

## 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."

"What was that?"

"He seemed to be immortal. As King Louis said, 'St. Germain is the man who knows everything, and who never dies.' He claimed that he'd discovered the elixir of youth in the Orient. People who saw him decades apart remarked that he was utterly unchanged. He had clear memories -- or so he boasted -- of Solomon and Amenhotep. Someone once asked the count's manservant if St.-Germain really was three thousand years old. The valet replied that he doubted it, for the Count had seemed to age. Of course, the valet had been hired during the twelfth century."

"Why did anyone believe such nonsense?" Marta asked.

"Well, St.-Germain didn't brag about it too much. In public, he would never eat, saying that he'd discovered a superior substitute for food. He would casually drop references to events from centuries past; then blush and talk vaguely about his great old age. Strange rumors started to spread. One thing was certain: he had remarkable skills as a chemist. He invented several new kinds of dye and started successful factories. Also, he knew scores of languages, including Sanskrit and Chinese. Evidently, he'd picked them up on his travels."

"Did any of the other courtiers know Sanskrit well enough to check?"

"I doubt it. Hey," Madison added, "here comes a customer. He's a burly guy in a wool coat and bowler hat. He's inside, wasting no time with those Cycladic fertility figures. Pitzker's come out of his office; they're talking. His hat's still on. Wait a second, now Pitzker's got our pole, and it's all wrapped up again."

Marta pulled a painter's cap over her curls and opened the back door a crack. "Don't you want me to drive?" said Madison.

"No, because I've been trained in urban surveillance. But you can sit in the front with me."

They walked around the truck and climbed into the cab. In the mirror, Madison could see the customer leaving with his package. Marta waited until he had turned the corner, then followed. They tailed him across the Ringstrasse and into newer districts near the Belvedere Palace. Marta stayed far behind him most of the time. Sometimes, when he was in the middle of a long block, she would drive around a corner so that he completely vanished.

"You're going to lose him," said Madison at one point. The bowler hat was barely visible in the crowd.

"No, he's going to turn right at the next intersection," said Marta, driving around a traffic circle.

"How do you know?"

"You can read people. They anticipate their next turn."

At last they reached a quiet thoroughfare lined with turn-of-the-century apartment blocks: solid, Renaissance-revival buildings with heavy cornices and big windows. The man they were following entered a door near the corner. Marta pulled onto the curb and cut her engine.

"I daren't park too close," she said, "in case this fellow has a good eye for grubby old lorries. You get out with your wrench and walk around the block. But don't be obvious about it."

Madison swung his wrench and whistled as he walked down the street. Casually, he observed the door to a very narrow stone building with a flat roof and no windows. It was unmarked and unremarkable -- drab.

Madison walked straight past, turned left at three intersections, and climbed back into the cab. Marta said, "He used a brace of keys to get in. Since the building has no windows, I can't see anything inside."

Madison said, "There's no name on the door, so we can't look them up. We'll have to think about breaking in."

"It looks tough."

Marta stepped out of the truck and said, "Drive around the neighborhood. I'll be in the back. When you're sure that no one can see us, knock once."

Madison changed seats and started the engine. When he heard a rap behind him, he drove a little way, turned, and found himself between the high garden wall of the Belvedere and a railroad track. He stopped to let the traffic pass, then thumped twice. He heard the back door open and close. In a minute, Marta walked by, looking just like a Viennese housewife in pumps and a raincoat. A piece of paper fluttered from her body. Madison retrieved it and read: "Be back here in 15 minutes. Keep driving until then."

He drove to the Ringstrasse, crossed the Danube Canal twice, and returned to the Belvedere just a minute late. Marta

approached from the opposite direction and walked right by, dropping a matchbook on the ground as she passed. This time she had written, "Südbahnhof, 12:05. Cross concourse. No plumber's clothes."

Madison found a quiet place to park, removed his overalls, and walked to Vienna's southern train station. He weaved through the crowds between the ticket offices and the railway platforms until someone grabbed his arm and said, in credible Viennese dialect, "Herr Karl! A pleasure to see you here."

