pulled himself onto the roof.

It was a flat area surrounded by a low wall. On every side were gables, spires, and chimneys. Madison turned around and saw the oversized roof of Saint Stephen’s Cathedral: zig-zag tiles in yellow, green, and black. Lit electrically, it seemed to float over the skyline. In the opposite direction, the huge ferris wheel of the Prater turned slowly.

Marta was peering over the wall. “From here, it’s a three-meter drop,” she said. Madison joined her. He had been recalling a production of *Die Fledermaus* in which the naughty bat had scampered across Viennese rooftops on New Year’s Eve. But one look over the edge made him forget about operettas. It was a long way to the peaked roof below, and there was a three-foot gap between the buildings.

Marta leapt, then Madison. He hit a steep, tiled surface and struggled to hold onto something, finally rolling to a stop near the gutter. Marta was already up and walking away. From below and behind them, they could hear sirens and shouting. Marta climbed off the peaked roof and onto a higher, flat one. Madison followed her, finding himself beside an iron water tower. Breathing heavily, he ducked under the rusty cistern and saw that Marta was peering over the opposite edge of the building.

She paused for a minute, then jumped out of sight. He ran after her, looked down, and saw her prone on a very steep roof. To his great relief, she moved, inching her way across what seemed to be a church’s apse. His relief faded as he realized that he would have to vault that way too, or else fall to the cobblestones below.

He tensed and nearly sprang, but stopped himself just before he leapt, teetering on the brink. He felt dizzy and incapable. Marta, now a small figure, had found a gothic window and was prying it

open. Madison backed up several steps, closed his eyes, and ran. He kept pumping his legs after the roof ended, until at last he collided with the church. The cold, sheer surface struck his knees and chest hard, but he managed to grasp a buttress and hang on. His right knee was bleeding. He lowered himself onto the steep, tiled surface and crept after Marta.

She had entered the apse through the window panel and now stood on a catwalk behind the high altar. The structure of the church was gothic; but light filtering through narrow windows revealed a thicket of baroque ornaments. By day, Madison guessed, the nave would be resplendent in pink and gold; but now the statues and gates, pulpits and side altars were just lacy silhouettes. He and Marta climbed down a ladder to the ground and walked along the north aisle, hearing nothing but the scuffle of mice. They opened a large wooden door and peered into a deserted square. After several minutes, no one had appeared. They slipped outside and walked briskly to the Ringstrasse, where they caught a tram for Heiligenstadt.

## VIII

Early the next morning, a plumber's truck parked near the Pitzker Antiquities shop. The driver was a man in overalls and a painter's cap. He climbed out of the cab, a wrench in his hand, and let himself into the back.

"Hi, Marta," he said. "Are they open?"

"Not yet." Also dressed in worker's overalls, she was staring through a small telescope that she had pressed against the wall of the truck. "Oh, here comes the receptionist. She's attractive. She looks like Barbara Stanwyck."

Madison decided that no response was required. He sat on an empty milk jug. The light in the truck was dim, and there was thick dust on its corrugated floor. After ten minutes, Marta said, "Here's Pitzker. He's inside, taking his hat off. Having a little chat. Looking at his phone messages. Now he's gone into the office. Notice that it's precisely nine. Germans accuse the Viennese of *Schlamperai* -- messiness -- but you have to admit they're fanatically punctual."

Another half-hour passed, and Madison said, "Is anything going on in there?"

"You look." Marta handed him the telescope. He adjusted his eye to the instrument and scanned the plush shop. The receptionist was reading a magazine; Pitzker was nowhere to be seen. Every few seconds, a large, blurry figure would cut across Madison's vision, startling him. The nearest shoppers were just inches away.

Marta said, "Did you see that archaeologist chap last night? In the back row, grinning malevolently?"

"St.-Germain? I saw him, all right. He said 'adieu' to me. He should have said 'à bientôt.' We aren't finished with him."

"Why did you call him by a French name?"

"Because der Graf von Sanktus-Germanus is a translation of 'le Comte de St.-Germain.'"

"And you know who that is?"

"Maybe. The original St.-Germain was an eighteenth-century courtier -- and an alleged spy -- who frequented Versailles before the Revolution and Berlin under Frederick the Great. He had one claim to fame."