"Fraülein --" He couldn't think of a good name.

"Don't you remember me?" said Marta. "Anna Magdalena Schmidt. My father supplied your mother's pastry shop."

"Of course," said Madison, and they walked together to the station cafe, a smoky, crowded place. Seated at an inconspicuous table, they spoke quietly in English. "I saw something interesting," Marta said. "There's a man watching the street from the building opposite. He has a pretty nice set-up, with translucent curtains and a camera on a tripod."

"He could be a lookout for the folks in the windowless place," said Madison.

"He could be, but I think he's spying on *them*."

"So we have company." Madison stirred his coffee and glanced at the laborers and meter maids at nearby tables. "Who do you think he works for?"

"Not the NKVD. If he were a Soviet officer, then I wouldn't have been able to spot him in the first place. For the same reason, he can't be Gestapo. You know," she added, "it would be easier to surprise a peeping tom than to break into a stone fortress. And he might know what goes on in there."

"Let's try it."

Marta left Madison at the Südbahnhof while she bought a handgun from underworld suppliers. This took her nearly three hours, and until she returned, Madison pretended to wait for trains to Yugoslavia. It was dusk by the time they reached the street with the windowless building. They approached on the opposite side, sticking close to the rusticated walls of the apartment blocks. Marta stopped at a door and fiddled with a lock until it opened.

They now stood in the marble foyer of a modest residence. There were mailboxes on the left; the floors smelled of antiseptic.

Marta picked up a heavy coal shovel that she found near the back door. They ran quietly two flights up, and then Marta counted doors. "I hope I'm right," she whispered.

They backed against the opposite wall, then charged with their shoulders down, holding the shovel like a battering ram. The door cracked down the middle but held in place. They took two steps back and charged once more, crashing into the room.

It was dark and unfurnished except for lacy curtains and the camera. By the window stood a skinny man with a long face and a mop of bushy, reddish-brown hair. He held a knife in his trembling hand.

"Drop it," Marta said, in German.

He was shaking all over, but he wouldn't move. Marta drew her pistol.

"Shoot me now," he said. "I don't want torture." The pitch of his voice was strangely high.

The next thing Madison knew, Marta had the man's gaunt arm in her hand, and the bare knife was waving toward the window. Madison ran over and pried it free, eliciting a piteous cry.

"It's all right," said Marta. "We're probably on the same side. What's your name?"

"There is no one on my side."

"Oh, buck up," said Marta. "Your name?"

"Egon."

"Hello, Egon, I'm Marta. This is Madison. We're good guys. He keeps me from killing anyone."

"I'm not always successful," Madison observed.

"Egon, what are you doing in this flat?" Marta held her gun to his head.

"I live here."

"I see -- just you and your camera. Do you know your neighbors across the street? Would you like us to take you over there and introduce you?"

"Oh, please, God, no! Mercy! I beg you --"

"All right, all right. Tell us the truth, and you'll be fine. You're spying on the gentlemen in the house with the blank walls. Why?"

"It's *my* house," said Egon, sorrowfully.

Madison asked, "You live there?" He was beginning to

wonder whether the young man was sane.

"Of course not. I'm a member of the Lodge."

"The Lodge," said Marta. "What's its full name?"

"I cannot tell you."

"Oh, yes you can," she said, taking the knife from Madison. She now held a deadly weapon in each hand.

Egon gave a soft shriek and said, "It's the Illustrious Fraternity of the Alchemical Cross."

"If you're a member," said Marta, "why are you so afraid to go over there? Why are you spying on your own organization?"

"Because it's been taken away from us." Egon began to babble, gesticulating with his bony fingers: "We let a few join at first. They had friends, and soon there was a whole faction. They were very learned and frightfully serious. Old members stopped attending. One of the original group, Wilibald Meyer, vanished altogether; then his body washed up near Schwechat. He'd been castrated. The Grand Master moved to expel the new faction when he found out what they'd done with the Codex Fludd. There was a struggle. For a while, there were two Masters -- I don't know exactly how that started. Appeal was made to the Graz chapter, which sided with the usurper. We voted; their man won. Then our Master was arrested on sodomy charges -- totally unfounded, sacrilegious accusations -- and they carted him away."

"What's going on in there now?" Madison asked.

"I don't know, exactly. They've removed our library."

Marta glanced out the window. "Where did they take it?" she asked.

"Somewhere to the east."

Madison said, "How do you know?"

"Because they're using our *grimoires*: the Codex Borgia and the book we call *T*. I can feel resonances. Somewhere to the south and east, necromancy is being performed."

Marta, obviously skeptical, asked, "Did you actually see the books leave the building?"

Egon stabbed the air with his fingers, which he held tightly together in twos and threes. "With my very own eyes, yes."

"So what's your plan?" Madison asked.

"Revenge. I have photographs; I have one hair cutting. There are still black manuals in my possession. Their doom will be

horrible, unspeakable. I will imprison their souls in the body of roasting, hornèd goats. I will offer them up to Lucifer, their infernal master. They will scream like gutted cats. I will send them direct to the fourth circle. No, when I'm done, they will *long* for the torments of the damned." His eyes grew misty and his skinny fists clenched as he contemplated their fate.

Marta asked, "What about the Comte de St.-Germain? Is he one of them?"

Egon practically spat. "He *calls* himself that."

"You know," said Marta, "we've followed that imposter all the way from Persia. We nearly killed him in the Alamut Valley. We *did* destroy his whole organization. He hates us and fears us."

"What do you intend to do with him?" Egon's eyes became crafty slits.

"If you'll help us to break in across the street, then he's a dead man."

"It would be very dangerous."

Madison asked, "Is anything left in there? Any of the arcana?"

"Not really." Egon became suspicious. "Why? Are you after our library? You can't have it."

"No," said Madison, "we don't want your books, but we'd like to make sure that evil people don't control them. If we find what they've stolen, we'll give it all back to you. But you have to tell us: is there anything valuable left in Vienna?"

"Not exactly here --"

"Where then?" said Marta.

Egon looked at her dubiously.

"We'll take care of St.-Germain if you'll tell us." Marta patted her revolver suggestively.

"And then *you'll* steal our treasures," said Egon.

Marta told Madison, "This is a waste of time. The Lodge obviously has nothing of value."

Egon looked hurt. "You're wrong about that," he announced.

"No, I think you're right, Marta," said Madison, sighing. "This is just another bunch of harmless hobbyists, playing at magic. Ladies with crystal balls and ouija boards who hear thumps under the table. They don't own anything worthwhile."

Egon's voice squeaked with excitement. "What would you like to see more than anything else in the world? What have you always dreamed of seeing? What's the *sanctum sanctorum* of the occult?" He paused for dramatic emphasis, his fingers spread like spider's legs. Madison guessed what he was going to say, but let him finish. With his face contorted, Egon announced: "The Vault of Christian Rosenkreutz!"

"The seven-sided vault," said Madison, acting unimpressed. "Is anything left inside? Books?"

"No books." Egon's face fell. "What we hadn't removed already, those demons across the street sent overseas. But they couldn't move the alchemical samples."

"Where is this Vault?" Marta asked.

"I'll never tell you."

Madison spoke in a reasonable tone. "Look, if we're bad guys, then we'll find it anyway, after we torture you. Or St.-Germain will. You'll lose either way. But if we're friends, then we can protect Rosenkreutz' samples. You must simply tell us where they are."

"Maybe," said Egon. "First, I'll have to investigate you spiritually. I'll need an item of clothing from each, something you've worn intimately."

Despite his disgust, Madison managed to say, "That's a *good* idea. Will our socks do?"

Egon pouted. "I'll need your underwear."

Marta asked, her voice slightly weary, "How much time will you need for these -- investigations?"

"Three nights," said Egon.

"Starting tonight?"

"Yes," he conceded, evidently unwilling to forgo any advantage.

"All right. You can have our underwear. We'll meet you in the Kunsthistorisches Museum on Thursday at three. Madison, suggest a spot."

"The room with the Brueghels."

"Very well. Turn him around." Madison turned Egon to face the window while Marta removed her stockings and underwear. Then it was Madison's turn to pull his boxer shorts off. Once they had replaced their outer clothes, they left. As they walked away,

they noticed Egon in his window, photographing them assiduously  
Driving toward Heiligenstadt, Marta said, "What shall we do until Thursday?"

"We could watch the Fraternity of the Alchemical Cross."

"A waste of time, I think. We can't see anything in there."

"Good," said Madison. "I'm getting sick of this truck."

They were driving along the embankment of the Danube Canal, with the faded amusement park of the Prater to their right. Men slept almost head to toe along the wall, beneath swastikas and other political graffiti.

"You know," Marta said, "I'm becoming rather pessimistic. This Egon fellow's obviously a lunatic, and we're actually going to wait for him to examine our underwear." She snorted.

"If he doesn't turn out to be helpful, we can always find another way to infiltrate the Lodge. Maybe we can use Pitzker as an intermediary."

"All right, but what kind of nonsense is going on there, anyway? I had just started to find this occult business eerie, and then someone said the word 'alchemy.' I can take kabbalah half seriously, especially after what happened to us in that cave. Besides, I know nothing about it, so I'm respectful out of ignorance. But *alchemy*? I studied some chemistry at Moscow State University. Alchemy is just chemistry minus the knowledge, isn't it?"

"Not necessarily," said Madison. "As you know, some alchemists were just hacks who tried to turn lead into gold. They were called 'puffers.' Others were con men who sold dyed copper *as* gold and then left town before it could be assayed. But these people were denounced by the true alchemists, who claimed that they didn't care about material wealth. They sought the secret of metamorphosis in general, not just a way to turn lead into precious metal. What they really wanted was spiritual understanding and perfection."

"That sounds lovely," said Marta; "but clearly they failed. Science came along and put them out of business. Today, we understand *why* things change."

They had left the canal and entered the grimy streets of North Vienna. It had started to rain -- big drops that smeared the windshield. Madison said, "Actually, it's hard to tell whether alchemy worked or not. Science is public; its results are published

and checked. But alchemy was an occult art. In fact, the word 'hermetic,' meaning secret, is derived from the name of the first alchemist, Hermes Trismegistus. His followers performed clandestine experiments constantly for twenty-five centuries, whereas chemists have only been working for about two hundred years. If the alchemists discovered something, we wouldn't know about it. Their achievements wouldn't be obvious things, like wealth or immortality; they'd be spiritual goods."

"But if alchemy was such an otherworldly business, then why do the Nazis care about it?"

"Because it was another effort to find the primeval language. In a way, it was similar to kabbalah. For Jewish mystics, the universe was constructed when God combined letters to make words. For alchemists, the building blocks were chemical elements that formed compounds. Structurally, the two systems were so similar that occultists sometimes fused them, mapping alchemical elements onto Hebrew words, and vice-versa."

"I agree that a limited number of elements form the universe," said Marta, lifting both hands off the steering wheel to emphasize her point. "But now we know exactly what they are: helium, hydrogen, lithium, barium, --. They're on the periodic table. Any other system is bunk."

"Why?" said Madison. "Maybe there are many ways to describe reality."

Marta looked annoyed. "Only one way has produced verifiable results: science. The periodic table is testable. It works."

"Look at it this way," said Madison. "We test theories. For example, I propose that heat plus water makes steam. Test it, and you'll find it's true. However, I expressed that theory in a *language*, which isn't testable. English and French aren't true or false. There's room for countless languages in the universe, because linguistic signs are arbitrary; what matters are the relationships among words. For instance, the relationship between *homme* and *femme* is roughly the same as the relationship between *man* and *woman*; either language will do. So perhaps alchemy and kabbalah aren't theories, they're languages; and so is science. They're all networks of relationships, composed of signs that are neither true nor false on their own."

Marta parked the truck and cut the engine. She stared into

the rainy darkness for a few minutes, and then announced, "I can't accept that chemistry is on the same level as alchemy. Some systems of thought are more rational than others; and I'll put my money on science and Marxism, not occult gibberish. But if what you say is right, and all languages are arbitrary and equal, then there can be no *true* names -- no language of Adam. Any system would be as good as any other. In that case, I don't see what the Nazis are trying to learn by studying the occult."

She had been facing the windshield as she talked; but now she turned her intense eyes toward Madison. He was genuinely perplexed. "You know," he said, "I'm not really very clever about these matters. But the best philosopher of language in the whole world is Viennese. Let's see if we can find him tomorrow and grill him."

"Oh, good. Grilling people is my specialty."

They had made themselves somewhat more comfortable in their warehouse by finding a mattress on the second floor. In the morning, they rode trams south to the Ring. On its southeast side, there was a pretty park with winding paths and bridges over narrow streams. Geese strutted on the brown grass. Madison and Marta crossed the park and entered a wealthy neighborhood outside the Old City. Kundmangasse, not far away, was a typical street of apartment blocks and small stores, sloping toward the Danube Canal. But at number 19, they saw a striking building. In a small, raised plot stood a structure of concrete and steel, starkly simple in its conception -- an ensemble of rectangular blocks.

"See," said Madison, as they mounted the garden steps, "this is a rebuke to the Ringstrasse. Here is architecture without any style at all -- an authentic building, for better or worse. Its architect is the man I want to talk to. He built this place for his sister, Gretl Stonborough. I don't know if he's in Vienna these days, but Gretl's thoughts will be illuminating. She lives in the U.S. part of the time and has heard me lecture in San Francisco; we're quite friendly. A formidable woman -- she had a major influence on her brother."

They rang the bell and a small woman in a lacy maid's outfit opened the door.

"I'm Madison Brown. Sorry, but I don't have a calling card. Will you see if Mrs. Stonborough is in?"

Madison and Marta waited in the anteroom below a short

flight of steps. The interior had no carpets or moldings; the lights were bare bulbs. The floors were made of dark, glossy stone, and the walls and ceilings had been painted a light mustard yellow. Glass doors allowed the visitors to see deep into the building. At the top of the stairs was a bronze bust of a young woman, modeled impressionistically. "Marguerite Respinger," said a label, "by Ludwig Wittgenstein."

"Will you come inside," said the maid. She led Madison and Marta up the stairs and into a room furnished with Bauhaus chairs. "I've heard," Madison whispered, "that when this house was finished and being cleaned, Wittgenstein noticed that the ceiling in the drawing room was three centimeters too low. He demanded that it be raised. When the contractor asked him if it really mattered, he was outraged. So they rebuilt the whole place."

Someone coughed behind him. She was a woman in middle age, with dark hair, a long white dress, and haughty features.

"Frau Margarete Stonborough," said Madison, "may I introduce Captain Marta Khatchaturian. I hope we haven't disturbed you."

"Not at all. I would have been frightfully angry if you had visited Vienna and not looked me up, Herr Professor. Will you have some coffee?"

They sat and looked into the garden, with its muted winter colors. "I'm awfully sorry," Frau Stonborough said, "to have to entertain you so shabbily. I have just one dear servant left, and we actually serve suppers in the kitchen. What brings you to this degenerate city?" She sat erect and looked elegant even in her ordinary clothes. To Madison, she sounded like an aristocratic Englishwoman from the movies, although a trace of German could be heard in some of her vowels.

"I can't tell you our whole story," Madison said. "It's better for you not to know the details. But we have a philosophical problem. Our enemies think that they've discovered the one true language. We're wondering whether that's possible. You see, these people are quite dangerous."

"You really need my brother, Ludwig," said Frau Stonborough, accepting coffee from her maid.

"Is he in Vienna?"

"No, he's holed up in a cottage by a Norwegian fjord.

Vienna and Cambridge distract him too much, apparently -- which is our loss. You could send him a letter, though."

"Perhaps that's unnecessary. You know his *Tractatus*, don't you?"

"I've read it, but I don't dare talk to Ludwig about it, because he might fly into a rage if he thought I'd misunderstood him."

"It's not exactly easy reading," said Madison. "Do you own a copy that I could show to Captain Khatchaturian?"

The maid was sent for the book, which Marta examined. It was actually a volume of a journal, *Annalen der naturphilosophie*, published in 1921. Not more than 75 pages long, it consisted of short propositions, each numbered like books in the Dewey decimal system. A few propositions were long and contained complex logical symbols; others were very brief. Number 1.0, for example, stated: "the world is everything that is the case." In the margins, corrections had been made in pencil and a few words had been translated into English.

"What is this?" Marta asked, flipping through the pages and looking at Madison.

"It's one of the greatest books ever written," he said, "but that doesn't mean that I can explain it. Frau Stonborough, what would you say about the *Tractatus*?"

"Do you want me to summarize it?"

"If you can. You see," Madison told Marta, "Wittgenstein has come the closest of any respectable philosopher to creating a perfect language."

"Very well," said Frau Stonborough. She fastened her pale eyes on Marta and spoke deliberately. "Ludwig assumes that ordinary languages, like English and German, must really reflect one ideal language that's made of pure logic plus pure facts. To discover it, we must analyze our own languages down to their atoms, their most basic particles. Ordinary words like *chair* are not atomic. They can be logically analyzed. For example, if a chair is an object for humans to sit on, then the word *chair* depends upon the words *person* and *sit*. It can also be analyzed in other ways, perhaps down to its component parts: steel, leather, thread. And each of these words can be further analyzed.

"Nevertheless, at some point, analysis must stop. There must

be logical atoms, if our language has any content. These atoms must be fixed and changeless, or else they could be further analyzed."

"Give me an example," said Marta.

"I can't." She looked at Madison, who offered no assistance, and then continued: "Perhaps there are no atomic words in our ordinary languages. I sometimes think that Ludwig is referring to metaphysical objects. They are logically necessary as the foundation of language, but we don't actually see them or speak their names."

Marta said, "Yet they're the words that occultists claim to know. Does your brother say anything at all about them?"

Frau Stonborough said, "Yes, he explains how they work." She found a piece of paper by the telephone and drew the following diagram:

a	b	c
d	e	f
g	h	i

"This," she said, "is an imaginary world composed of just nine objects and one logical rule: objects can be combined only with adjacent objects. Once we know 'a,' we know that 'a-d' is a possible combination, and 'a-i' is logically impossible. Ludwig's point is this: to know an object's true name is to understand all its potential relationships to other objects."

Marta interrupted. "I find this all terribly abstract. How does it apply to real life?"

"Well," said Frau Stonborough, "our world is just a more complicated version of my chart. There are many more objects, and the rules of combination are more complex. You look as if you want an example. I suppose, according to Ludwig, your true name is not -- pardon me, what are you called?"

"Marta."

"Right. Your true name is not Marta, but a word indicating that you're your father's daughter, my guest, Dr. Brown's friend,

and so on. Of course, there is no such word in any actual language."

"I think I understand names," said Marta. "But how about logic? You said that in your imaginary world, there was one rule: objects could be connected to their neighbors. In our world, are there infinite rules?"

"On the contrary, just two. Union and negation, *and* and *not*."

Madison said, "What about causality?" He searched for an example, finally turning to the object in Marta's hand. "I see coffee steaming in that cup," he said, "so I infer that heat was applied to water. Where does that kind of inference fit in?"

"Ludwig would turn your hypothesis into a logical expression: Water boils if and only if heat is applied. This can be analyzed into the logic of union and negation."

She wrote the following expression on her paper and showed it around:

$$q \text{ if and only if } p = \text{not} (\text{not } p \text{ and } q) \text{ and not } (p \text{ and not } q)$$

Then she continued, "You see, causality is just a more complicated combination of 'and' and 'not.' Whenever I say that something is true, I always mean that two objects, such as 'a' and 'b,' go together. When I say that something is not true, I'm refusing to affirm such a connection. Everything we say is just a union of affirmations and denials. You are Dr. Brown's friend; you are not Herr Hitler's friend. The whole universe is a gigantic string of atomic propositions connected by *and*'s -- with *not* written before the false ones. Experience tells us which are true and false. Anything, such as an aesthetic or moral judgment, that cannot be expressed in these terms, is senseless. As Ludwig says, we must pass over it in silence."

"Aha," said Marta: "your brother sounds like a man after my own heart. A scientific materialist."

"Not at all. Hand me the book, please." Marta gave the volume to Frau Stonborough, who translated proposition 6.432 into English: "How the world is, is of no consequence to what is higher. God does not manifest himself in the world."

"How does *God* get into this?" Marta looked disappointed.

Frau Stonborough said, "The statements in the *Tractatus* depict what is essential about the world: its logical structure. The picture they draw is beautiful. Ludwig believes that you could not prove that one of Beethoven's sonatas was beautiful, because an aesthetic judgment cannot be translated into logical language. But you could *show* its beauty through a sympathetic performance. This would be a kind of picture, a beautiful representation of Beethoven's musical idea.

"In the same way, Ludwig presents a picture or performance of the logical structure of the world in his little book. He thereby shows that the form of the world is beautiful, although of course its content is awful. But God doesn't care about facts, whether something happens to be the case; He is concerned only with the pure logical structure. To show that the structure is beautiful, Ludwig aspires to aesthetic perfection in the design of his book, which is crystalline, minimal, balanced, and rational like a work of art -- like this house."

She gestured idly with a chalky finger. "His book makes no concessions to the reader. For example, terms are used before they have been defined. All contingencies are banished, as Ludwig follows the plan of the cosmos itself. If the *Tractatus* succeeds in showing that the world is formally beautiful, then this constitutes a demonstration that God exists and that the world is redeemed."

After a moment, Madison said, "The conditions under which your brother wrote his book make it even more remarkable. He worked in the trenches of the Eastern Front during the last war. The material world was consumed in horror and ugliness. As shells fell around him and men died of dysentery in a pointless conflict, your brother showed that the form of the cosmos was God."

Frau Stonborough was nodding thoughtfully. Madison knew that two of her other brothers had shot themselves during the War; and the third, a famous pianist, had lost his right arm. Madison wondered whether she could find any consolation in the abstract system of her youngest sibling.

Marta said, "This is all terribly moving, I'm sure, but what have we learned about magic languages? Are they possible?"

"I don't know," said Madison, "but I've learned two things."

"Yes?" Marta prompted him.

"Well, first of all, a true name would represent the

relationship between a primitive object and all the other objects in the universe to which it could be connected. If you knew these names, then every sentence you uttered would be true. This would be a source of enormous power; it would give you mastery over nature. Presumably, Adam had such power in the Garden of Eden."

Marta said, "If a true name represents all the relationships between one object and everything else, then it must be rather long."

"Perhaps," said Madison, after a moment's inconclusive thought.

"What else have you learned?"

"I'm beginning to understand why serious occultism attracts people today. Clever men like Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and Rabbi Halberstam are crazy about it. What can they possibly see in Tarot cards and alchemy?"

"I have no idea."

"Well, the basic experience of modern life is diversity and change. There are many languages, many styles, many moralities. How can any of them be right? But what if there were one secret language, unchanged since the dawn of history? At least as a poetic metaphor, this is an awfully appealing idea."

"Let's *hope* it's just a metaphor," said Marta, rising. "Frau Stonborough, you have been most helpful. Please assist us further by not mentioning that you have seen Dr. Brown in Vienna."

Their hostess said, "I am awfully curious about your mission." But no one offered her further information, so she added, "Yet I can be circumspect. The times demand it."

"Speaking of that," Madison said, "are you managing all right in Vienna? The authorities don't give you much trouble?"

"I happen to be a fellow citizen of yours. I carry an American passport, thanks to my husband."

"Good. How about the rest of your family?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Well, if I'm not mistaken, your background --. I mean, ethnically --"

"The Wittgensteins are Austrians, sir, and have been Catholics for generations. We're not the kind of Eastern rabble that crowds into the Leopoldstadt with their caftans and sidelocks. Of

course, I don't approve of anti-Semitism. But the Wittgensteins will always be safe in Austria."

"Hold onto that passport," said Marta.